



# We Have A Voice, Follow Our Lead

Young and  
Homeless 2020

**YOU  
TH  
VOICE**  
SPEAK UP FOR CHANGE

# Executive Summary



**Systemic disadvantages  
have created and  
sustained a youth  
homelessness crisis in  
England for some time.**



**Co-produced with Youth  
Voice, this research brings  
together the stories of 45  
young people with experience  
of homelessness living across  
England.**



## **Key Findings**

**The research highlighted  
the interlinked nature of the  
challenges and enablers at  
play in a young person's life.**

Youth Voice identified five assets that help young people to develop their strengths, resilience and aspirations, which we used to shape our interviews. We called them the '5Cs':

**C**ONFIDENCE

**C**HOICE

**C**OMMUNITY

**C**ONSISTENCY

**C**ONTROL

When present, the 5Cs tended to be mutually reinforcing and supported young people's ability to deal with adversity, gain and share knowledge with peers, develop their skills, aspire to building a career, and much more.



## Challenges

- **Insufficient welfare support**
- **Lack of information**
- **Unreliable support from statutory services**
- **Barriers to accessing and sustaining education, training or work**

Most of the young people we spoke to had been failed by public services in some way.

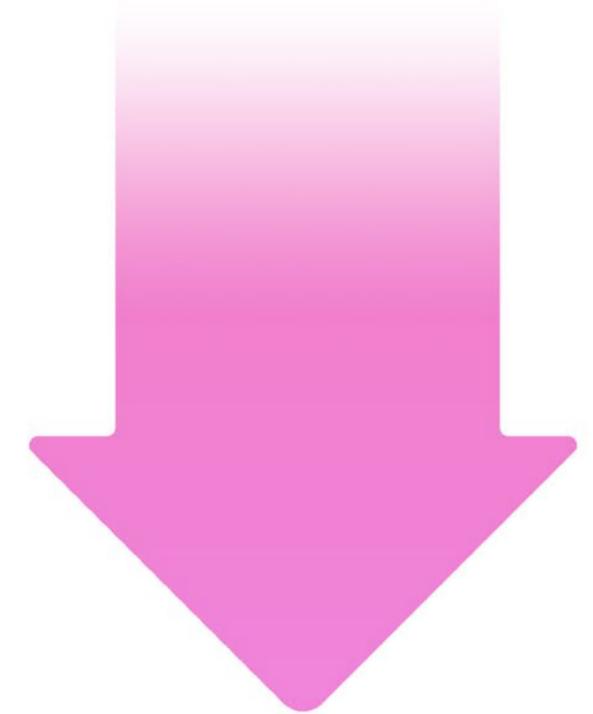
This had a negative impact on their internal resources, resilience, and wellbeing, as well as their ability to cope with challenges they faced and move on from homelessness.

## Enablers

- **Flexible and tailored support**
- **Participation and co-production**
- **Advocacy**
- **Transparency**

Young people valued organisations that encouraged participation, where their experiences of adversity were recognised, where they were provided with responsive and tailored support, and were supported to build upon their aspirations and strengths.

Building and sustaining trusting relationships with staff and peers was particularly significant in building young people's self-confidence and a sense of control.



**C**ONFIDENCE  
**C**HOICE  
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**C**ONTROL

# Key recommendations for change

This report identifies a series of recommendations for action by government, commissioners and local service providers in collaboration with young people. These important changes would empower young people, improve service provision and help prevent and end youth homelessness for good.

“Homelessness has impacted me so much in my life. Like, I don’t even understand how much it impacted me. I had no confidence, I was ready to give up on myself, and I don’t know where I got that confidence from. I just did it... and it’s given me more confidence than I have ever had in my life.”

Beth, North of England



Develop a cross-government strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness



Create a welfare safety net that works for young people



Prioritise prevention by supporting partnerships between key services



Provide long-term capital and revenue investment for a range of housing options



Recognise housing precarity within the responsibility for Children in Need



Fund schools to identify and support young people at risk of homelessness



Invest in mental health provision in non-health, community settings



Ensure social prescribing benefits young people at risk of homelessness

### Government should:

- Urgently develop a cross-government strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness. This strategy should be fully funded and accountable, with a focus on supporting partnership working, early intervention and prevention. It should include the development of a framework for identifying young people at risk of homelessness across public services, as well as a public information campaign. The strategy should be developed in consultation with providers, other youth stakeholders, and young people with lived experience of homelessness.

### The Department for Education should:

- Recognise children with housing precarity as a distinct group within its responsibility for Children in Need and work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure adequate preventative support is offered.
- Support local areas to ensure schools are funded to recognise and respond to young people at risk of homelessness. This should include incorporating risk of homelessness into safeguarding procedures, as well as awareness-raising aimed at both staff and young people on homelessness and the support options available.

### The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should:

- Prioritise prevention by supporting partnerships between the key services and agencies in young people's lives. This should include local authorities, mental health, schools and youth services.
- Provide local areas with long-term capital and revenue investment into a range of supported housing options for young people that recognise the diversity of their needs and experiences. This should include investment in 'staying put' schemes for care leavers, affordable shared accommodation and Housing First for young people.

### The Department of Work and Pensions should:

- Immediately bring forward plans to extend the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) exemption for homeless under-25s and care leavers announced in the Budget 2020. Match the Universal Credit standard allowance for under-25s to the amount over-25s receive, while maintaining the COVID-19 uplift of £20 per week.

### The Department for Health and Social Care should:

- Invest in mental health provision in non-health, community settings, including schools, youth centres and young people's supported accommodation, to offer early and flexible support to young people that need it.
- Ensure that young people at risk of homelessness benefit from social prescribing from mental health and primary care services, by linking in welfare, public health, housing advice and youth community services.



homeless link

# Let's end homelessness together

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