Key findings from our 2018 Young and Homeless research, which explores the trends, causes and nature of homelessness experienced by young people (aged 16-24) in England, and looks at the support available.
Trends in youth homelessness

Just because circumstances have dictated we’re homeless, we’re still people and we deserve the same things that everyone else gets.”

Young person

4,981 young people

Gender

44% Female
50% Male

Age

28% 16-17 years
54% 18-21 years
16% 22-24 years

Main support needs

44% Not in education, employment or training
41% Lack independent living skills
35% Have mental health problems
28% Have illegal substance misuse issues
20% Lack relationship skills
16% Lack of literacy and numeracy skills

Socio-demographic characteristics

27% Black and minority ethnic
22% Experiences of the care system
7% LGBTQ+

This may be underestimated as young people may not disclose their sexuality or gender identity to services

Our 2018 Young and Homeless research is based on surveys with 79 local authorities and 109 service providers, and interviews with 25 young people with experiences of homelessness, carried out between September 2017 and February 2018.
Pathways into services

I don't always think there's enough support for them. And I don't know, I think they just get a bit lost.”

Young person

Most young people we interviewed were staying in a range of temporary living arrangements (e.g. sofa surfing) prior to accessing support.

5 had experiences of sleeping rough.

Of the 188 local authorities and providers taking part in our survey:

28% believed there had been an increase in young women sleeping rough in their local area in the past year.

45% believed there had been an increase in young men sleeping rough in their local area.

They said that a lack of affordable housing, a lack of supported accommodation options and welfare benefit reform were causing this increase.

It’s important that emergency accommodation can be accessed:

31% of local authorities reported an increase in the use of B&Bs to accommodate young people.

Most providers said there is a lack of emergency accommodation in their area.

Providers said that usually it is difficult for young people to access:

67% Women-only accommodation

58% Emergency accommodation

57% Long-term supported accommodation

Demand for services

Increase in demand reported

Providers 55%

Local authorities 40%

43% said that youth homelessness had increased a little. Most said this was because of welfare benefit reform and limited housing availability.

17% said that youth homelessness had decreased a little. Most said this was due to the use of a co-ordinated service approach e.g. the Positive Pathway model.

66% told us that the Positive Pathway model is being used or developed in their area.

Increased demand may be due to a range of factors such as closure of other services or increased youth homelessness in certain areas.

Young & Homeless 2018: Key findings

Homeless Link
Preventing youth homelessness

If you want to tackle the problem of homelessness, you approach people before they become homeless, or before they start experiencing all this.”

Young person

Prevention initiatives offered by local authorities and providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention initiatives offered by local authorities and providers</th>
<th>Prevention initiatives that young people think are most important</th>
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<tr>
<td>Signposting to other services</td>
<td>Education in schools on life skills, healthy relationships, mental health, support</td>
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<td>Advice services for young people</td>
<td>Mediation should be offered before tensions reach breaking point</td>
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<td>Joint working between children’s and housing services</td>
<td>Early intervention during childhood targeting the family not just the young person</td>
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<td>Access to short-term funds</td>
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<td>Partnership working with local troubled families programme</td>
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<td>Mediation services</td>
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<td>Home visiting</td>
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<td>Education in school</td>
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Multiple and complex needs

Young people with multiple and complex needs can face particular difficulties in accessing the support they need

82% of providers said the number of young people accessing their service with complex needs had increased because of:

- ...lack of capacity and resources in homelessness services
- ...lack of specialist mental health services
- ...lack of early prevention and intervention

Reasons for not being able to assist

The top three reasons why services were unable to assist young people in the past year were:

- Considered high risk to others: 73%
- Needs are too high: 69%
- Has no local connection: 52%
Drivers of youth homelessness

That’s why a lot of people end up like this, because the system’s letting them down.”

Young person

Family relationship breakdown

Accommodation providers reported that 49% of young people they support became homeless because of relationship breakdown with their family or care-giver. Young people told us this was usually due to:

1. **Structural factors**
   - e.g. over-crowding, welfare benefit reductions and financial difficulties

2. **Individual factors**
   - e.g. mental or physical health of a family member

Welfare benefit reform

We asked providers and local authorities if welfare benefit reform was impacting young people’s ability to access and sustain accommodation.

- 92% said delayed payments under Universal Credit were having an impact
- 90% said sanctions were having an impact
- 80% said the capping of LHA rate to SAR rate was having an impact

A range of other factors also play a role

For example accommodation providers reported that of those young people they supported:

- 31% had experienced drug or alcohol problems
- 26% had experienced mental or physical health problems
- 17% had left care
What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness agencies and the wider housing with health, care and support sector. We work to improve services through research, training and guidance, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.