

**St Basils Response to the Communities and
Local Government Commons Select
Committee Homelessness Inquiry.**

January 2016

Executive Summary

- St Basil's works with young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition to providing housing and support services directly to young people across the West Midlands we deliver two national programmes funded by DCLG:
 - The National Youth Reference Group (NYRG) and Youth Homelessness Parliament, supporting young people who have been homeless to influence policy and practice
 - The Positive Pathways programme, supporting local authorities with their strategic response through our Positive Pathways framework and specialist advisers.
- Whilst the average age of young people leaving home continues to rise there remain a significant minority of young people who do not have the option of staying at home. They are more likely than their peers to be in poverty and to have had traumatic experiences during childhood including mental health issues, substance misuse issues, offending and violence at home. As a result some need encouragement and support (financial, practical and emotional) to learn life skills and get on track. Without these, young people can be at risk of homelessness and other harm.
- Tackling youth homelessness is an 'early action' activity which delivers the 'triple dividend'¹ of helping young people thrive; protecting them from future harms costly to them and the public purse; and helping them contribute more, and more quickly, to their communities and the economy.
- Despite what was considered by many to be a perfect storm for youth homelessness in 2010/11 - the economic downturn, high youth unemployment, welfare reforms and service cut backs – available data and research show that overall youth homelessness has remained relatively steady. Local action works: 64% of local authorities have or are developing Positive Pathways, taking a whole systems approach to agreeing what should be done, by whom and with what resources. Preventing homelessness and helping young people into work are key priorities within the framework.
- The risk now is that we cannot continue to hold this position in the face of the pace of change in the policy, funding and housing market environments – with welfare reform and ongoing local authority cuts being the biggest factors in the immediate term. The greatest damage would be caused by the limiting of HB to 18-21 year olds and the application of local housing allowance rates to social housing (including the shared accommodation rate for under 35s and including supported housing).
- Supply of accommodation for young people on low incomes is incredibly short across all tenures. In this context any reduction in access to social housing seriously hampers efforts to prevent and address youth homelessness, especially in localities with the most pressured housing markets.
- Youth homelessness is rarely just about housing – it is symptomatic of a range of inter-related difficulties in young lives, beyond DCLG's areas of responsibility. We very much support the Ministerial Working Group's re-establishment to promote collaboration across Government.
- A great deal has been achieved using a homelessness prevention and housing options approach to youth homelessness, much of it despite the current legislation rather than being supported by it. We support change to put the prevention and relief of homelessness on a statutory footing.
- We make recommendations (please see page 21) in four categories - youth housing pathways; the legal framework; welfare reform; and monitoring and reporting.

¹ Early Action Task Force (2011) The Triple Dividend, Community Links <http://www.community-links.org/earlyaction/the-triple-dividend/>

1. Introduction

1.1 St Basils works with young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, helping over 4000 young people per year across the West Midlands with services in Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull, Worcestershire, Coventry and Walsall. At any one time we have over 540 young people living in our 32 supported accommodation schemes, which for some young people includes their young children as well. We have a range of prevention, accommodation and support services to help young people regain the stability they need to rebuild their lives, gain skills, training and employment, and move on. The aim is to help them break the cycle of homelessness, as our shared hope is that the next generation will be free from this blight on young lives and instead will go on to develop and thrive and experience a bright, fulfilling future.

1.2 St Basils also works with young people and partners on a national basis, funded by DCLG. We facilitate the National Youth Reference Group, a group of young people from across the country who have experienced homelessness, and the Youth Homeless Parliament, which brings young people to present their manifesto to Ministers at Westminster each year. We are working through our national youth homelessness advisers with local authorities and their partners across England to roll out our 'Positive Pathway' framework nationwide.

1.3 The National Youth Reference Group has contributed to a range of policy and practice development work including the review of St Basil's Positive Pathway Framework, Homeless Link's 'Young and Homeless' research and Public Health England's work health and youth homelessness. The 2014 Youth Homelessness Parliament was attended by 94 young people with young people presenting the YHP Manifesto² to Ministers and MPs. Kris Hopkins MP acknowledged that the previous YHP had helped lead to the announcement of the DCLG and Cabinet Office 'Fair Chance' programme. One of the young people described the experience: *"Speaking in Parliament was the most incredible thing I have ever done. Such a passion for change echoed throughout the halls of Parliament that day. I was so glad to be there, it was awesome."*

1.4 According to recent research by Homeless Link³, 64% of English authorities either have or are developing a Pathway approach and we have been in contact with more than 200 authorities this year alone. In the face of rising rough sleeping and family homelessness and mounting pressures on the supply of housing and support for young people, the evidence shows that levels of youth homelessness are broadly holding steady⁴. Many of us in local authorities and the sector have been working hard on this since 2008. We now fear it will not be possible to continue to hold this position on youth homelessness over this parliament, particularly if certain key welfare reform policies are implemented.

² Youth Homelessness Parliament 2014 – Making a Stand Against Youth Homelessness
http://www.stbasils.org.uk/files/2015-05-19/YHP2014MANIFESTO_1_1.pdf

³ Young and Homeless, Homeless Link 2015 <http://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/young-and-homeless-research>

⁴ Watts E et al (2015) Youth Homelessness in the UK: A review for The OVO Foundation, Heriot Watt University for the OVO Foundation <https://www.ovenergy.com/binaries/content/assets/documents/pdfs/ovo-foundation/youthhomelessnessbriefing.pdf>

1.5 We are part of the national End Youth Homelessness Alliance and our home city of Birmingham has become the first city to sign up to a collective approach - across the public, private and third sectors - to end youth homelessness.

1.6 Given the breadth of our activities this response comes from both local and national perspectives. It takes into account evidence from the National Youth Reference Group and includes specific feedback from them, and includes practice examples from St Basils and others around the country (see boxes). As you would expect **the primary focus of our response to the Select Committee's call for evidence is Youth Homelessness**. Our response is longer than usual for written evidence to a select committee inquiry because we bring together these different perspectives.

1.7 By young people we mean 16-24 year olds (inclusive), primarily single young people rather than young families. This group incorporates two priority needs categories for the purposes of the homelessness legislation; 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged 18-21. Other homeless 18-24 year olds may be considered in priority need if they are vulnerable, but in practice this is uncommon despite the recent Supreme Court ruling on the testing of vulnerability in statutory homelessness cases (the Johnson ruling 2015). A significant part of the group we are talking about are therefore outside any priority need group, sometimes termed 'non statutory' homeless.

1.8 Although the provision of housing options for young people is a challenge in itself, in this response, we are **not** talking about young people who could remain in their family home or wider family network but choose to 'move out' before they can afford it. Where young people have the option to stay with family and it is safe to do so, both St Basils and the National Youth Reference Group firmly believe it is the best and safest route for them to take. We also know that the operation of the welfare benefits system and the housing market make 'moving out' and living on benefits virtually impossible in many areas – most young people who need to do this while they get on their feet financially can only do so with support from local authorities and their partners such as St Basils.

1.9 The average age at which young people leave the family home has been increasing for several years as housing supply options and affordability have become more challenging. For different reasons, many young people stay in the family home well into their 20s and even 30s. However, research has consistently shown that there is a significant minority of young people **who do not have the option** to live with their families, including the 1,200 young people accommodated by St Basils each year and the 350 young people who joined Re-writing Futures, our social investment bond backed programme for homeless 18-24 year olds, in 2015⁵. They are also much less likely than their peers to have access to significant financial support from parents and much more likely to experience poverty and complex and challenging transitions to independent living.

1.11 There is an infinite range of circumstances that can lead to a young person not being able to stay with their family. Data from the Birmingham Youth Hub, the single point of access for young people experiencing homelessness in the city, reveal the complex mix of circumstances and reasons young people seek help (rounded figures). 2,204 18-21 year olds sought help from the service

⁵ Rewriting Futures is one of 7 projects funded through the DCLG and Cabinet Office Fair Chance Fund, a PBR programme for young people aged 18-24 who are homeless, NEET, not in 'priority need' and unable to access existing services. The main payment metrics are for access to and sustaining of accommodation, education, training and employment.

because of homelessness in 2015/16. There was almost an equal gender split. One third came directly from the family home, 30% had been sofa surfing, 13% from wider family members and almost 15% from accommodation where they had rental liabilities such as supported and private and social rented accommodation. Of the 643 16 and 17 year olds seeking our help a higher proportion, 52%, came from the family home. Almost 2/3 of this younger group were young women.

1.12 The main reasons for homelessness for the 18-21 year old group were as follows:

- Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate 57%
- Other relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate 37%
- Loss of tenancy (various reasons) 8%
- Relationship breakdown with partner 4%
- Leaving care 4%

Secondary issues facing the young people included:

- Lack of tenancy experience 73%
- Mental health problems including depression 15%
- Criminal convictions 11%
- Overcrowding 11%
- Long term illness 9%
- Learning difficulties 8%
- Debt / rent arrears 6%
- Substance misuse 5%

1.13 A higher proportion of the 16 and 17 year olds (76%) said their parents were no longer willing or able to accommodate them and another 30% of this group had other family or friends who were no longer willing to accommodate them. They reported a similar range of secondary issues apart from being less likely to have debt or rent arrears.

1.14 It is common for young people to face combinations of these and other issues and to have experienced a range of traumatic experiences at home prior to homelessness including mental health issues, substance misuse issues, offending and violence within their home and/or family. We come to understand each young person's situation through high quality assessment. Some are already known to statutory services, others not.

1.15 Establishing how many young people experience homelessness across the UK or England is challenging given data limitations and the 'hidden' nature of some manifestations of youth homelessness such as sofa surfing. According to the most recent estimate⁶, **at least 83,000 young people were in touch with homelessness services across the UK in 2013/14**. This and previous estimates suggest that dramatic falls in statutory youth homelessness have been offset by rises in non-statutory homelessness, with overall youth homelessness remaining relatively stable in comparison with other significant increases. The clear exception is rough sleeping in London where CHAIN data shows a 40% increase in rough sleeping amongst 18-25 year olds since 2011/12, in line

⁶ Clarke, A., Burgess, G., Morris, S., & Udagawa, C. (2015). Estimating the scale of youth homelessness in the UK. Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research for Centrepont <http://centrepont.org.uk/media/1522377/Cambridge%20full%20report%20-%20scale%20of%20youth%20homelessness.pdf>

with the general increase in rough sleeping in London over the period. 871 18-25 year olds were seen by outreach teams in 2014/15, in addition to nine 16 and 17 year olds.

2. The case for a specific focus on young people within homelessness policy

2.1 There are a number of reasons why we believe that the challenge of youth homelessness should receive specific attention within overall efforts to tackle homelessness. These fall into the categories of **maturity; position in the economy with regard to earning potential and the housing market; skills and experience; and age-specific public service issues**. Finally and crucially, in terms of public service transformation, **tackling youth homelessness is an ‘early action’ activity** which delivers the ‘triple dividend’⁷ of helping young people at risk to thrive, protecting them from future harms that are costly to them and the public purse, and enabling them to contribute more, and more quickly, to their communities and the economy.

NYRG members on why we need a specific focus on young people

- ❖ Young people are the bread and butter of the country and need to be invested in to get on track
- ❖ We don’t want this way of life - we want to work and contribute
- ❖ We need support to grow and develop and have aspiration
- ❖ Young people need creative intervention
- ❖ Young people are easily influenced

2.2 First and foremost we are talking about children (16 and 17 year olds) and young people who are still growing up and who should normally be able to expect to move gradually towards independent adulthood with the practical, emotional and financial help of their parents or carers over a period of years. The **transition to independence** should be an exciting and challenging time when young people develop their independence, test boundaries and, in doing so, take risks. This can make for a turbulent time in many families. Without the security of home and familial support there is much more risk of the transition to adulthood tipping into a time of danger and harm. The fact that many young people are ‘still growing up’ into their early to mid-20s affects both what young people need and ‘what works’.

2.3 According to a literature review by the University of Birmingham⁸: *“Maturity can be understood as a developmental concept, including the categories of physical, intellectual, emotional and social development....it is the categories of emotional and social development that are of most relevance in considering the maturity of young adults.”* The authors go on to identify that *“Development of those areas of the brain concerned with higher order cognitive processes and executive functions, including control of impulses and regulation and interpretation of emotions, continues into early adulthood; the human brain is not ‘mature’ until the early to mid-twenties.”* We also know that young people who experience homelessness are more likely to have had traumatic experiences in childhood⁹, one

⁷ Early Action Task Force (2011) The Triple Dividend, Community Links <http://www.community-links.org/earlyaction/the-triple-dividend/>

⁸ Prior. D. et al (2011) Maturity, young adults and criminal justice: A literature review, University of Birmingham for the T2A Alliance <http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Birmingham-University-Maturity-final-literature-review-report.pdf>

⁹ Pleace N et al (2008) Statutory Homelessness in England: The experiences of Families and 16 and 17 year Olds, University of York for DCLG <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2008/Family%20Homelessness%20final%20report.pdf>

of the impacts of which can be developmental delay. Services need to adopt age specific psychologically informed approaches in order to help young people thrive.

2.4 Recent research has revealed the **challenging position in the economy** occupied by young people, and in particular those without considerable financial support from families. The two factors affecting young people disproportionately (but of course not exclusively) are **constraints on their earning power** and, largely as a consequence, extreme **constraints in access to all sectors of the housing market**.

2.5 By definition, young people aged 16-25 are starting out in the world of work and by and large the younger they are the less they will be able to earn. Unless provided for by their families they are unlikely to have significant savings. Many will be in full or part time learning or caught in the dilemma of undertaking learning to improve their job prospects in the future or taking low quality entry level work with limited development opportunities. Depending on their age and circumstances they may not have access to state financial support to enable them to study. Minimum wage rates are considerably lower for young people (see below) and young people are not included in the new Living Wage policy. Young people are most at risk of being unemployed or having insecure employment; ONS data shows that just over 40% of zero hours contracts are held by 16-24 year olds, and whilst youth unemployment has fallen since 2014 it remained at 16% at the start of 2015 compared to 4% for older adults.

Minimum Wage rates in 2015

| Group | Hourly Rate | Weekly rate (40 hour week) |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 16 and 17 | £3.87 | £154.80 |
| 18 to 20 | £5.30 | £212 |
| 21 plus | £6.70 | £268 |
| Apprentices* | £3.30 | £132 |

*Rate for 16-18 year olds and 19 year olds in their first year – outside this relevant NMW rates apply.

2.6 Within this overall picture, national research has shown that young people experiencing homelessness are five times more likely to be NEET than their peers in the general population and that they are less likely to have basic qualifications (see footnote 6). St Basil's data about young people using the Youth Hub shows a corresponding picture.

Employment status of 16-25 year olds presenting at the Birmingham Youth Hub in 2014/15

| Employment Status | Total | Overall % |
|----------------------------|-------|--------------|
| 16 and 17 year olds | | |
| NEET | 375 | 58.3% |
| College | 181 | 28.1% |
| School | 55 | 8.6% |
| Working part-time | 14 | 2.2% |
| Working full-time | 8 | 1.2% |
| Apprenticeship | 10 | 1.6% |
| 18 to 21 year olds | | |
| NEET | 1624 | 73.7% |
| College | 304 | 13.8% |
| School | 11 | 0.5% |

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Working part-time | 128 | 5.8% |
| Working full-time | 82 | 3.7% |
| Apprenticeship | 33 | 1.5% |
| University | 22 | 1.0% |
| 22 to 25 year olds | | |
| NEET | 107 | 82.3% |
| College | 3 | 2.3% |
| School | 0 | 0.0% |
| Working part-time | 11 | 8.5% |
| Working full-time | 8 | 6.2% |
| University | 1 | 0.8% |
| Total | 2977 | |

2.7 Only 29% of all young people were engaged in employment, education or training at the point of referral. The remaining 2106 young people were NEET. The quality and stability of employment is also a key concern for us – we see high proportions of young people taking up flexible and insecure work, often on zero hours contracts and/or via agencies. They are often in and out of employment and have repeated benefits claims and they often find themselves in debt through this process.

2.8 In the West Midlands, in common with many other areas, the housing market allows extremely limited access for young people on low incomes, especially those on benefits. The private rented sector (PRS) is understood by many to be the default tenure for young people moving away from home, but the realities for young people at risk of homelessness are:

- Independent access to the PRS for young people on benefits or low wages without savings is virtually impossible, hence the establishment of PRS Access Schemes by Local Authorities, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector. These schemes offer landlords basic assurances that this prospective group of tenants cannot afford themselves, such as rent in advance and bond guarantees.
- Research and practice demonstrate that the market for shared accommodation at LHA rates is extremely limited across most of the country because of low returns and low landlord confidence in young people on benefits, sharing accommodation, as tenants.
- This pinch is tightening as other, more financially attractive/viable segments of the PRS (including for young professionals and students) continue to drive up demand and effectively out compete young people on benefits or low wages.

2.9 Social housing is a preferred alternative for many young people, but demand far exceeds supply and this includes small units of accommodation suitable for single young people. Downsizing related to the so-called bedroom tax has exacerbated this. In many areas even young people experiencing homelessness or moving on from supported accommodation cannot access social housing; in some areas even young people leaving care cannot expect a social rented property when they move to independence. Where young people are considered for a tenancy we have seen an increase in them failing Associations' pre-letting affordability assessments given the lower minimum wage and lower benefit rates they receive.

2.10 Because of their age and experience young people are much less likely than older homeless people to have developed the **skills to manage a tenancy and all the other responsibilities of independent living** that many of us take for granted. They are also by far the most at risk of falling

into debt. In order for services to prevent or resolve homelessness in a sustainable way they need to provide training in money management and independent living skills to the vast majority of young people.

2.11 All homelessness responses need to be integrated across public services. **There are some key differences between the nature of the partnerships required** around young people, families, single homeless people with complex needs etc. Core public service partners needed around the table to support young people facing homelessness (but less so other groups) include various children's services teams (for example adolescent support teams and looked after and leaving care services), education partners such as FE colleges, child and adolescent mental health services, youth offending services etc. Managing difficult and resource constrained transitions from children's to adult services for young people with high support needs is also a distinct function of homelessness services for young people compared to different challenges with other homeless groups. Dedicated supported accommodation and homelessness prevention services for young people are best able to manage these partnerships and provide age appropriate support for young people. The case for separate emergency and supported accommodation for young people is particularly strong because all-ages provision presents greater levels of risk for vulnerable young people, especially relating to multiple forms of exploitation linked to money, sex and involvement in crime.

2.12 Finally in this section, **action on youth homelessness is early action that helps prevent future harms and cost to the public purse.** Young people facing prolonged periods of homelessness are at risk of a range of negative outcomes and find it much harder than other young people to get on their feet financially. Repeat homelessness through life is just one heightened risk – 42% of the respondents to research by Crisis¹⁰, all of whom were single and homeless, had first experienced homelessness before reaching 20. 70% of the sample were aged over 31 and 29% aged 21-30 (1% were 20 or under). Many of these respondents by this time had a range of needs, often multiple and complex, and long-term unemployment, mental and physical ill health and addiction were common amongst those surveyed.

2.13 The Hard Edges report by Lankelly Chase¹¹ provides the best available evidence about adults facing severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD), defined as experiencing homelessness, offending and/or substance misuse). The risk factors it reveals for SMD correlate extremely strongly with those for youth homelessness (see footnote 6), for example running away, violence and/or abuse, parental substance misuse or mental health problems, not getting on with family, missing a lot of school and not having qualifications. **47 per cent of those surveyed facing all three domains of SMD had left home before reaching 18.** Some young people had already reached higher levels of SMD - 8% of those experiencing all three domains of SMD were 18 or 19 and a further 17% were 20-24 – but young people were much more heavily represented in the 'homeless only group' (40% in total). Making sure homeless young people, and just as importantly those at risk of homelessness, are supported onto a sustainable path to independence represents an extremely sound investment.

3. The causes of Youth Homelessness

¹⁰ Reeve, K (2011) The Hidden Truth about Homelessness: Experiences of Single Homelessness in England, Centre for Economic and Social Research for Crisis

http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/HiddenTruthAboutHomelessness_web.pdf

¹¹ Bramley, Fitzpatrick et al (2015) Hard Edges Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage, Lankelly Chase Foundation <http://lankellychase.org.uk/multiple-disadvantage/publications/hard-edges/>

National Youth Reference Group members on the causes of their homelessness

- ❖ *I left because of family breakdown - It got so bad no way could I have stayed*
- ❖ *There was abuse at home I had to go*
- ❖ *My parents didn't support me or care for me so it was easier to go*
- ❖ *I was dealing with coming to terms with my gender identity - my parents did not understand that I had to live as me so that meant leaving*
- ❖ *My parents didn't cope with my mental health issues and what I was going through and how I acted so they kicked me out*

Overall young people said the causes are complex and each person usually faces a combination of factors – such as family or relationship breakdown, mental health issues, abuse, lack of money, eviction by parents because of young people's sexuality. They also said they hadn't appreciated how tough it would be dealing with homelessness and its aftermath.

3.1 As explored above there are structural factors in the economy that place young people with low incomes at risk of homelessness if they do not have access to practical, emotional and financial family and social support. Young people are the age group most likely to be in low paid and/or insecure employment and most disadvantaged in the labour market. They now have the highest poverty rates of all age groups – 34% for 16-19 year olds and 29% for 20-24 year olds – rates which have risen significantly in the past decade¹².

3.2 Against the backdrop of these structural factors there are a range of risk factors in young peoples' lives that make them much more likely than peers in the general population to experience homelessness – see paragraph 2.13 and footnote 6 – primarily a range of traumatic experiences at home and difficult family relationships. Finally there is usually a trigger for homelessness (which may then repeat or vary as young people move between different insecure living arrangements). See page 3 for the main triggers to homelessness for young people in Birmingham last year – in common with the national picture parents, other relatives or friends being no longer willing or able to accommodate them led the vast majority of young people to our Youth Hub last year. This differs markedly from triggers to homelessness for other groups where the loss of a private rented tenancy has recently become the most common factor.

3.3 Losing a tenancy is, however, a significant risk for young people whether they live in supported accommodation, rent privately or have a social tenancy. This risk is greatest for those young people who have the highest support needs and challenging behaviour, so that in many cases those in need of support are the ones who 'burn their bridges' and find themselves homeless again and unable to access alternative accommodation. Young people in a priority need group may be found 'intentionally homeless' under the homelessness legislation. Exclusion often comes as a result of landlords feeling they cannot manage the risk the young person brings - we have seen this become much more common as budget cuts for supported accommodation services have led to reductions in staffing and support levels (see footnote 1). Many of the young people in this situation will feature in the Hard Edges report as facing severe and multiple disadvantage (paragraph 2.13, footnote 8) and

¹² MacInnes. J. et al (2015) Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2015 Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/mpse-2015>

there is evidence that a rising proportion of homeless young people are presenting to local authorities and support agencies with complex needs (see footnote 1).

3.4 St Basils delivers Rewriting Futures, a DCLG and Cabinet Office funded payment by results programme backed by social impact bonds (See footnote 3), across five West Midlands Authorities. During 2015, 350 young people aged 18-25 who were homeless, NEET, not considered by the LA to be in priority need and unable to access accommodation and support services because of their complex needs, joined our programme. By definition these young people would otherwise have been unlikely to receive services, in many cases because of their complex needs and eviction/exclusion from existing provision.

3.5 Eviction due to rent arrears is a significant risk for young people trying to make ends meet for the first time on low incomes. Challenges interacting with the benefits system, including moving in and out of short term employment and the sanctions regime (which has a strong disproportionate effect on young people¹³) are often a driver for young people getting into debt.

NYRG members on the biggest challenge for young people trying to move on from homelessness and avoid ever being homeless again

- ❖ Feeling trapped financially and mentally

4. Steps to tackle youth homelessness (including local authority responses)

4.1 St Basils has developed the Positive Pathway Approach with a range of partners and supported by DCLG. The Pathway was published in the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness report Making Every Contact Count in 2012 and has been reviewed in 2015 (see figure 1 on page 13 and the full document here http://www.stbasils.org.uk/files/2015-08-35/10_FINAL_pathwaysA4_booklet_98812.pdf). The Positive Pathway takes a whole systems approach, built on collaboration and service integration within a locality. There is a clear focus on early action to prevent homelessness and on supporting young people into learning and work.

4.2 The framework sets out five key service areas, each with clear aims, but can be used very flexibly by local authorities and their partners in accordance with needs, resources, services and market factors in their area. The five service areas are as follows:

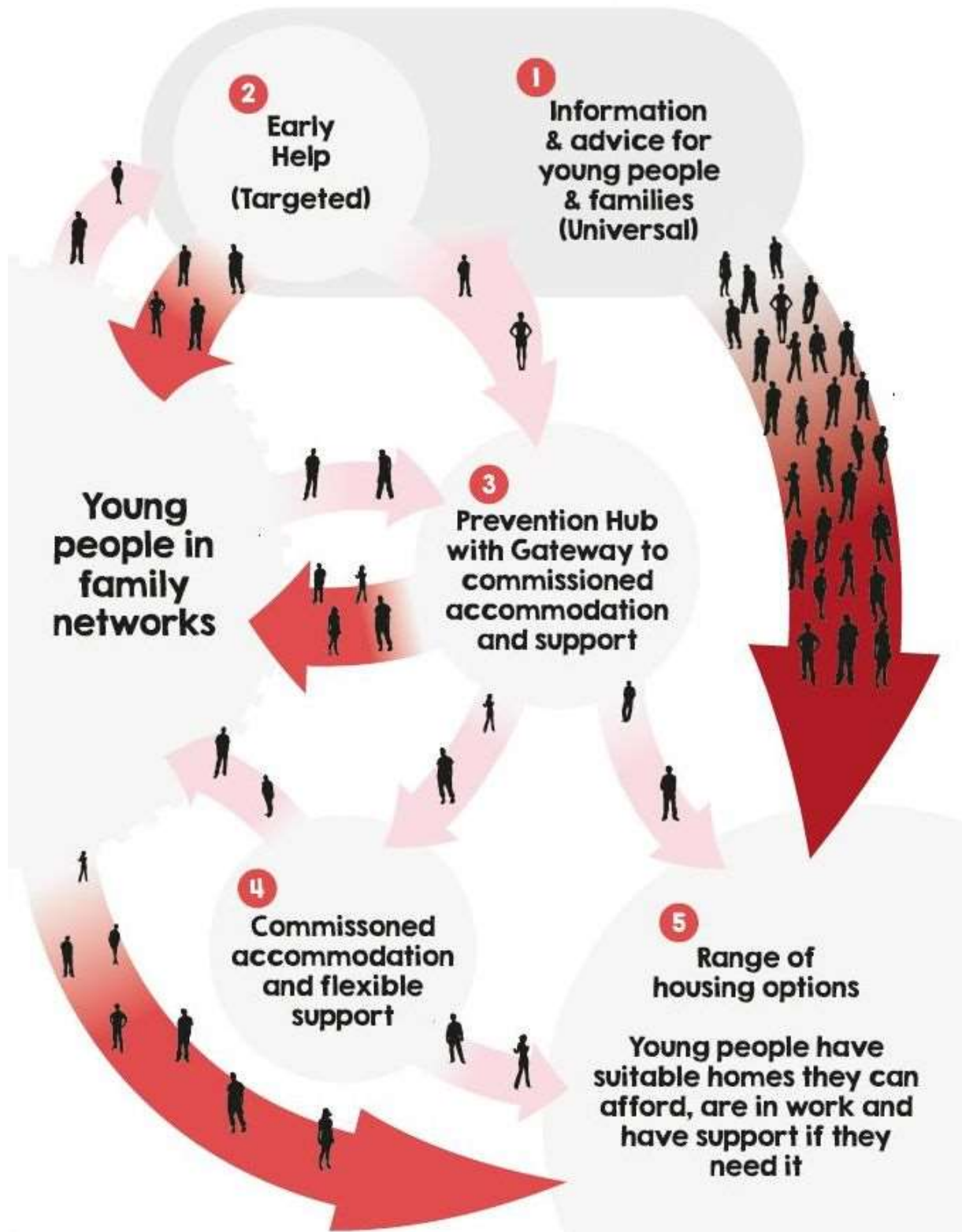
- 1. Information and advice for young people and families:** Timely, accurate information and advice about housing options available to everyone, delivered in a range of ways including online and through schools to reach young people, families and professionals. The desired results are that young people and families are empowered to plan transitions to independent living without support from specialist services; they understand the links between housing choice and their financial and employment situation; and they know where to get help if they need it.

¹³ Watts, B et al (2014) Welfare Sanctions and Conditionality in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/welfare-sanctions-and-conditionality-uk>

2. **Early help: Early intervention targeted to reach households where young people are most likely to be at risk of homelessness.** Delivery involves all local services working with young people and families at risk, e.g. Troubled Families programme, Family Support, Youth Support and Youth Offending Services. The desired result is that young people stay in the family network where possible, are safe and are supported to make planned moves instead of becoming homeless if they need to move out.
3. Integrated response ('hub' or 'virtual hub') and gateway to commissioned accommodation and support: Led by the Housing Authority and Children's Services, an **integrated service for young people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or need help with planned transitions to independence.** Housing options and homelessness prevention services come together, often co-located, with other services including support for pathways into learning and work. Underpinned by assessment and including a needs driven gateway into commissioned supported accommodation and flexible housing related support services. Key data collection point to inform ongoing development of the pathway. The desired results are that homelessness is prevented wherever possible, for example by supporting young people to stay in their family network or preventing the loss of a tenancy; young people who need accommodation and/or support get it, including quick access emergency accommodation and immediate and ongoing support where needed; **and young peoples' accommodation and support underpins rather than disrupts their pathways in learning and work.**
4. **Commissioned accommodation and support:** A range of accommodation and support options designed for younger and more vulnerable young people. Accommodation and support is linked together in some options, for example supported accommodation, Foyers, supported lodgings and Housing First. Flexible outreach support is also available to support young people wherever they live (including in the family home) and stick with them when they move if needed. The desired results are that young people gain the stability and skills they need, engage with learning and work and move on to greater independence.
5. **Range of Housing Options:** A range of safe, decent, affordable housing options, shared and self-contained, in the private, social and third sectors. Where the market doesn't provide sufficiently for young people on low incomes the offer will need to be shaped through local housing strategies, using partnerships to create options. May include creative approaches such as partnerships with learning providers and employers to provide dedicated accommodation that underpins participation in learning and work. Access to flexible outreach support (see above) in case young people need it. The desired result is that young people are economically active and have suitable homes that they can afford - they can build for their future.

Figure 1: The Positive Pathway Framework

Positive Pathway Model



NYRG Members on what has helped them the most:

- ❖ Having a voice - being able to make change / work with other young people to make change happen like NYRG / YHP
- ❖ Well balanced support based on my needs; support workers that follow your journey
- ❖ Support with life skills and getting into training or education; aspiration stuff
- ❖ Investment in me - being cared for and listened to; opportunities to gain confidence and develop relationships
- ❖ Understanding and support with mental health and accessing services
- ❖ Investment in families before crisis

And the least:

- ❖ Not working with young people on a flexible basis
- ❖ Dumping young people with no support
- ❖ Staff constantly changing
- ❖ Too much paper work
- ❖ Unhelpful and unknowledgeable staff that don't care

4.3 The Positive Pathway model has become common currency amongst Local Authorities and their partners. In 2014, **49%** of the local authorities responding to the Homeless Link survey for 'Young and Homeless' reported they had a Pathway model in use or in development. In 2015 this had increased to **64%** and the finding that 25% reported their Pathway to be in development demonstrates continued focus and progress. Within this context joint working between housing and children's services continues to improve: **58%** of respondents reported joint working to be effective/highly effective in 2014/15; but this has risen to **64%** this year. In partnership with Barnardos we have also launched a linked Pathway Framework for young people leaving care, developed with input from a range of partners including Ofsted, and supported by Government. Again this is attracting considerable interest from local authorities who know that placing young people leaving care into their own tenancy at 18 is often a "fast track to failure" resulting in social isolation, poverty and debt.

4.4 DCLG has funded free specialist youth homelessness advisor support to local authorities in the development of their local Pathways since 2008. There continues to be a high demand for our service - an indication of how highly the youth homelessness advisory work is valued. Just since April 2015 we have worked with a minimum of 215 authorities, including 22 London Boroughs and 15 County Councils in two tier areas. One Authority's feedback in response to our customer satisfaction survey sums up what we are trying to achieve: *"The input of the Youth Homelessness Advisor was a shot to the arm for the County and created a snowball effect. Over a 3 year period we have stopped the infighting, created a clear single process, saved at least 20 FTEs in officer time, saved £800k in supported accommodation budget, saved £400k in other placement costs, ended the use of B&B for 16/17 year olds, and most importantly improved services to young people drastically."*

4.5 There is a wealth of good practice in local areas where partners have come together using the framework as a catalyst for action, identifying what needs to be done, by whom and with what resources. One of the real strengths of the framework is that it helps authorities drive change over time and respond positively to external challenges. We have set out some examples on pages 15 and 16.

Nottinghamshire County Council 'Journey of Support'

Nottinghamshire County Council has recently commissioned a new accommodation and support pathway for young people. The end of the 'Supporting People' Programme and subsequent resourcing decisions meant that the original funding stream for supported housing had been virtually eliminated. In order to achieve their strategic priorities the Council has pooled funding from Children's Social Care, Targeted Support & Youth Justice and Public Health to commission supported accommodation for young people aged between 16 and 21. They have developed a model based on 'Journeys of Support' from entrance into a 'Core' Supported Living Service until a young person exits the service, via a range of other housing and support options if needed, as a self-sufficient adult who is able to manage their own tenancy. The Council's aims for the service are set out in the box below:

- Prevent homelessness and increase independence for the young people, Care Leavers and Looked after Children in Nottinghamshire.
- To improve the health of young people, Care Leavers and Looked After Children and ensure that they are able to access relevant universal services as and when necessary.
- Ensure that young people have a safe place to live and access to appropriate support. In the majority of cases the safest accommodation for a young person aged less than 18 years is within a family and that family of origin remains a significant relationship for young people regardless of their home address. Early Intervention and Mediation with Families of origin are a priority and should only be discontinued if this is not in the best interests of the young person.
- That a homeless young person aged between 16 and 18 years should be Looked After but where young people choose not to be, or discharge themselves from Local Authority Care, they will still have access to support and safe accommodation and access to advice about their legal status.
- Enable young people, Care Leavers and Looked After Children in Nottinghamshire to achieve their optimal potential.

Birmingham's Youth Hub

This is a multi-agency service, delivered in partnership between Birmingham City Council's Homeless and Children's Services and St Basils. The Youth Hub works with all young people in housing need, including care leavers, young people leaving custody and young parents. It offers specialist services to prevent youth homelessness, including housing options, advice and family mediation.

Safeguarding of young people underpins all of the work of the partners in the Youth Hub. Trained staff undertake needs and risk assessments, referring young people into specialist services where necessary. The Youth Hub offers a variety of different services including:

- Assistance in preventing homelessness - family mediation; access to floating support and landlord liaison/ negotiation
- Statutory assessments including Children's Services undertaking Initial Assessments of young people aged 16/17, and Housing taking and investigating homeless applications and provision of temporary accommodation
- Advice and help applying for a range of housing options, for example, supported accommodation, private and social housing
- Benefits advice
- Advice on accessing education, training and employment

- Specialist support services including health needs, drugs and alcohol misuse support and mental health services
- Access into suitable short stay/emergency accommodation if needed.

Via a central telephone line, Youthline, it is the “gateway” into supported accommodation for all young people in housing need in Birmingham.

95% of young people using the service had their homelessness prevented or resolved for at least 6 months.

North Yorkshire Young Peoples’ Pathway

In North Yorkshire the 7 District authorities have a joint approach with the county’s Children’s and Young Peoples Service. There is a clear pathway for young people aged 16 – 25, focusing on prevention in the first instance. Each of the Districts has a ‘hub’ comprising three partners; the district Housing Department, Children and Young Peoples Service and a third provider organisation. The model has a high rate of prevention success – consistently over 80%.

Live and Work Scheme

St Basils and Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust have developed a ground breaking new scheme to offer homeless young people both paid apprenticeships and nearby accommodation, making good use of formerly empty ex-nurses lodgings which have been renovated. This innovative new scheme was funded through a grant from the Government’s Empty Homes Community Grant Programme (EHCGP) to renovate empty properties on the hospital site. 27 young people will initially benefit from the scheme but it is hoped the partnership will continue and through the learning from this first scheme, be replicated elsewhere. Young people will live benefit free as the rents have been deflated to an affordable level for young apprentices. See <http://www.stbasils.org.uk/news-resources/news/partners-hold-open-day-for-new-sandwell-live-and-workscheme/> Live and Work

4.6 We are extremely concerned that planned welfare reforms, in particular the limiting of HB to 18-21 year olds and the application of LHA rates to social housing (including supported housing), would be hugely detrimental to services like these which have been so successful in preventing youth homelessness and supporting young people into independence. A huge amount has been achieved on youth homelessness since 2008 with relatively little resource and weak statutory levers. Despite what was considered by many to be a perfect storm for youth homelessness rising in 2010/11 - the economic downturn, high youth unemployment, welfare reforms and service cut backs, youth homelessness has remained relatively steady. The risk now is that we cannot continue to hold this position in the face of the pace of change in the policy, funding and housing market environments – with welfare reform and ongoing local authority cuts being the biggest factors.

NYRG Members on Housing Benefit

Young people that can't stay at home need housing benefit this will have a massive impact on young people that are vulnerable. Youth Homelessness will Sky Rocket if HB is cut and young people will put themselves in to real danger either by staying at home or having to live on the street and being forced to survive. This scares us as when homeless hits you it's so hard I can't imagine what would happen if I didn't get HB and the support.

5 The relationship between youth homelessness and the availability of social housing

5.1 Whilst the underlying causes and triggers for youth homelessness are varied and complex it is clear that housing supply is an important factor. Without decent, affordable and reasonably secure accommodation accessible to young people on low incomes, housing need tips into homelessness. Young people may be unable to secure accommodation themselves when they need it in order to prevent homelessness, leading to local authorities facing greater challenges in the prevention and relief of homelessness for this group. There is also increased risk that young people aren't able to move on from their supported accommodation in a timely way, leading to beds in effect being 'blocked' in supported housing schemes. This is already very common in many parts of the country.

5.2 Rented social housing is only one tenure option in response to these challenges and access to the majority of social housing is tightly managed through local authority allocations schemes and in some cases individual housing association lettings policies. In some localities, especially most London authorities but many others besides, very little social housing is available to single young people. But in many it still constitutes a significant component of local supply and is an essential part of the Positive Pathway system. Of the 742 young people moving on from St Basil's supported accommodation last year almost a third, 209, secured a tenancy in general needs social housing. By contrast only 2% moved into the private rented sector where access for this group is extremely limited.

5.3 Some of the key characteristics of social housing – decent quality, affordable rents, security of tenure, good management, and the availability in many places of self-contained studio and 1 bed units – make it a preferred and valuable option for many young people, particularly those who are more vulnerable and less able to cope with sharing in an HMO in the PRS and the associated challenges and instability. Research has consistently shown that many young people leaving care particularly value the security offered by social housing given their often weak social and family support networks.

5.4 Reductions in the supply of social housing undoubtedly, therefore, increase the risk of youth homelessness and make tackling it harder. We have already seen access reduce for a range of reasons including a reduction in the availability of 1 bed flats as people have downsized in response to the 'bedroom tax' and more stringent pre-letting affordability checks which young people on benefits may not pass.

5.5 Our greatest concern is that if the proposal to impose the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) of Local Housing Allowance in social housing is implemented the bottom will fall out of the supply of social housing for young people. We have seen no evidence that the private rented sector will fill the gap.

5.6 We do not believe social landlords will open up supply of shared social housing on anything like the scale they currently let to single young people for two main sets of reasons – primarily demand for most types of 2 bed plus accommodation from families, but also their concerns at the management challenges of facilitating shared accommodation in general needs stock.

5.7 The gap between the SAR and rents for bedsit and 1 bed accommodation in social housing is significant in many areas - £30 - £50 per week in Birmingham. We doubt that many social landlords will reduce rents for those properties to nearer SAR, especially whilst they are prevented from increasing rents elsewhere to adjust for this.

5.8 At best we may see a small amount of new development of purpose built or adapted accommodation to be affordable at SAR, but we know from our own experience as a developing RP that this is extremely difficult to achieve without significant subsidy.

6 Different approaches to homelessness in big cities and in non-metropolitan areas

6.1 Local Authorities have found the Positive Pathway Framework and more recently the Care Leavers Framework effective in both urban and rural areas because of the flexibilities of the models we have designed. They are underpinned by what works well, innovation and key principles and are about outcomes. The models act as catalysts and provide an informed focus for decision making between local partners regarding taking actions together – what needs to be done in that particular area, will do what and with what resources.

6.2 In our experience there are particular risks relating to the viability of services in two-tier authorities. Some County Councils are significantly cutting or ending the commissioning of housing related support services because they are not statutory provision and are often viewed as a service that Housing Authorities should be providing. The historical position of Supporting People and the 2003 transfer of revenue funding for supported housing from District to County Councils has often been forgotten. But there is strong evidence that short term savings from closure of provision will only shunt costs - higher and longer term - to the public purse elsewhere.

7 The cross government Ministerial Working Group on Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

7.1 The Ministerial Working Group's endorsement of the Positive Pathway Approach in its 2012 publication Every Contact Counts¹⁴ gave a huge boost to the implementation of the Positive Pathway Framework and we very much support the recent re-establishment of the MWG by the Homelessness Minister. For the vast majority of young people homelessness is not simply about housing – it is symptomatic of a range of other inter-related difficulties in their lives, beyond the remit of DCLG's areas of responsibility.

7.2 St Basil's approach to tackling youth homelessness is to engage with partners across the public sector and beyond and similarly we believe Government can achieve more by taking a cross government approach – both in terms of pro-active prevention policy and understanding and avoiding potential unintended homelessness impacts from other policies. This is currently most urgent in relation to welfare reform, making effective collaboration between DCLG and DWP Ministers of paramount importance. However, a wide range of policy areas both across DCLG (e.g. Social Housing, Private Rented Sector, Troubled Families, Public Sector Transformation) and across

¹⁴ Making Every Contact Count, A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness (2012) DCLG
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7597/2200459.pdf

Government (e.g. Looked After Children and Leaving Care, Health and Social Care, Youth and Adult Criminal Justice) have the potential to greatly help or hinder efforts on many aspects of homelessness depending on the effectiveness of cross-government collaboration.

8 How levels of homelessness are monitored and reported

8.1 DCLG's P1E data collection framework was improved through the addition of data on the prevention and relief of homelessness, giving a richer picture of service delivery by housing authorities. However, it remains inadequate as a tool for increasing our understanding of levels and trends in homelessness or for driving service improvement and we would support an overhaul. One of the most obvious improvements would be the collection of basic data on people seeking help from local authorities as well as those assisted. We support the maintenance of quarterly publication of this data by DCLG, at LA and sub-regional level so as to be practically useful for local and national planning.

8.2 We also support the ongoing collection of data on 16 and 17 year olds placed in B&B accommodation because the use of B&B is both a negative factor in itself and a useful barometer for the effectiveness of local systems to prevent and tackle youth homelessness. This is currently done through the P1E system for placements by housing authorities but monitoring of placements by children's services requires significant improvement. The collection and active use of this data has had a huge impact on B&B use for 16/17 year olds by housing authorities since 2008. The latest P1E data shows that the number of 16 and 17 year olds in B&B accommodation is at its lowest ever - 30 in England in Q3 of 2015. In Q1 of 2008 when St Basil's started working with DCLG, there were **560** 16/17s in B&B.

8.3 The CHAIN system for monitoring rough sleeping in London provides invaluable data but rough sleeping data for the rest of the country is far from reliable. We would support the extension of CHAIN or a similar system to other large cities linked to local homelessness responses. Both monitoring and reporting should include age in order to develop a better national and local understanding of the extent and nature of rough sleeping by young people.

8.4 Understanding hidden homelessness is by definition very difficult because the services collecting data aren't aware of it. Crisis' analysis of large scale survey data about concealed, sharing, and overcrowded households in their Monitor series¹⁵ sheds helpful light on potential pent up demand and hidden homelessness.

9 The effectiveness of current legislative framework in England with a review of the different approaches taken in Scotland and Wales

9.1 The examples in section 4 demonstrate how much can be achieved using a homelessness prevention and housing options approach, but much of that has been achieved despite the current

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick S et al (2015) The Homelessness Monitor: England 2015, Universities of Herriot-Watt, York and New South Wales for Crisis.
http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness_Monitor_England_2015_final_web.pdf

legislation rather than being supported by it. We strongly support a change in the law to put prevention for all households at risk of homelessness and relief of homelessness onto a statutory footing, enabling and obliging LAs and homeless households to work together to find practical solutions. The early signs from Wales are that the new prevention and relief duties are having a very positive impact on outcomes.

9.2 From a youth homelessness perspective the biggest beneficiaries of this change would be young people who are aged 18 and over and are not care leavers. The majority are not in a priority need category and despite their age and (often) vulnerability often get minimal assistance from local authorities because they are only owed a general advice duty. Even in local authorities which do work hard to prevent and relieve homelessness for this group the extent of what they can offer is increasingly limited as budget cuts continue.

9.3 Consider extending CHAIN or a similar system to other large cities, linked to local homelessness responses, to improve our knowledge of rough sleeping.

10 Our Recommendations

We have made recommendations in four categories: **youth housing pathways; the legal framework looking at the homelessness legislation and interactions with social care; welfare reform and monitoring and reporting. Our starting point is our ambition to end youth homelessness, not just manage it.**

Youth Housing Pathways

- 1 Specifically include Youth Homelessness within the terms of reference of the re-established Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness. The MWG could lead on the development and promotion of integrated policy and commissioning at both national and local levels.
- 2 Continue to support the National Youth Reference Group and Youth Homelessness Parliament and engage them in the MWG's work on youth homelessness. Members understand the realities of homelessness and how it impacts on their lives - by sharing their lived experience they can reality check policy aims and offer key recommendations based on life experience. They have offered to work in partnership with Government.
- 3 Recognise that access to decent, affordable accommodation and support for young people on low incomes can bring a 'Triple Dividend' (Early Action Task Force 2011) – helping young people thrive as they get started on adult life; protecting their wellbeing so they require fewer costly services now and in the future; and helping them achieve economic independence and begin contributing to the economy more quickly and sustainably.
- 4 Endorse the Positive Pathway approach, the first version of which was published by the MWG on Homelessness in 2012, and continue the provision of DCLG funded support for Local Authorities to lead local partnerships to implement Positive Pathway approaches. This will ensure we are able to continue to support the 25% who are underway with developing their pathway and that penetration of the model continues to develop beyond the current 64%.
- 5 Undertake a review of affordable housing supply in England for young people on low and modest incomes to build an understanding of the extent to which the housing market serves their needs. Understanding and acting on this will be fundamental to delivering the 'triple dividend'. Given large national variations the review will need to be done on a regional basis and take into account employment as well as housing markets.
- 6 Take long term measures to secure sufficient housing supply accessible to young people on low incomes who cannot live with their families. This could be done by requiring Local Authorities to explicitly assess and plan to meet the housing needs of young people on low incomes within Local Housing Strategies and Local Plans. Such planning could act as a powerful catalyst to the concerted local efforts required to develop viable schemes for this group.

Legal Framework – Homelessness and Social Care

- 7 Overhaul the homelessness legislation in England to introduce a duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness regardless of Priority Need. Incorporate a requirement to develop personal housing plans with households to help them sustain their accommodation, with a duty to co-operate for relevant authorities to promote multi-agency working to promote the wellbeing of vulnerable households with support needs. In line with consistent findings from research we would expect a higher proportion of young people to fall into this category compared to other types of household.
- 8 Within this undertake a detailed review of the interaction between homelessness and children’s legislation relating to homeless 16 and 17 year olds and subsequently produce new joint statutory guidance to replace existing guidance on the provision of accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year olds.
- 9 Commission best practice guidance for housing and social care authorities on joint working in the implementation of the Care Act. The aim would be to ensure young and older people experiencing homelessness as part of severe and multiple disadvantage are not overlooked in the implementation of this improved safety net in the context of increasing resource constraints in adult social care.

Welfare Reform and Youth Homelessness

- 10 18-21 Housing Benefit Cut: Do not pursue this policy on the grounds that there are sufficient other measures in place to ensure young people are supported on their progression to employment; the administrative burden would be disproportionate; and the risk of a damaging unintended impact on supply and a corresponding increase in homelessness (and its immediate and long terms costs) is too great.
- 11 Application of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) including the Shared Accommodation rate (SAR) to social housing: Exempt ‘specified accommodation’ (supported accommodation as defined in the Housing Benefit regulations) from the extension of LHA caps to social housing and do not apply the share accommodation rate to any social housing. In the event that the policy goes ahead apply exemptions to vulnerable young people, extended to those between 25-35, as well as those in low paid and insecure employment.
- 12 1% social rent reduction: Exempt ‘specified accommodation’ from the rent reduction, protecting services, especially those of small specialist housing associations, and maintaining parity across the different types of provider of specified accommodation.
- 13 Youth Obligation: Ensure that the situation of young people living away from home is fully considered as the policy is worked up including assessment of risks relating to homelessness;

coherence between this and any HB changes that are implemented; and access to education and training as well as employment for this group.

- 14 LHA and SAR in the private rented sector: Raise SAR levels back to the 50th percentile in the face of evidence that the SAR in particular is not serving its purpose of enabling people under 35 on low incomes to access private rented accommodation. This could considerably increase supply for the prevention and relief of homelessness and move-on from supported accommodation.

Monitoring and reporting

- 15 Overhaul the P1E reporting system including introducing the collection of age specific data about everyone seeking homeless assistance as well as data about services provided and outcomes.
- 16 Reporting on placements of young people by Children's Services authorities should be improved, requiring them to report on any young person placed including 16 and 17 year olds placed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as children in need, looked after 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged 16 – 21.