

# Young people and homelessness

**For many years government policies and other factors, such as the level of unemployment and the lack of affordable housing, have often made it hard for young people to access the accommodation they need. Although the Government has improved homelessness legislation, many young people still experience problems, and research has found that people who become homeless at a younger age are more likely to face long-term difficulties.**

**This factsheet looks at the causes of youth homelessness, some of the groups of young people who are most at risk, the scale of the problem, government initiatives for tackling and preventing homelessness, and Shelter's work with young people.**

This factsheet is one of a series published by Shelter. Factsheets dealing with other housing and homelessness issues can be downloaded from <http://www.shelter.org.uk/factsheets>

## What is homelessness?

Homelessness means not having a home. A home is a place that provides security, privacy, and links to a community and support network. It needs to be decent and affordable.

Under the law, even if someone has a roof over their head they can still be homeless. This is because they may not have any right to stay where they live or their home may be unsuitable to live in.

Research carried out for Shelter among young homeless people found that the most common definition of homelessness they gave was not having a permanent home.<sup>1</sup> Another study found only a few young homeless people equated homelessness with sleeping on the streets or rooflessness.<sup>2</sup>

'I think I was homeless, not because I was living in the street, basically because we, me and my sister, were living at a different house every week and basically living out of a bag in that house.'<sup>3</sup>

## Young people entitled to help with housing

Local authorities have a duty to house certain groups of homeless people under the homelessness legislation. The homelessness legislation was amended in 2002 and extended the groups of homeless people for whom local authorities have a duty to rehouse. These now include young people aged 16 to 17, care leavers aged 18 to 20, and people considered vulnerable because they've been in care, the armed forces or prison, or because they've experienced violence, or the threat of violence. See page 12 for more information on legislation.

## Why do young people become homeless?

Research has identified adverse housing, economic and family trends as having impacted disproportionately on young people.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, many young people do not know where to go when they have housing problems.<sup>5</sup>

Although the reasons for becoming homeless differ between each person, there are common factors. Some factors are related to the family, community and individual, and others are structural, relating to the economy, the law, social trends, and the national housing system. Homelessness is likely to be caused by a combination of structural and personal factors. For more details see the Housing and homelessness factsheet.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, I. and Thompson, S., More priority needed?: the impact of legislative change on young homeless people's access to housing and support, Shelter, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Young Homeless People, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, I. and Thompson, S., More priority needed?: the impact of legislative change on young homeless people's access to housing and support, Shelter, 2005

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this factsheet a young person is anyone between the age of 16 and 24 and includes single people, couples, and those with children of their own.

<sup>5</sup> YouGov poll commissioned by Shelter, June 2005

## Structural factors

### Unemployment

Employment opportunities and income levels have been a key factor in the growth of youth homelessness. Homeless young people experience severe disadvantages in the labour market and a high proportion are unemployed. Surveys among single homeless people have consistently found that between 80 and 90 per cent are unemployed.<sup>6</sup>

The economic position of young people in relation to adults has declined substantially since the 1970s. Young people at the bottom end of the labour market with few qualifications have been the most affected, particularly young men. The main factor has been the collapse of youth labour markets. Whilst youth unemployment fell overall in the mid-1990s, unemployment levels of more than 30 per cent have persisted for many years among young people in some deprived areas.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Unemployment rate**

Year*	All aged over 16 %	16- to 17-year-olds %	18- to 24-year-olds %
1996	8.3	20	14.5
2005	4.8	21.4	11.1

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Trends, April 2005

\*March–May quarters for both years

### National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage was introduced in 1999. It aims to provide employees with a minimum pay defined by law. There are three levels of minimum wage and the rates from October 2005 are:

- £3 per hour for 16- and 17-year-olds
- £4.25 per hour for 18- to 21-year-olds
- £5.05 per hour for employees of 22 years and older.

### Benefit changes

The gradual withdrawal of state support from young people has been a factor in the increase of housing problems among this group. Their reduced income means that they are excluded from accessing most forms of housing.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Randall and Susan Brown, Ending exclusion, employment and training schemes for homeless young people, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, K., 'Is there an emerging "underclass"? The evidence from youth research', in R. MacDonald (ed), Youth, the 'Underclass' and Social Exclusion, Routledge, 1997

**Social Security:** The Social Security Act 1988 replaced general entitlement to Income Support for most young people aged 16 and 17 with the offer of a suitable place on a Youth Training Scheme. The allowances paid under this scheme are much lower than wages paid to young workers by employers. In cases of 'severe hardship' young people are entitled to receive a discretionary payment for a limited period of time.

In the same year, benefit levels for people under 25 were also reduced, on the basis that they could be at least partially dependent on their parents. However, it is often unrealistic to expect parents to continue to accommodate their children in their 20s. Furthermore, this is not an option for young people who are escaping abuse or for care leavers.

**Housing Benefit (HB):** HB can be claimed by tenants on a low income to help to pay their rent. Most young people under 25 who live in the private rented sector have their HB restricted by Single Room Rent (SRR). SRR restricts HB to the cost of rent for a single room in shared accommodation. It would be unlikely to cover the cost of young people living on their own.

Research into the impact of the SRR has found that young people frequently experience a shortfall between their benefit level and housing costs.<sup>8</sup> The Government's own research found that 87 per cent of claimants faced a shortfall, which averaged out at £35.10 per week.<sup>9</sup>

It also found that, since the introduction of SRR, private rented accommodation has become increasingly unavailable for people under 25 years of age who are claiming HB. This appears to have resulted in situations where many young people enter informal lettings without written contracts, for example, or end up sleeping on friends' floors.

## **Housing policy**

Since the 1980s, government housing policies have reduced the housing options for young people. Young people often find it difficult to access accommodation in either the public or private sector. In many areas, age restrictions apply on entitlement to housing let by local authorities or registered social landlords and, with the exception of homeless 16- and 17-year-olds and care leavers aged 18 to 20, young people are unlikely to be given priority on local authorities' waiting lists.

The private sector has traditionally provided housing for young people. However, this is increasingly unaffordable and usually requires rent deposits and rent paid in advance, both out of reach for many young people.

---

<sup>8</sup> Kemp and Rugg, *The Single Room Rent: Its Impact on Young People*, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, 1998

<sup>9</sup> Department of Work and Pensions: *Research into the Single Room Rent Regulations*, 2005

In many parts of England it is 'very difficult for people on average incomes to find accommodation; for young people, who are not on average wages, it is impossible. If they can't return home... then they are homeless'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Personal factors**

Not everyone affected by the above structural trends becomes homeless. It is likely to be an interplay between these and some of the personal experiences and circumstances listed below that make some individuals more likely to become homeless.

### **Leaving home**

The reasons young people leave their home are key to understanding how some become homeless. These reasons can be divided into 'push' and 'pull' factors.<sup>11</sup>

- 'Pull' (positive) factors: many young people leave home for positive reasons such as to start university, training or a new job, or to have a family of their own. The majority of young people leave their home more than once and have the option of returning home, if their course or job has come to an end or for financial reasons.
- 'Push' (negative) factors: some young people are forced to leave the family home in an unplanned way. This may be due to family conflicts, violence or sexual abuse, or simply poverty, and the lack of space and privacy. Young people over 16 years of age can also be thrown out by their parents, as they are merely 'licensees' in the family home. Young people who leave home due to 'push' factors tend to do so at an early age and are more likely to lack the skills and resources required to successfully set up a home. Some of these young people will not be able to secure their own accommodation and will become homeless. Eighty per cent of young people assisted by Centrepoin have left home due to 'push' factors.<sup>12</sup>

### **Family conflict**

Evidence shows that family conflict is the main precipitating factor leading to homelessness among under-18s, and is sometimes associated with physical or sexual abuse. It is estimated, that for at least two thirds and possibly up to 90 per cent of homeless young people, conflict with their families was the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Smith, J., Which youth became homeless in the UK? Changes and persistences in the biographical and social risks among 16–25 year olds, University of Cambridge, 2004

<sup>11</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Young Homeless People, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000

<sup>12</sup> Centrepoin: <http://www.centrepoin.org.uk>

<sup>13</sup> Randall, G. and Brown, S., Trouble at Home: Family conflict, young people and homelessness, Crisis, 2001

Family conflict includes:

- Disputes with parents and step-parents: one study found that two thirds of young people with housing problems came from households where the parents' relationship had ended or where a new partner had moved into the family home.<sup>14</sup>
- Parents' behaviour: this includes drug and alcohol abuse, violence and neglect. A study showed that two thirds of young people reported that their parents' behaviour was a major reason for them becoming homeless.<sup>15</sup> Another study concluded that 86 per cent of all homeless young people had been forced to leave home following violence, abuse, family breakdown, poverty and being 'thrown out'.<sup>16</sup>
- Conflict with the rest of the family: it has been suggested that homeless young people commonly have a range of other problems, including drug and alcohol abuse, violence in and outside the home, mental health problems, criminal activity, and problems at school. However, it is difficult to disentangle the extent to which they are causes of, or caused by, conflicts within the family.<sup>17</sup>

The most common characteristic of the majority of young homeless people is that their parents have low incomes. Poverty makes it more difficult to resolve family conflicts. It can also be a direct cause of disputes, because it can be harder for parents to support their children and they may need financial contributions from them. Child Benefit is not paid for 16- and 17-year-olds who are not in full-time education. This age group is unable to claim benefits. One study found one in 10 homeless young people reported problems to do with money, including rent contribution, as a reason for leaving home.<sup>18</sup>

## How many young people are homeless?

Homelessness among young people has been a major social problem over the last two decades. There are no accurate national statistics to measure the extent of youth homelessness as there is no requirement on any statutory agency to identify the scale of the problem. Also, young homeless people, like other homeless groups, tend to be mobile and not always visible to services. This further exacerbates existing problems with quantifying the number of homeless people.

There are statistics available relating to the number of households that approach local authorities and are helped under the homelessness legislation. For more details on these figures see the [Housing and homelessness factsheet](#). However,

---

<sup>14</sup> Smith J. et al., The family background of homeless young people, Family Policy Studies Centre, 1998

<sup>15</sup> Smith, J. and Bruegel, I: Taking Risks: An analysis of the risks of homelessness for young people in London, Safe in the City, 1999

<sup>16</sup> Nassor IAA et al., 'The new picture of homelessness in Britain', Youth Affairs Briefing, Centrepoint, 1996

<sup>17</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Young Homeless People, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000

<sup>18</sup> Randall, G. and Brown, S., Trouble at Home: Family conflict, young people and homelessness, New Solutions series, Crisis, 2001

these statistics do not provide an absolute measure of all instances of homelessness, particularly as many young people are reluctant to approach statutory agencies because they think they won't get a good service. The other nationally gathered statistics are those that estimate the number of people sleeping on the streets on any one given night.

There are many local samples that identify the extent of youth homelessness in particular areas. Although only localised studies, these indicate that the extent of youth homelessness each year is likely to be much greater than the official homelessness figures provided by local authorities.

### **Local authority statistics**

In 2004/05, 10,560 homeless young people were accepted by local authorities as having a priority for rehousing due to their age. However, this number is likely to underestimate the number of young people rehoused by local authorities. This is because some young people would be regarded as having a priority need for reasons other than their age, eg due to mental or physical health problems or having children of their own. This figure also excludes those who are found to be homeless but have no priority for housing. Further details on these figures are available from the [Housing and homelessness factsheet](#).

The number of homeless young people accepted by local authorities for rehousing because they are vulnerable due to their age rose from 5,800 in 2001/02 to 10,560 in 2004/05, an increase of over 80 per cent. This is largely due to the changes in priority need categories introduced as part of the Homelessness Act 2002 (for more information see page 12, or visit the Homelessness Act website at <http://www.homelessnessact.org.uk/>).

### **Street homelessness**

A report by the Social Exclusion Unit on rough sleeping in 1998 found very few under-18s sleeping rough, while 25 per cent of rough sleepers were aged 18 to 25 years.<sup>19</sup> During 2004/05 a total of 3,112 people were contacted on the streets by London outreach teams, and 223 of these were aged between 16 and 24.<sup>20</sup>

### **Young people approaching Shelter**

During the financial year 2004/05, 15,360 young people under the age of 25 approached Shelter's Housing Aid Centres for help with housing difficulties. Of these, 25 per cent were either sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough.

### **Other evidence of homelessness**

Shelter has also collated information on youth homelessness from organisations in Merseyside since 1995. Our 'multi-agency monitoring' system showed that, in 2004, nearly 3,400 young people approached one of the participating agencies

---

<sup>19</sup> Social Exclusion Unit report: Rough Sleeping, July 1998

<sup>20</sup> Data provided by Combined Homelessness And Information Network (CHAIN).

with serious housing problems. Half of these young people were already homeless and over 40 per cent were under 18 years old.<sup>21</sup>

## Who is most at risk?

Many of the causes of homelessness described above, such as unemployment, shortage of housing, and family problems, affect young people across the spectrum. However, there are some young people who are more at risk of becoming homeless.

### Care leavers

Around 8,500 16- to 18-year-olds leave care every year. Care leavers have to learn to live independently at a younger age than most other young people.<sup>22</sup> There are a variety of reasons that make care leavers more vulnerable to becoming homeless. Children often enter the care system as a result of the breakdown of their birth family. Some will have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or neglect. For this reason, care leavers often lack the emotional and practical support from families that other young people can rely on. Even if a high level of support is provided by social services during the leaving care period, it is likely to be limited in the longer term. Research has shown that up to 20 per cent of those in care experience homelessness within two years of leaving.<sup>23</sup> Between a quarter and a third of all people sleeping on the streets have spent time as children being 'looked after' by local authorities.<sup>24</sup> Care leavers have lower rates of educational attainment or participation in further education after the age of 16. They also have higher levels of unemployment and welfare benefits dependency.<sup>25</sup>

### Runaways

Running away is closely linked to family breakdown, and the term is generally used to refer to children and young people under the age of 16. It is estimated that about 77,000 children and young people run away every year.<sup>26</sup> The majority of young people who run away have experienced family conflicts, and children in care often run away because they are not happy in their care placement. Running away is a common experience of young people who go on to become homeless in the long term.<sup>27</sup> A quarter of young people who run away end up sleeping rough and one in 14 survive through stealing, begging, drug dealing or prostitution.<sup>28</sup> Over 30 per

---

<sup>21</sup> Multi-agency monitoring in Merseyside, Briefing paper, Shelter Young Persons Team, 2004

<sup>22</sup> Stein, M. and Wade, J., *Helping Care Leavers: Problems and strategic responses*, Department of Health, 2000

<sup>23</sup> Biehal et al., *Moving On: Young People and Leaving Care Schemes*, London, HMSO, 1995

<sup>24</sup> Social Exclusion Unit: *Rough Sleeping*, London, 1998

<sup>25</sup> Smith, J., *Which youth became homeless in the UK? Changes and persistences in the biographical and social risks among 16–25 year olds*, University of Cambridge, 2004

<sup>26</sup> Social Exclusion Unit: *Young Runaways*, London, 2002

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Social Exclusion Unit: *Young Runaways*, London, 2002

cent of young people helped by Centrepoin have run away from home by the age of 16.<sup>29</sup>

### Young offenders

There is a strong link between offending and homelessness. Many studies show that an involvement with the criminal justice system can lead to housing problems for young people.<sup>30</sup> Housing is increasingly being recognised as a serious issue for juvenile prisoners leaving custody.<sup>31</sup> Research suggests that secure accommodation on release can reduce re-offending by over 20 per cent.

Homelessness can also lead to offending, and young people are more likely to offend if they have multiple problems and/or have been homeless for a prolonged period. The National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders has expressed concerns that young offenders develop a chronic cyclical and repeating pattern of homelessness, offending and prison.<sup>32</sup>

Research found that up to 1,000 young people per year are remanded in custody, or in other secure centres, due to the lack of suitable accommodation for them, at a cost of £5 million. Furthermore, Youth Offending teams estimate that over 8,000 young people receive custodial sentences because their housing is unsuitable, at a cost of £16 million.<sup>33</sup>

### Black and minority ethnic (BME) young people

BME households are over-represented among England's homeless population. Fifty-seven per cent of young people assisted by Centrepoin are from BME origin, while BME people make up seven per cent of the population in England.

Research into BME homelessness in Scotland found that breakdown in existing relationships seemed to be a common contributory factor. This included deterioration or breakdown in relationships between older and younger members of extended families, and was sometimes exacerbated by overcrowding.<sup>34</sup>

BME households are more than six times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions than white households. A study found that overcrowding was one of the risk factors that can lead to young people becoming homeless. Young people who have to share a room by the age of 12 are three times more likely to become homeless.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Centrepoin: <http://www.centrepoin.org.uk>

<sup>30</sup> Ravenhill and Sutherland, 2000; Randall and Brown, 1999; Smith, Gilford and O'Sullivan, 1998; Dane 1998; Ravenhill1999

<sup>31</sup> Social Exclusion Unit: Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners, London, 2002

<sup>32</sup> Evans, A., We don't choose to be homeless, Report of the National Inquiry into Preventing Youth Homelessness, CHAR, 1996

<sup>33</sup> Youth Justice Board: Sustainable Accommodation: A strategy for the provision of suitable and sustainable accommodation for young offenders and young people at risk of offending, 2005

<sup>34</sup> Scottish Ethnic Minorities Research Unit/Heriot Watt University: Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and Homelessness in Scotland, Scottish Executive Social Research, 2004

<sup>35</sup> Safe in the City: Taking Risks: An analysis of the risks of homelessness for young people in

BME people appear less likely to be homeless on the street and therefore tend to be less visible. Young BME homeless people are also less likely to sleep rough and more likely to stay with friends and relatives.<sup>36</sup>

### **Young refugees and asylum seekers**

Asylum-seeking children who come to Britain as 'unaccompanied minors' (ie without adult family members) are the responsibility of social services until they reach the age of 18. At this point, all responsibility for them ends and all contact with the agency ceases. They are then likely to be dispersed to another part of the country, often to be placed in poor or substandard housing. They may undergo several moves while waiting for a decision on their asylum application.

Centrepoint has reported that about one in four of the young people staying in its hostels are asylum seekers who have been allowed to stay in the UK on a temporary basis or have refugee status, nearly three times the number it recorded five years ago.<sup>37</sup>

### **Young people in rural areas**

Many rural areas suffer a lack of affordable housing caused by a proportionately smaller social housing stock and the demand for housing from other groups, such as commuters, retired households and second home-owners.

While some young people may consider moving to urban centres as a choice, evidence suggests that rural homelessness may lead to people having to move to towns and cities to find accommodation.<sup>38</sup> A survey found that 40 per cent of rural districts had no emergency accommodation at all for young people and 70 per cent of rural local authorities use bed and breakfast accommodation to house young homeless people.<sup>39</sup>

## **Impact of homelessness on young people**

Homelessness can have a detrimental impact on young people, with long-term implications for their education, employment prospects and health, and can lead to an escalation of substance abuse.

### **Education and training**

Young homeless people face great difficulties accessing and completing training courses. For those moving from one temporary home to another or sleeping rough,

---

London, 1999

<sup>36</sup> ODPM, Housing and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities: Review of the evidence base, London, 2003

<sup>37</sup> Centrepoint Statistics, 2004

<sup>38</sup> The Rural Development Commission: Young People and Housing in Rural Areas, 1997

<sup>39</sup> Centrepoint and The Countryside Agency: Rural Affairs Briefing 2002, Youth Homelessness and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas, 2002

it is nearly impossible to maintain training or education programmes because their time is spent finding somewhere to sleep.

'I'm still in college and I'm looking to go to university. I haven't been to college for four weeks now because I'm not settled yet. I need somewhere settled before I go back. I walk the streets most of the day. My intention is to stay in school to fix my life...'<sup>40</sup>

A study found that 16- and 17-year-olds are unable to continue with their education when placed in bed and breakfast accommodation far away from their local communities. Others fail their exams and coursework because they have nowhere to study.<sup>41</sup>

## **Employment**

Many homeless young people have their employment prospects adversely affected by an extensive history of insecure accommodation. Furthermore, many homeless young people lack information on job availability, as well as experiencing discrimination from employers.<sup>42</sup>

For those living in hostels, the high level of rent, paid by Housing Benefit, acts as a major disincentive.<sup>43</sup> Because Housing Benefit tapers off as income rises, every additional pound earned through work yields as little as 10 pence in real income. Effectively, this means that moving off benefits can actually increase the risk of poverty and debt.

## **Substance misuse**

Research found that becoming homeless can lead to an escalation of drug use, in some cases. About 20 per cent of young people reported that they began to use drugs after they became homeless, predominantly because it was the first time they were exposed to them. Some young people who had previously used drugs reported that they have used a greater variety of drugs since becoming homeless.

Substance misuse linked with homelessness can lead to begging and offending. Research found that 95 per cent of young people have committed an offence at some point in their lives. Of those, a quarter linked offences with alcohol use and half with drug use, and one third related offences to homelessness.<sup>44</sup>

## **Health**

Homelessness has detrimental effects on both physical and mental health. There is substantial evidence suggesting that young homeless people are particularly

---

<sup>40</sup> Smith, J., Hidden Statistics: The Other Young People Sleeping Rough in London, Centrepoint, London, 2000

<sup>41</sup> Centrepoint: Bed and Breakfast: unfit housing for young people, London, 2005

<sup>42</sup> Randall, G. et al, Ending exclusion: employment and training schemes for homeless young people, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Wincup, E. et al., Youth homelessness and substance use: report to the drugs and alcohol research unit, Home Office, London, 2003

vulnerable to poor physical and mental health; and risk-taking behaviour such as self-neglect, self-harm, suicide, and substance use.<sup>45</sup> Young homeless people are more likely to experience a variety of medical problems, such as infectious diseases and nutritional disorders. This is more evident among those young people who sleep rough, who may also have little money, a poor diet, and a lack of access to health services. A study found that 16- and 17-year-olds placed in bed and breakfast accommodation experience difficulties in accessing health care services.<sup>46</sup>

Homelessness can have a negative impact on young people's mental health. Evidence shows that depression and anxiety are the most commonly reported mental health disorders among young people.<sup>47</sup> Another study found 70 per cent of young homeless people had been diagnosed with depression or other mental health disorders, or had concerns about their mental health.<sup>48</sup>

## Financial

The wider financial impact of youth homelessness can be substantial, and increases the longer a young person remains homeless. For example, costs are incurred through extra policing and increased health and social services provision.

## The legal framework and other initiatives for tackling and preventing homelessness

### Homelessness Act 2002

In 2002, the homelessness legislation was amended to extend the groups of homeless people with a priority need of accommodation to include:

- 16- and 17-year-olds
- care leavers aged between 18 and 20
- those who are vulnerable as a result of having been in care, the armed forces or prison, or as a result of fleeing violence or threat of violence.

The Homelessness Act also requires local authorities to carry out a homelessness review and produce a homelessness strategy every five years.

---

<sup>45</sup> Mental Health Foundation: The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Children and Young People, Updates, Volume 3, Issue 22, August, 2002

<sup>46</sup> Centrepont, Bed and Breakfast: unfit housing for young people, London, 2005

<sup>47</sup> Graig, TKJ, et al., Off to a bad start: a longitudinal study of homeless people in London, The Mental Health Foundation, 1999

<sup>48</sup> Wincup, E. et al., Youth homelessness and substance use: report to the drugs and alcohol research unit, Home Office, London, 2003

### **The Children Act 1989**

Under the Children Act 1989, social services departments have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their areas. The Act requires accommodation to be provided for people:

- under the age of 17 who are the subject to a care order
- aged 16 or 17 whether or not they have previously been in care, if their welfare is likely to be 'seriously prejudiced'.

### **The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000**

This Act amends and supplements the Children Act 1989 and places a clear duty on social services to financially support and meet the housing needs/costs of care leavers until their eighteenth birthday, and to maintain contact with them thereafter.

The Act is one of a range of initiatives designed to improve the life chances of people in the care system. It aims to ensure that care leavers are given greater help to prevent them from becoming homeless, by helping them to gain employment and take advantage of educational and other opportunities.

### **Supporting People**

The Supporting People programme provides housing-related support to a wide variety of people in particular circumstances.<sup>49</sup>

Groups helped under this scheme include young homeless people, people with mental health problems or disabilities, women fleeing domestic violence, and people with learning disabilities. The programme requires that housing and social services departments have to work in partnership with their health department and probation services to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people.

### **Mediation schemes**

Mediation schemes aim to solve conflict when two parties disagree with each other and need someone to help them to solve their problems. Many local authority housing departments are now offering mediation to those approaching them as homeless following relationship breakdown. They particularly target homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.

### **Connexions**

Connexions was established in 2001 to help all young people aged between 13 and 19, with a particular focus on those at risk of receiving no education, employment or training, or being socially excluded. Connexions also forges partnerships with local careers advice, youth work, and housing advice agencies to

---

<sup>49</sup> ODPM, Supporting People: key findings from the Supporting People baseline user survey, London, 2005

create a tailor-made support service, where each young person is allocated a personal adviser.

## New Deal

New Deal offers education and training to unemployed people aged 18 to 24 who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for six months or more. Homeless people, who are at great disadvantage in the labour market, are one of the target groups of this initiative.<sup>50</sup>

## Shelter's work

We help 100,000 people in housing need each year, through our Housing Aid Centres and practical projects, and via our free housing advice helpline. We campaign for new laws and policies – as well as more investment – to improve the lives of homeless and badly housed people, now and in the future. As a leading expert on housing in Britain, we develop practical solutions to address the housing crisis. We also work in conjunction with the housing sector, to promote good practice, publish reports, and provide professional training.

### Shelter's work specifically with young people includes the following:

- The Young Persons Team, which is part of the Good Practice Unit, acts as a centre of expertise on youth issues. It works with local authorities countrywide to improve policy and provision as well as developing educational materials and training packages for professionals working with young people.
- The Ricochet Project provides housing advice, advocacy and support for young people. It also specialises in getting people who have approached the project to go into schools and colleges to talk about their housing problems. Through its experience with clients and agencies, the project is campaigning to influence statutory service providers to minimise the cause of homelessness.
- The Gloucestershire Young Peoples Housing Advice Service provides advice, advocacy, and support to single people aged 16 to 25 in housing need. The service assists young people who are homeless or planning a move. It provides help with landlord/tenant issues, harassment, illegal eviction, housing conditions, rent, benefits, and accessing specialist support services.
- The Vodafone UK Foundation is supporting Shelter's work with and for young people, enabling Shelter to provide young people with the housing advice they need at the time they need it. The programme of work includes:
  - a new online advice website and email service offering in-depth practical and legal advice on a range of housing problems, <http://www.shelter.org.uk/knowyourrights>
  - an awareness campaign that targets students and vulnerable young people

---

<sup>50</sup> Centrepont: Tackling Youth Homelessness in Gateshead, London, 2003

- good practice guides, reports, and training for professionals working with young people.

This factsheet was produced by Shelter. Written by Rita Diaz 2005.

© 2005 Shelter. All rights reserved. This document is only for your personal, non-commercial use. You may not copy, reproduce, republish, post, distribute, transmit or modify it in any way. This document contains information and policies that were correct at the time of publication.

Shelter  
88 Old Street  
London EC1V 9HU  
Telephone: 0845 458 4590  
Textphone: 020 7505 1170

Registered charity number 263710  
Registered company number 1038733