

Young & Homeless 2014

Our annual Young & Homeless report explores the reasons young people become homeless, the support available to them, and areas that need to be improved.

YOUNG AND HOMELESS 2014

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PRODUCED BY

Policy Team

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We would like to thank the National Youth Reference Group, and our interviewees for giving up their time to help with this report. We are also grateful to the local authorities and homelessness providers who responded to the survey, and in particular St Basil's, Centrepont, Riverside, Chapter 1 and YMCA London. The research is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

KEY FINDINGS

Young homeless people are arguably one of the most vulnerable groups in society and continue to make up over half of clients who access and receive support from homelessness services in England. Whilst the number of 16 to 24 year olds accepted as homeless by local authorities has steadily decreased since 2006, there has been a recent rise in the number of 18 to 20 care leavers accepted as homeless. Without adequate support, homelessness can significantly affect young people's lives, as they are more likely to become homeless again when they are older and face greater difficulties finding work.

Homeless Link carried out this research to explore the scale of youth homelessness, the provision of homelessness prevention and support services, and the accommodation options young people have at the point of crisis and longer term move on. The research is based on two surveys administered to providers of homelessness services and local authorities in September 2014, as well as twelve interviews with young homeless people at homelessness services.

Our key findings include the following:

- Half of areas have a positive pathway or model outlining how agencies should work together to help prevent youth homelessness and provide suitable support and accommodation for those who do become homeless.
- Most areas also have joint working protocols between Housing and Children's Services (88%) to target those at risk, although the efficacy of relationships could be improved.
- Almost one in five (19%) young people approaching local authorities have their homelessness prevented or relieved.
- Local authorities have increased their access to prevention initiatives, with more than nine out of ten (92%) now carrying out home visits. However, more needs to be done. Four out of ten (40%) local authorities believe that they do not have adequate prevention tools to deal with youth homelessness in their area, and nearly a quarter (23%) do not have access to mediation services. Education work in schools and other youth settings has also decreased slightly (66% down to 62%).
- Some groups are more at risk of becoming homeless than others; 13% of homeless young people are offenders and 11% are care leavers.
- Youth homelessness most commonly occurs when young people can no longer stay in the family home (36% of cases). This is usually the result of relationship breakdown.
- There is a lack of suitable emergency accommodation for young people, with half of councils using B&Bs to house young people often or occasionally. Frequent B&B use is more common in areas where the availability of emergency accommodation has decreased or is not available.
- Nearly three quarters (74%) had to turn young people away in August. The most common reasons were the client's needs being too high or due to limited capacity. More young people

are approaching homelessness organisations and their needs are more complex, so investment in services must continue.

- Around a fifth of respondents report that young people leaving supported accommodation most commonly go into the private rented sector. However, this can be difficult to access due to landlords' reluctance to rent to young people on benefits, and welfare reform limiting affordability and availability. Although many local authorities have schemes in place to help young people access private rented accommodation, the proportion with available schemes is lower than last year (the availability of rent deposit or cashless bond scheme).
- Young people are being adversely affected by sanctions, and the impact of benefit reductions and overcrowding are being increasingly felt. Work should be done to make sure that hardship and the risk of homelessness is not increased by welfare reform and sanctions.

YOUNG AND HOMELESS 2014

KEY FINDINGS

Our annual youth homelessness report looks at the needs and experiences of young homeless people and asks what services are doing to support them.

Based on surveys with 211 local authorities and providers, and interviews with young people these are the main findings from our 2014 report.

What did we learn about...

...PREVENTION?

13% of homeless young people are **offenders** and 11% are **care leavers**



Conciliation and mediation are the best means of preventing homelessness



Four in ten councils have inadequate access to **prevention tools** in their area

Fewer young people are approaching the council for support, but **more** are approaching providers

...young people IN CRISIS?

Not being able to stay in the family home is the most common cause of homelessness - usually due to **relationship breakdown**



Benefit reductions and overcrowding are contributing more to youth homelessness



Half of councils put young people in **B&Bs often or occasionally**

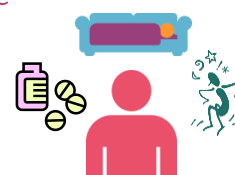
7/10 providers sometimes **turn young people away**, often because their needs are too high

...SUPPORTING young people?

Many young people are not in **employment, education or training**



6/10 young people have **complex needs**; half of services think needs are now more complex



More than half of providers reported that **external youth provision has decreased**

Homelessness organisations have **increased the support** they offer compared to last year

...HOUSING?

Young people often require **ongoing support** as they move towards independence



Councils have access to **fewer schemes** to help young people access housing



The extension of the Shared Accommodation rate, caps on Local Housing Allowance and difficulties accessing local welfare assistance are making **access to housing difficult**

INTRODUCTION

Background

Young homeless people are arguably one of the most vulnerable groups in society and continue to make up a significant proportion of clients who access and receive support from homelessness services in England. Over half (53%) of people using homeless accommodation projects are aged under-25¹. Whilst the number of 16 to 24 year olds accepted as homeless by local authorities has steadily decreased since 2006², there has been a recent rise in the number of 18 to 20 care leavers accepted as homeless³. It is also very difficult to capture the total number of young people who are homeless. Many young people fall outside the official figures as they stay temporarily with friends and family or sleep rough.

Without adequate support, homelessness can significantly affect young people's lives. Young homeless people are more likely to become homeless again when they are older⁴, and also face greater difficulties finding work as homelessness can disrupt their engagement with education, training and employment⁵. Preventing youth homelessness is key and there is an increasing recognition that young people who are supported to remain with their immediate family, or other family members, have better outcomes than young people who end up homeless. For many young people the response they need is some time and space away from immediate family pressures followed by advice and mediation support to encourage a planned return.

The type of accommodation available to young people, both emergency and long term, can also have a lasting impact. The range of accommodations options available for young people continues to be affected by economic growth, and by social and political changes including recent welfare reform. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on young people's housing options found that three groups of young people are increasingly marginalised within the housing system: those who are vulnerable due to their support needs, those on low incomes, and young families⁶.

This has been echoed by the recent attention given to accommodation provision for young people by a number of parliamentary inquiries. The All Party Parliamentary Group for the private rented sector (PRS) recently looked at access to the PRS for under-35s in recognition that this is increasingly one of

¹ Homeless Link (2014) Support for Single Homeless People in England Annual Review 2014

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Support%20for%20Single%20Homeless%20People.pdf>

² Table 781 Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by age of applicant England, 2006 to 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/358205/Table_781.xls

³ Detailed local authority level responses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

⁴ Research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that 34% of homeless people with the most complex problems had run away from home at least one night when they were young, while 16% had been part of a family that had experienced homelessness or spent time in local authority care: McDonagh, T., 'Tackling homelessness and exclusion: Understanding complex lives', Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2011): <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/homelessness-exclusion-services-summary.pdf>

⁵ Copps, J. and Keen, S., 'Getting back on track: helping young people not in education, employment or training in England', New Philanthropy Capital (2009): http://www.depauluk.org/_uploads/documents/getting-back-on-track-npc-report-on-neets.pdf

⁶ Clapham, D., Mackie, P. Orford, S., Buckley, K., Thomas, I. with Atherton, I and McAnulty, U. 'Housing options and solutions for young people in 2020' (2012) Joseph Rowntree Foundation http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-housing-options-full_0.pdf

the few options available to young people⁷. The report calls for greater support for young people who want to rent in the PRS including a full review of the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR)⁸ rules. Attention has also been drawn to the accommodation outcomes and needs of care leavers. The Education Select Committee invited evidence on the current accommodation provision and suitability of looked after 16 and 17 year olds⁹. Among the recommendations is an outright ban on the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation for care leavers which continues to be used by local authorities. Research by Barnardo's found that 51% of local authorities in England place care leavers in B&Bs for 28 days or more¹⁰.

Young people have been disproportionately affected by the economic recession, with continuing high levels of youth unemployment and slow economic growth. The lack of affordable and suitable housing options for young people and cuts in spending on youth services¹¹ places additional pressures on families and young people and on available opportunities for housing and employment. Contributing to the housing situation are some of the government's recent welfare reforms. Extending the Shared Accommodation Rate to people under-35 and changes to the sanction regime in the welfare system has had a disproportionate impact on young people. Research by Homeless Link in 2013 found that nearly 60% of survey respondents said half or more of their young clients (under-25) claiming JSA had been sanctioned¹² and in London only 5% of shared properties were affordable for people on the Shared Accommodation Rate¹³.

There has been recognition in the UK for several years of the need for a whole systems approach that focuses on prevention as well as emergency level responses¹⁴. Despite economic pressures, services working with young people experiencing homelessness continue to innovate and find new ways of offering support. Some investment has been made this year in the provision of support for hard to help young people experiencing homelessness using a payment by results approach funded through Social Impact Bonds. The joint Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Cabinet Office Fair Chance Fund has provided £15 million to support very vulnerable homeless young people in England — who would otherwise be likely to fall through the net of current service provision because of their complex needs — into sustained housing, education and work. The Department of Health (DH) and DCLG have also announced their intention for a capital funding programme in 2015/16 for a new type of transitional shared accommodation for young people with low support needs linked to their participation in work or training. The 'Platform for Life' programme aims to provide time limited accommodation for young people who want to work or study, but are prevented from doing so by homelessness or unsuitable housing. Yet despite this capital investment there continues to be

⁷ All Party Parliamentary Group for the Private Rented Sector (2014) Access to Private Rented Housing for Under the Under 35s: Report and oral evidence http://rla.org.uk/policyhub/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Under-35s-Inquiry-Report_Oct14.pdf

⁸ The Shared Accommodation rate refers to the amount of housing benefit a young person is entitled to when renting a room in a shared house in the private sector. The SAR has recently been extended from under-25s to under-35s.

⁹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/259/25902.htm>

¹⁰ Education Committee (2014) Second Report, Into Independence, not out of care: 16 plus care options http://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/Barnardos_goes_undercover_to_investigate_accomodation_of_children_leaving_care/latest-news.htm?ref=98637

¹¹ Unison (2012) The UK's youth services: how cuts are removing opportunities for young people and damaging their lives <https://www.unison.org.uk/upload/sharepoint/On%20line%20Catalogue/22532.pdf>

¹² <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/A%20High%20Cost%20to%20Pay%20Sept%202013.pdf>

¹³ Homeless Link (2013), *Nowhere to Move* http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attached-downloads/No%20Where%20To%20Move_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ Gaetz, S, (2014) Coming of Age Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/ComingOfAgeHH_0.pdf

increasing pressure on local authorities' budgets in providing homelessness prevention services and housing related support.

Our fourth annual report on youth homelessness focuses on young people accessing both local authorities and voluntary sector providers. It explores the main issues young people are facing, the provision of homelessness prevention and support services, the accommodation options young people have at the point of crisis, and longer term move on from homelessness services.

The research is based on two surveys of providers of homelessness services and local authorities, and interviews with young homeless people at homelessness services¹⁵. Discussions were also undertaken with six members of the National Youth Reference Group (NYRG)¹⁶ who provided feedback and recommendations on the findings. The full methodology is available in appendix one.

What is the Positive Pathway?

This year's report presents the findings within the framework of the Positive Pathway model¹⁷ to help illustrate the different elements of support which are involved in supporting young people at risk of homelessness.

The Positive Pathway brings together evidence of good practice and 'what works' in youth homelessness to develop a pathway outlining how agencies should work together in an integrated way to prevent youth homelessness wherever possible, and support young people who are unable to remain in the family home. The pathway focuses not only on accommodation but on the range of needs young people require support with, in order to avoid becoming homeless or to move out of homelessness.

Although routes into and out of homelessness are not linear, the pathway reflects the typical route that many young people take. This initially entails being 'at risk' where associated problems such as truancy and tensions at home manifest. Young people may then reach crisis point when homelessness occurs, followed by their experiences of homelessness and various types of accommodation. If successfully supported, young people may then move forward into more independent living, or be able to return to the family home. The pathway provides a blueprint for how services should work together as young people navigate this journey, but variations of the pathway may exist in many areas. What is critical is an agreed strategy on prevention and provision at a local level, with the appropriate access to services required to operationalise the pathway. The pathway consists of eight steps outlined on page 9.

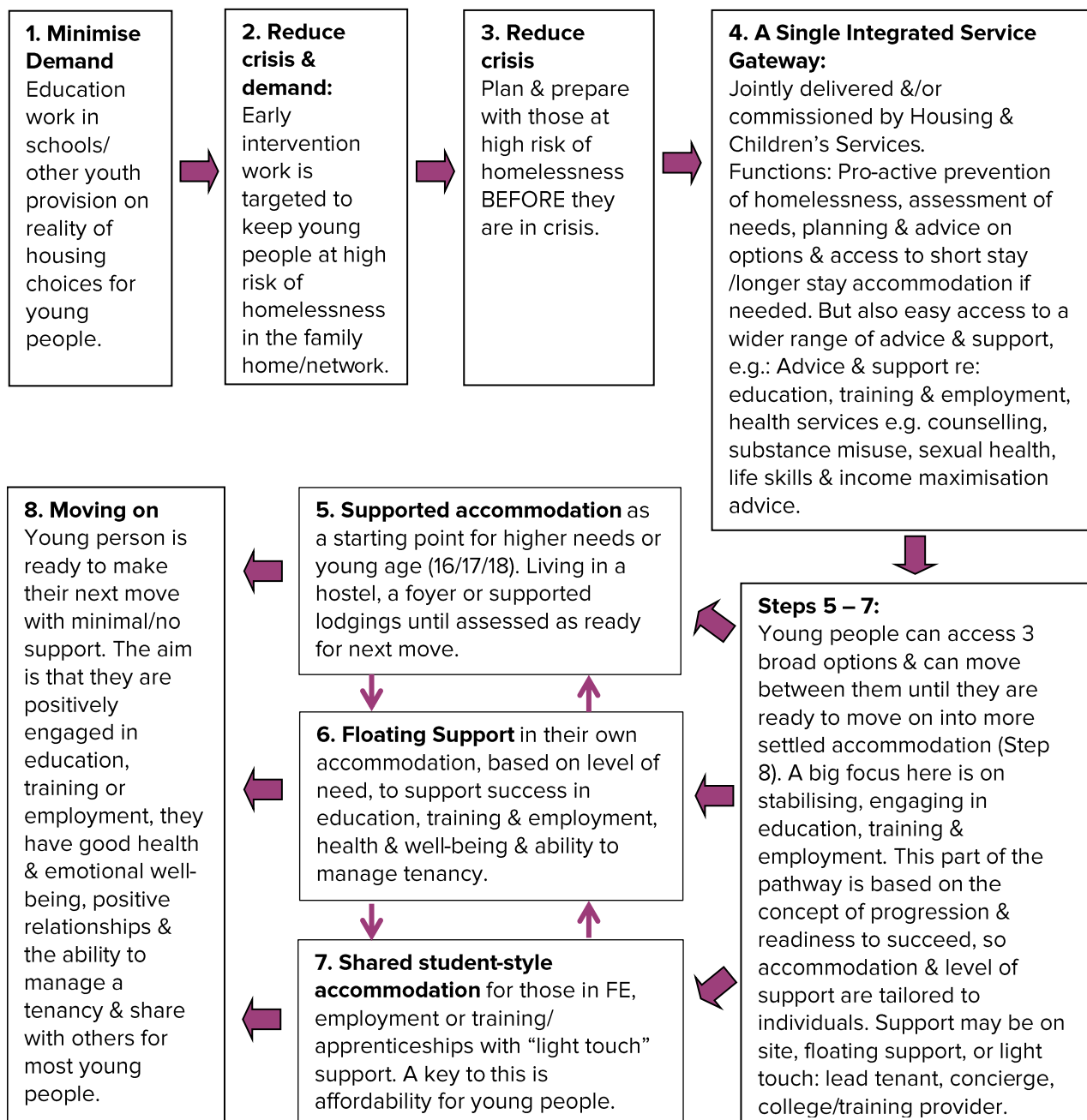
The fourth annual youth homelessness research attempts to capture the support that young people actually receive from homelessness services and local authorities as they navigate their journey, and look at the ways in which support can be improved.

¹⁵ 12 young people who had experienced homelessness were interviewed as part of the research.

¹⁶ The National Youth Reference Group is made up of young people aged 16 to 25 from across England who are homeless or have experienced homelessness. The group exists to assist national and local government, and homeless organisations, to develop and improve their involvement opportunities for young people.

¹⁷ The Positive Pathway' is the result of research and consultations undertaken with charities, organisations and young people by St Basils and Homeless Link in 2012. See <http://www.stbasils.org.uk/how-we-help/positive-pathway/>

The Positive Pathway



Methodology

This is the fourth consecutive year of the Young and Homeless report. The findings are based on two online surveys conducted with local authority housing departments and voluntary sector homelessness providers.

In total, we received 211 usable responses from both surveys; this consisted of 116 usable responses from providers of homelessness services and 95 usable responses from local authorities. This represents response rates of 25% and 30% respectively. Twelve interviews were conducted with young people from four homelessness services who have experienced homelessness. For the full methodology and limitations of the data please see appendices one and two.

FINDINGS

CHAPTER 1: BEING AT RISK

Education and early intervention are key to preventing homelessness:

- Some groups are more at risk than others — 13% of young people experiencing homelessness are young offenders and 11% are care leavers.
- Education in schools and other youth provision has been cut by 4% compared to last year (66% down to 62%).
- There is a positive pathway model or approach in half of areas.
- Housing and Children's Services are working together to target those at risk in most areas (88%), and 97% have a protocol in place between Housing and Children's Services for 16 and 17 year olds. But relationships could be improved; only 11% of local authorities described the relationship as 'very effective'.
- Local authorities have increased access to prevention initiatives, although four in ten (40%) feel they do not have adequate prevention tools to meet demand in their area.
- Local authorities reported preventing or relieving homelessness for 19% of the young people who presented as homeless, or approached them for advice and support in August 2014. Conciliation and mediation are most effective in preventing homelessness.
- Statutory youth homelessness appears to be decreasing (74% of local authorities reporting a decline or no change), but more young people are approaching voluntary sector homelessness organisations for help (45% of providers report an increase in the numbers of young people approaching them).

Ending youth homelessness is a commitment pledged by numerous agencies and organisations that work with and for the young and homeless. Achieving this goal starts with action early on to try and reduce the risk of homelessness, including education that informs young people about the realities of homelessness at a young age; and a range of early intervention and targeted support for young people at risk of homelessness, before they reach crisis point. Although individual cases vary significantly, there are a number of known early risk factors. These include truancy, substance misuse and offending. Schools, social services and other agencies have responsibility for identifying young people who may be at risk and working with them and their families to prevent situations leading to homelessness wherever possible.

This year's findings provide an updated picture of the prevention activity provided at a local level to those young people in housing need.

Raising awareness of homelessness

From the survey, 62% of local authorities reported that education in schools or other youth provision in their area forms part of their prevention work. This was down from 66% last year. In interviews, the majority of the young people reported that they had known very little or nothing about homelessness prior to their own experiences. Several young people reported that they hadn't known that places like their current accommodation existed and didn't know where to go for support when they first became homeless. Young people who did know about providers tended to be linked in with other services, for example youth offending, or have friends who had been in similar situations. Young people confirmed that education in this area is important:

Knowing where to go to get support would have really helped as the only place I knew was social services and they rejected me.

Client 5, service 4

Identifying those at risk

Although homelessness can happen to anyone at any time, certain groups of young people are more at risk. Understanding the backgrounds and demographics of young homeless people is important for knowing where to target prevention efforts, and as an indication of the kinds of support young people need.

Our research shows that during the month of August 2014, 52% of people approaching local authorities or providers for help with homelessness were under the age of 25 (Table 1). The proportion was higher among providers (59%) who responded to the provider survey.

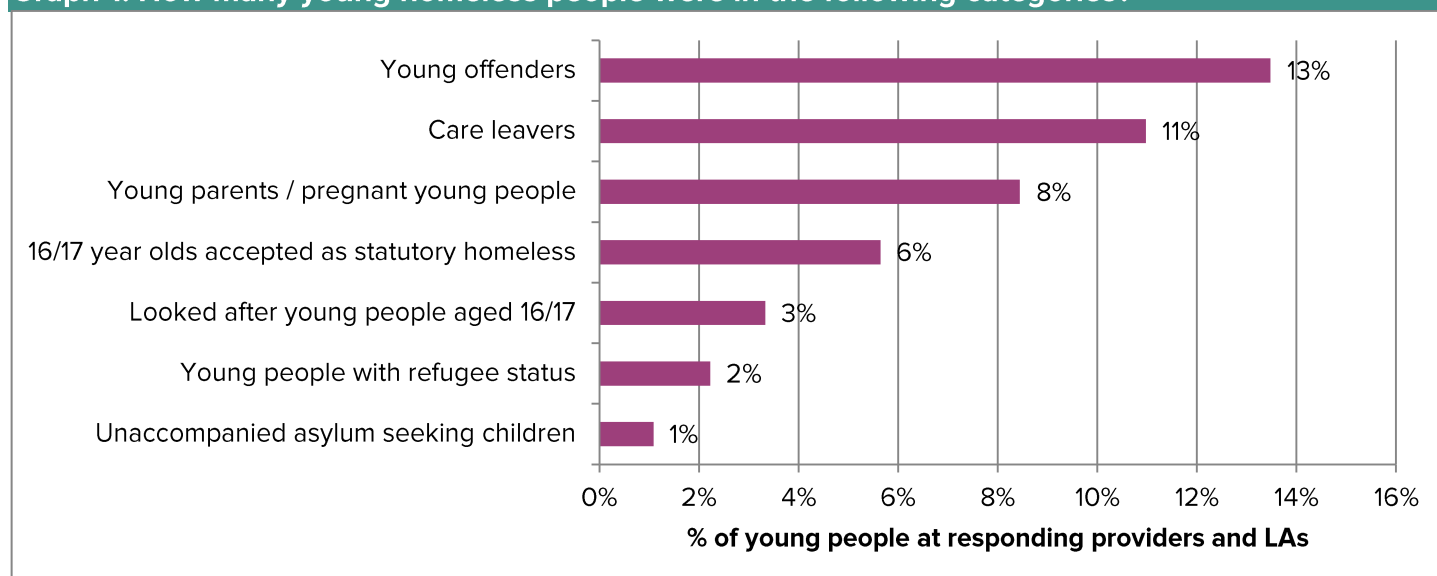
Table 1: Number of young people approaching services in August 2014

	Local authorities	Providers	All
Total number of clients	2,617	8,059	10,676
Number of young people	824 (31%)	4,754 (59%)	5,578 (52%)
N (number of respondents)	80	101	180

Of the total number of young people who approached local authorities or providers for help with homelessness during August 2014, 13% were young offenders and 11% were care leavers (Graph 1). Providers saw a higher proportion of young people in these groups. However, these proportions are lower than last year and show an increase in the number of non-care leavers approaching services.

For the first time both surveys asked local authorities and providers about young parents and pregnant young people; 8% belonged to this category. Young parents/pregnant young people were more likely to approach their local authority than a provider (27% of young people approaching their local authority). As young people with custody of their children have an increased likelihood of being eligible for support from their local authority this helps to explain the disparity.

Graph 1: How many young homeless people were in the following categories?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=108; LAs: N=74

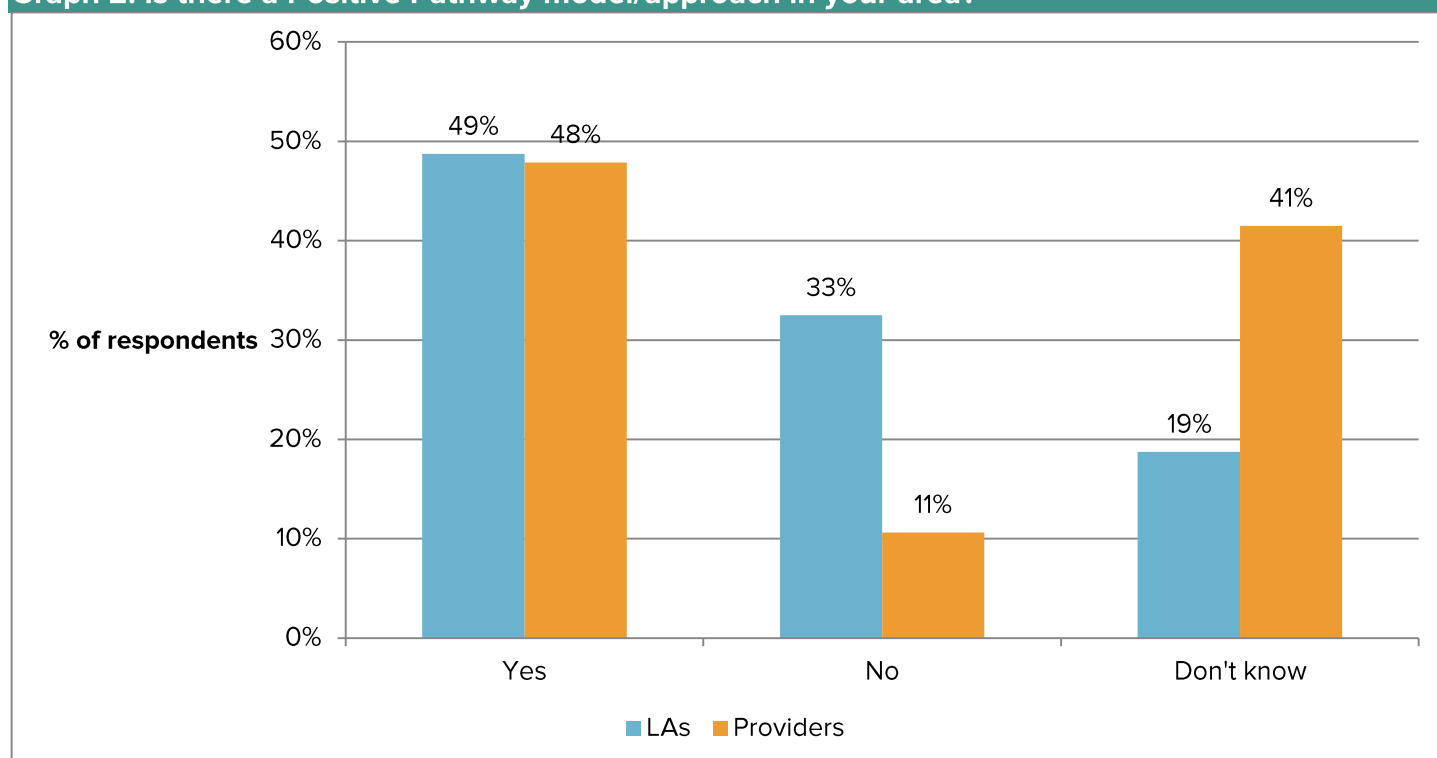
The most common age group among young people approaching local authorities and providers for help was '18-24 year old non-care leavers' (63% of young people). According to the provider survey, 40% of young people accessing homelessness organisations were female. This is higher than the proportion generally found among homeless people in all age groups, with research putting the figure at about 30%¹⁸ or 27%¹⁹.

Supporting those at risk

Working together

Appropriate prevention and provision of services to tackle youth homelessness depends on agencies working together in an integrated way to deliver an agreed model or pathway. Nearly half of all survey respondents reported that there is a positive pathway model or approach in their area (Graph 2). A third (33%) of local authority respondents said that there is not a pathway, with a large proportion of providers being unsure (41%).

Graph 2: Is there a Positive Pathway model/approach in your area?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=93; LAs: N=79

A key aspect of the Positive Pathway is joint-working/commissioning between Housing and Children's Services to provide a 'single integrated service gateway' to offer young people assessment, advice and access to accommodation. This follows from the *G v Southwark* judgment in 2009 which clarified that the Children Act 1989 takes precedence over duties under homelessness legislation in the case of homeless 16- and 17- year olds as they are still children.

¹⁸ Homeless Link (2014) Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2014

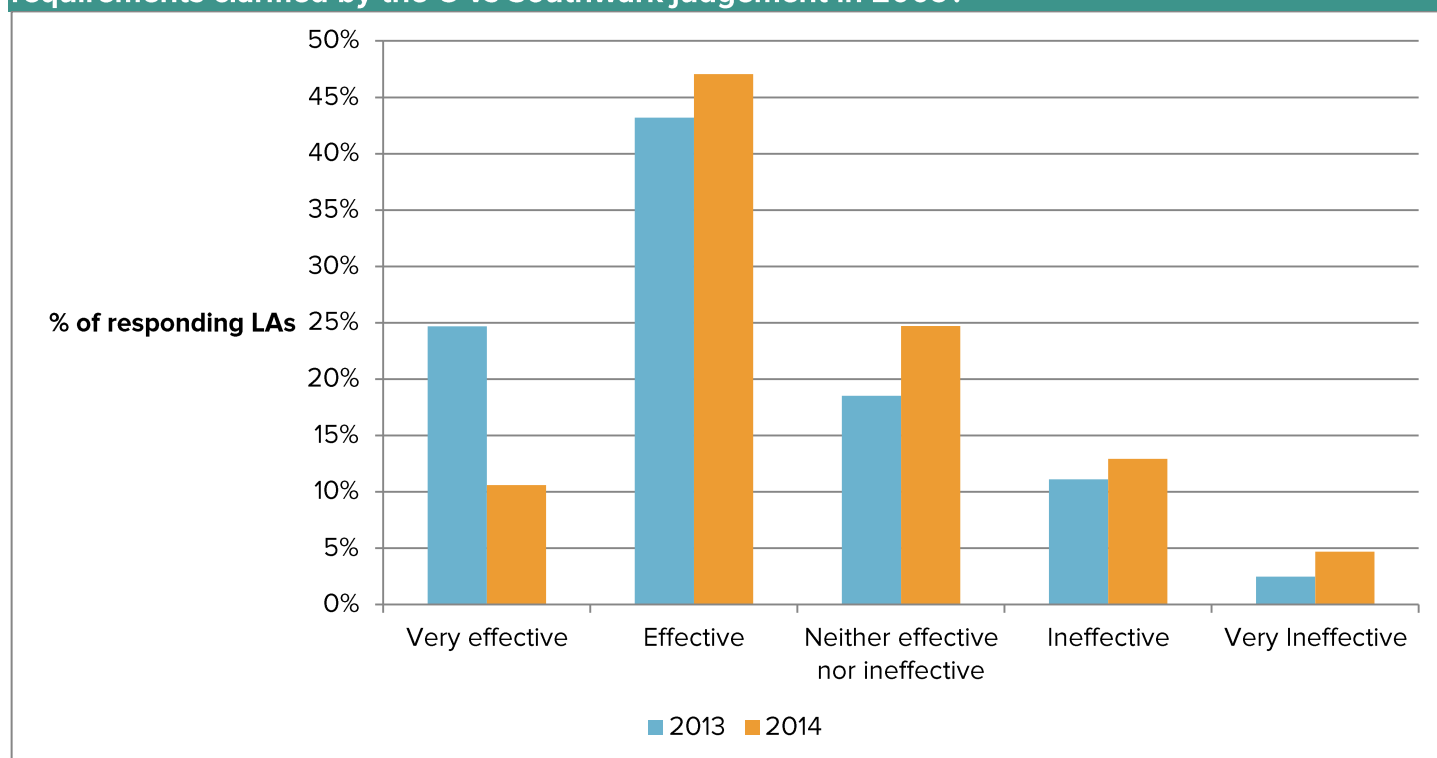
<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Support%20for%20Single%20Homeless%20People.pdf>

¹⁹ http://www.mungosbroadway.org.uk/homelessness/facts/homelessness_statistics

The survey asked local authorities about joint working between Children's Services and Housing to target young people under-18 and care leavers where they are identified as being at risk of homelessness. Eighty-eight percent of local authorities reported that they have this in place, up from 80% last year. Most local authorities (97%) also have a protocol in place between Housing and Children's Services for the joint assessment of 16- and 17- year olds.

Although joint working relationships are being established, the survey results indicate these need some improvement, with local authorities expressing relatively negative views compared to last year's survey. Only 11% of local authorities described the relationship in their area as 'very effective', down from 25% last year (Graph 3). A quarter (25%) described the relationship as 'neither effective nor ineffective' compared to 19% last year. While Housing and Children's Services clearly recognise the need to work together, the quality of the working relationship requires further development.

Graph 3: How effective is joint working between Housing and Children's Services in meeting the requirements clarified by the G vs Southwark judgement in 2009?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=85
Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2013: LAs: N=83

Local authority survey respondents gave a number of examples where working with Children's Services was proving challenging:

- 'Children and Young People's Services have a panel that make it very difficult for 16 & 17 year olds who are homeless to go down the section 20 route'
- 'Social Care rarely accept s20 duty plus other issues with the protocol for 16-17 year olds'
- 'Child in Need assessments are not always clearly followed through'
- Children's Services 'refuse to accept responsibility'
- 'Children and Young People's Services' service fails to acknowledge G v Southwark'

More encouragingly, some examples were offered of how relationships between Housing and Children's Services had been improved:

[There has been] excellent progress on integrated working between Children's Services and Housing Services. Local steering group with representation at strategic manager level from Children's Services and Housing Services provides quarterly monitoring around numbers and outcomes for young people. Action plan to improve the positive accommodation pathway for young people is monitored and successes and issues are highlighted at director level at Programme Board meetings.

LA survey respondent

A respondent to the provider survey highlighted the need for related organisations, such as those in the homelessness sector, to be made aware of new protocols, pathways and agreements:

Locally there is a Youth Homeless Protocol, which as far as I am aware has been agreed between the borough councils and the Children's Team at the County Council. It is a working document between themselves and despite requesting it, we have not seen it. It seems that we are a referral option for this as more statutory organisations are contacting us now.

Staff member – homelessness service

Types of prevention

Many local authorities carry out prevention work to help young people avoid homelessness where possible, or have their homelessness relieved.²⁰ This can include cases where a young person is at risk, or where a statutory duty is not owed. According to the local authority survey, local authorities saw 2,094 young people in August 2014 who presented for advice and support. Similar to those who presented as homeless, the largest age group was 18-24 non-care leavers (70%), with care leavers comprising 9% of this group. Very few young people under the age of 16 approached their local authority housing department (n=10), reflecting the responsibility of Children's Services to support this age group.

Local authorities use various initiatives to prevent youth homelessness including family mediation, education and advice on accommodation options. Some local authorities have policies which aim to support young people from groups that are considered at risk:

Team around the child mediation and casework meetings delivered by third sector organisation [are] contracted to run jointly commissioned service for young people at risk.

LA survey respondent

Other approaches adopt an early-warning system which aims to capture anyone who may be at risk:

We have an early warning protocol which involves housing options officer early when problems arise so that an effort can be made to prevent homelessness.

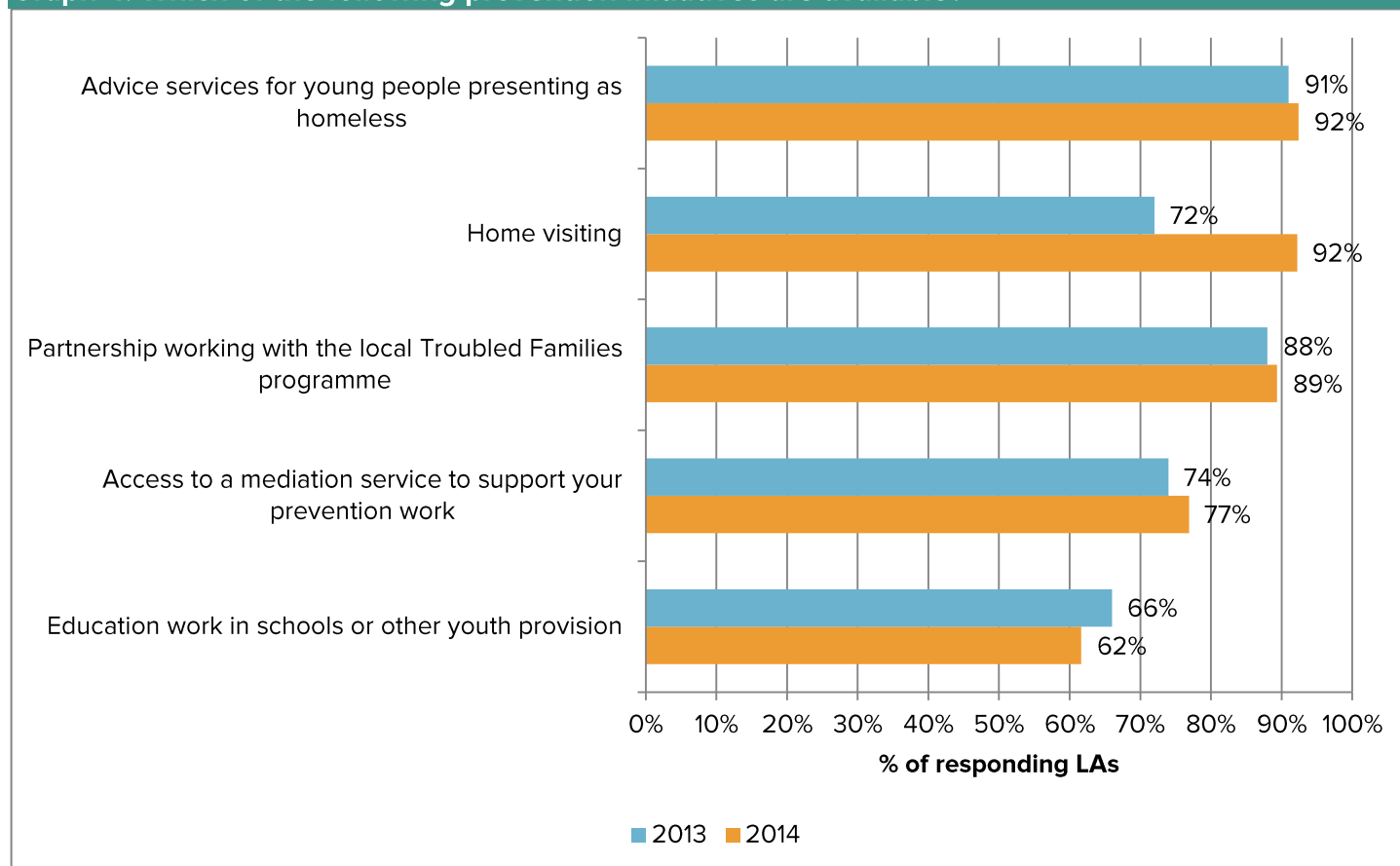
LA survey respondent

²⁰ Prevention occurs when someone avoids homelessness and is assisted to obtain alternative accommodation or to remain in their existing home. Relief occurs when the authority is unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation even though they are under no obligation to do so.

Despite the importance of prevention work, 40% of local authorities reported that they did not have an adequate range of prevention services in their area to meet the needs of young people at risk of homelessness, up from 35% last year. Many local authorities (73%) felt that in the last year there had been no change in the availability of prevention services they are able to provide, with 14% reporting a decrease.

However, the local authority survey showed that there were slight increases in the availability of some types of prevention initiatives compared to findings from last year's survey (Graph 4). The largest increase was seen in home visiting, up 20% from 72% to 92%. Access to mediation services have been increasing slightly in recent years (71% in 2012; 74% in 2013; 77% in 2014). However, nearly one quarter (23%) of local authorities still do not have access to mediation services.

Graph 4: Which of the following prevention initiatives are available?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=79

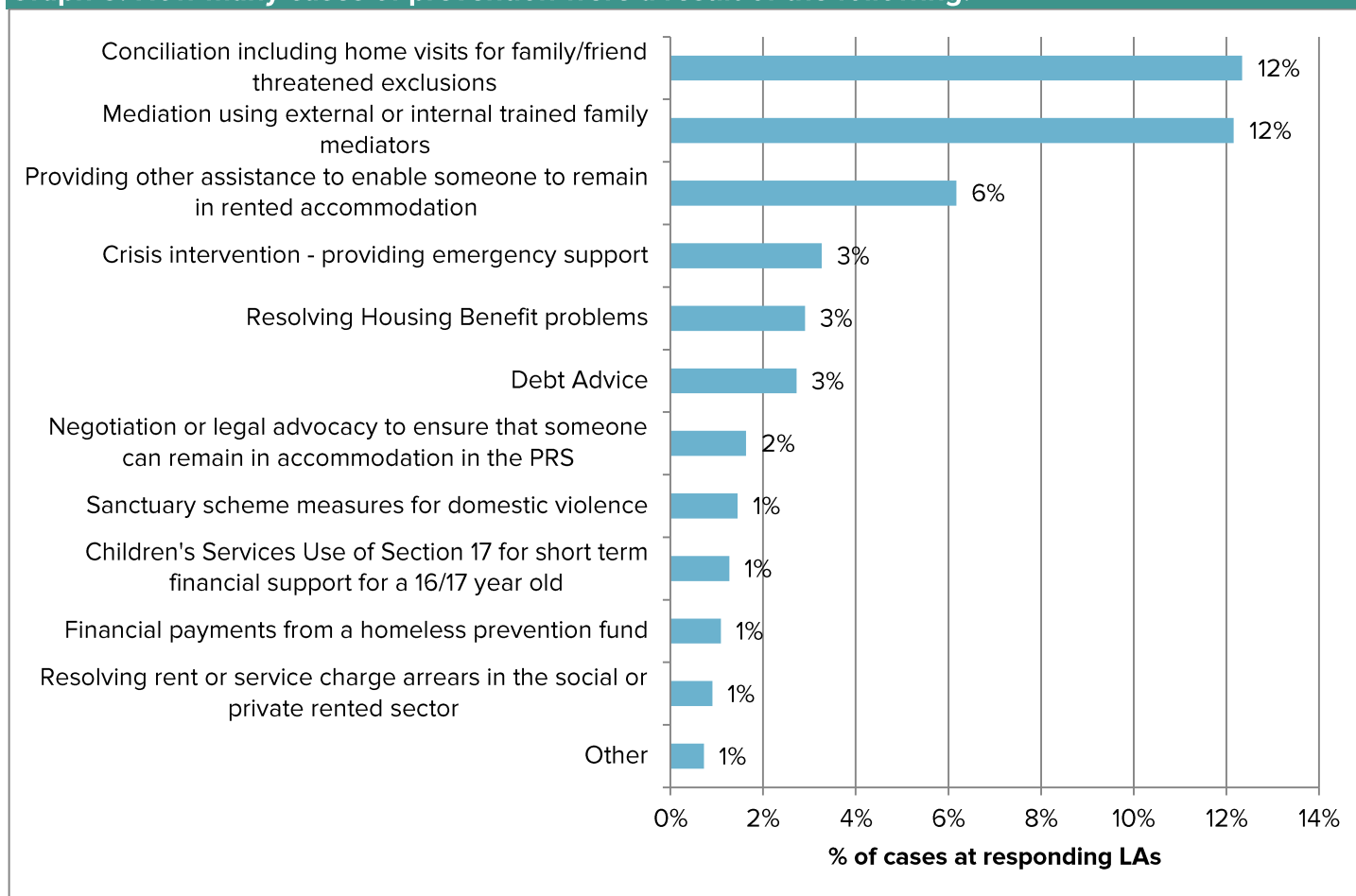
Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2013: LAs: N=80

Is prevention working?

Prevention work in the housing sector

Local Authority respondents reported preventing or relieving homelessness for 19% of the young people who presented as homeless, or approached them for advice and support in August 2014. The most successful prevention initiatives involved activities which helped young people to remain in the family home, such as conciliation (12% of cases) and professional mediation (12% of cases) (Graph 5).

Graph 5: How many cases of prevention were a result of the following:



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=60

Early intervention work, including targeting schools, was cited by local authority survey respondents as work that has made a positive difference to youth homelessness in their area. In particular, respondents reported positive outcomes from providing housing advice at the earliest stage possible, and 'Early Help Referrals' for young people under 19 years old facing eviction from the family home.

One indication of whether prevention efforts are working is data on whether the number of young people becoming homeless is changing. Unfortunately, there is limited data on this (see Appendix 2). Findings from the local authority survey indicate a decline, with three-quarters of local authorities reporting that the numbers of young people they saw in August 2014 had either decreased or shown no change compared to last year. Statutory figures for England tell a similar story, with the number and proportion of acceptances for households headed by a 16-24 year old declining in recent years (Table 2). The same applies to households which were accepted due to the household member being aged 16/17 or a care leaver aged 18-20 (although 18-20 care leavers considered as a separate category shows an increase²¹). The decline is at odds with more general rises in statutory homelessness observed until recently.

²¹ Detailed local authority level responses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

Table 2: Statutory homelessness acceptances for young people

	Total number of households accepted	<i>of which:</i>	
		16-24 year olds	Household member vulnerable due to young person (16/17 year olds and 18-20 care leavers)
2014 Q2	13,140	3,380 (26%)	320 (2%)
2013 Q2	13,470	3,840 (28%)	380 (3%)
2012 Q2	12,890	4,260 (33%)	440 (3%)
2011 Q2	11,820	4,240 (36%)	530 (4%)
2010 Q2	10,100	3,700 (37%)	490 (5%)

Source: DCLG, Tables 773 and 781, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

One interpretation of the findings is that fewer young people are becoming homeless, perhaps as a consequence of the prevention work carried out by local authorities. In some areas, effective joint working and agreed referral processes are reducing the number of formal homelessness applications which are being made:

We work very closely with Children's Services under a county joint protocol. This ensures that anyone under-18 presenting has a full assessment via Social Care. Giving preference to those who are homeless at 16/17 or after leaving care, for our supported projects means that we rarely take formal homeless applications from anyone in this group.

LA survey respondent

LA [is] to become referral gateway to services where possible and providers asked to work to outcomes and discuss with the LA whether young people remain in accommodation after an allotted period of time.

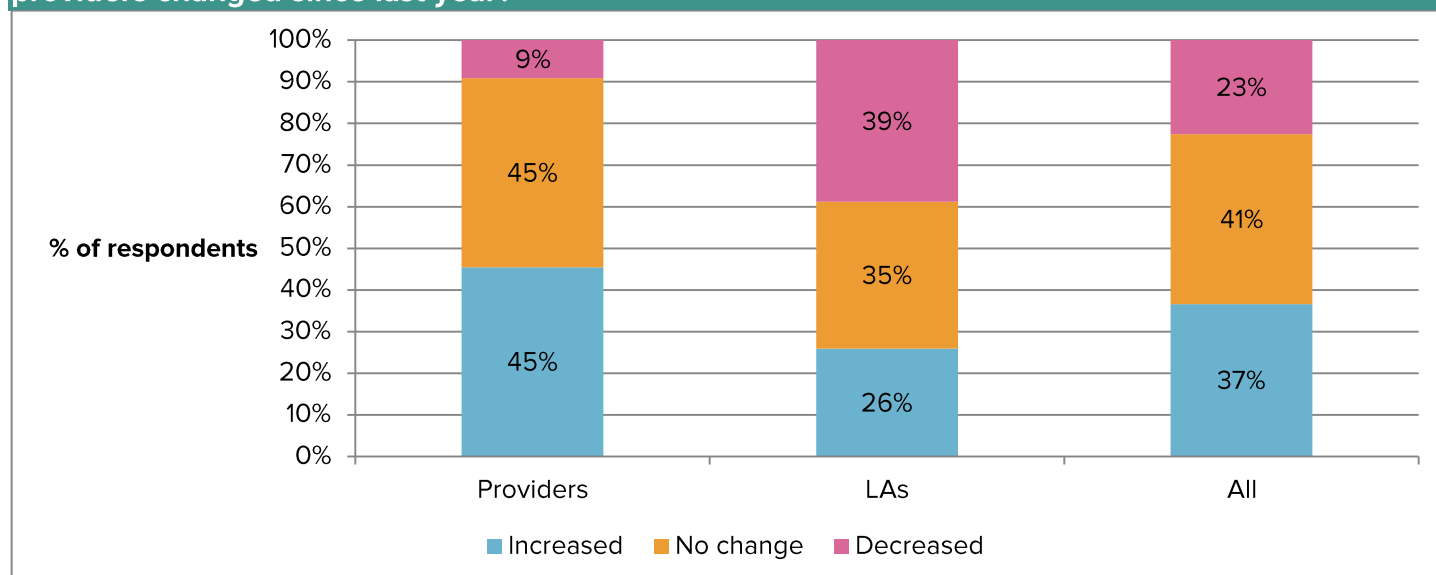
LA survey respondent

Conversely, proving homelessness can be difficult for young people and it is also possible that some homeless young people are being turned away by local authorities without an adequate assessment. Recent research by Crisis using mystery shoppers found evidence of gatekeeping; young people (played by actors) were turned away by local authorities without being offered an interview, information or assistance if they could not prove they were homeless, or even without being asked about the circumstances that had led to them becoming homeless²². Young people from the National Youth Reference Group also gave examples of being thrown out of home by their parents but being unable to prove to the local authority that they were homeless. They explained that some parents will not admit to throwing out their child, particularly if they are concerned about the custody of younger children being affected, but nevertheless will not allow the young person back into the family home.

In contrast to local authorities, 45% of providers reported an increase in the number of young people approaching their service compared to last year, with a further 45% reporting no change. Despite prevention efforts it is apparent that many young people are still becoming homeless, and in some areas this may be increasing.

²² Dobie, S., Sanders, B. and Teixeira, L. (2014) Turned away: The treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England, Crisis. http://community.crisis.org.uk/file/policy---document-upload-or-download/MysteryShopping_Report_FINAL_web.pdf

Graph 6: How has the number of young homeless people approaching local authorities and providers changed since last year?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=99; LAs: N=86

Prevention work in other sectors

A large part of prevention work depends on support from agencies outside the homelessness sector, including education, training and employment, health services, counselling, substance misuse, sexual health, life skills and income maximisation advice (Step 4 of the Positive Pathway). In interviews, many young people²³ spoke about being linked in with other organisations such as Connexions, Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI), mental health and counselling services.

Conversely, some young people spoke about difficulties accessing support due to long waiting lists, notably for mental health support such as counselling and psychiatric services. The following example is from a young person with mental health problems and drug use.

Rebecca's story

Rebecca reported feeling that she was 'different' to others at the age of eight, and although she got on with her family she wasn't able to talk to them about how she felt. When she was 16 she started taking drugs, mostly cocaine and ketamine, and this developed into a habit. At age 20 she had an interview with a mental health facility but they sent her away because she was deemed insufficiently high risk. As a consequence she overdosed in order to be able to access the support that she felt she needed. She was sectioned as a result of her overdose, saying that she had to do something stupid in order to be recognised and get help. After she left the mental health facility she returned home but for the immediate two weeks after leaving she wasn't allocated a mental health worker. During that period her mental health began to deteriorate again and she became psychotic, couldn't sleep, suffered panic attacks and would ring the police for help. She went back to the mental health facility but they wouldn't take her back. During a psychotic episode she went to Cambridge where she slept rough. When she returned from Cambridge she was allocated a mental health worker and was supported to make an application with the homelessness organisation and was accepted. She reported that she had previously made an application but had been unsuccessful.

²³ Based on twelve interviews with young people who have experienced homelessness

Some young people also reported some negative experiences of using social services. Examples included being turned away, having numerous social workers with no consistency in care, and not being offered protection from an abusive parent. If other services fail to support young people then the risk of homelessness increases, as well as the risk of increases in their support needs. One interviewee reported that he was vulnerable and self-harmed but states that the situation needed to reach crisis point before anything was done:

Either get sectioned or arrested before you get noticed, it had to be me on a bridge before I was taken seriously.

Client 3, Service 4

CHAPTER 2: REACHING CRISIS POINT

When young people reach crisis point they need support and access to appropriate emergency accommodation:

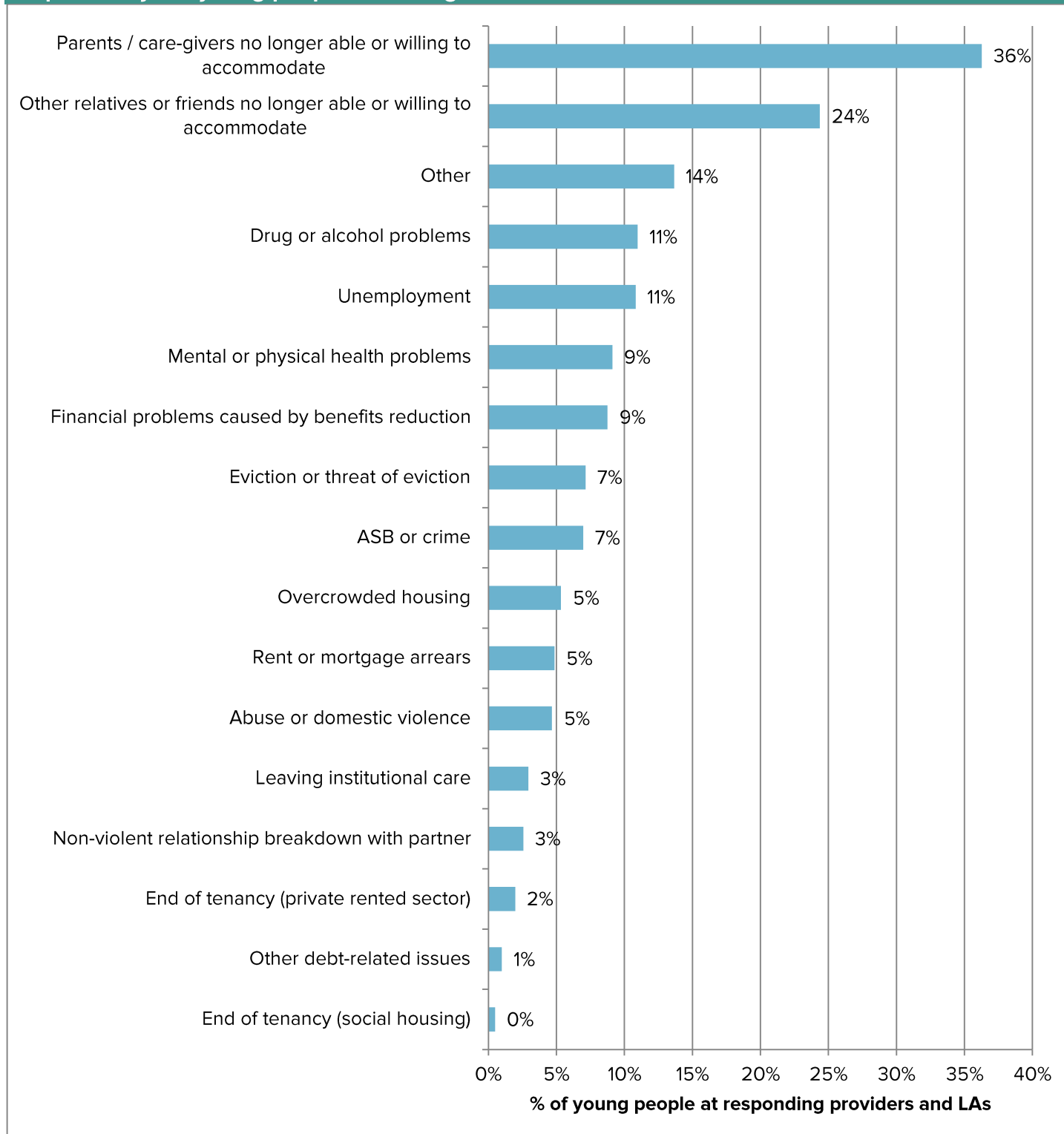
- The most common reason for becoming homeless is because young people can no longer stay in the family home (36% of cases) — usually because of relationship breakdown.
- Benefit reductions and overcrowding are contributing more to youth homelessness than previously. Providers reported that homelessness caused by financial problems due to benefit reduction has increased from 1.7% to 10% and overcrowding has also doubled.
- Sanctions continue to be a significant issue for young people. Eight out of ten respondents think young people are affected by sanctions ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a bit’.
- B&B continues to be used by local authorities to accommodate young people in emergencies. Half of local authorities reported using it frequently or occasionally. This is more frequent in areas where other types of emergency provision are not available.
- More than seven out of ten (73%) providers had to turn young people away at some point during August, most commonly because the client’s needs were too high (63%), or the service lacked capacity (56%).

Although certain groups are overrepresented among the young homeless population, not all members of these groups will become homeless. There are a range of personal, interpersonal and structural factors that can lead to, or contribute towards, youth homelessness. These include breakdown in family relationships, substance misuse, mental health problems and financial difficulties. It is often the interplay of factors rather than one or two triggers that can result in young people reaching crisis point.

Why are young people becoming homeless?

Previous research has shown that the most common reason for young people becoming homeless is due to their parents or main care-givers being either unable, or unwilling, to accommodate them. Our surveys show that this continues to be the case, with respondents from the two surveys reporting that this was a factor for 36% of young people.

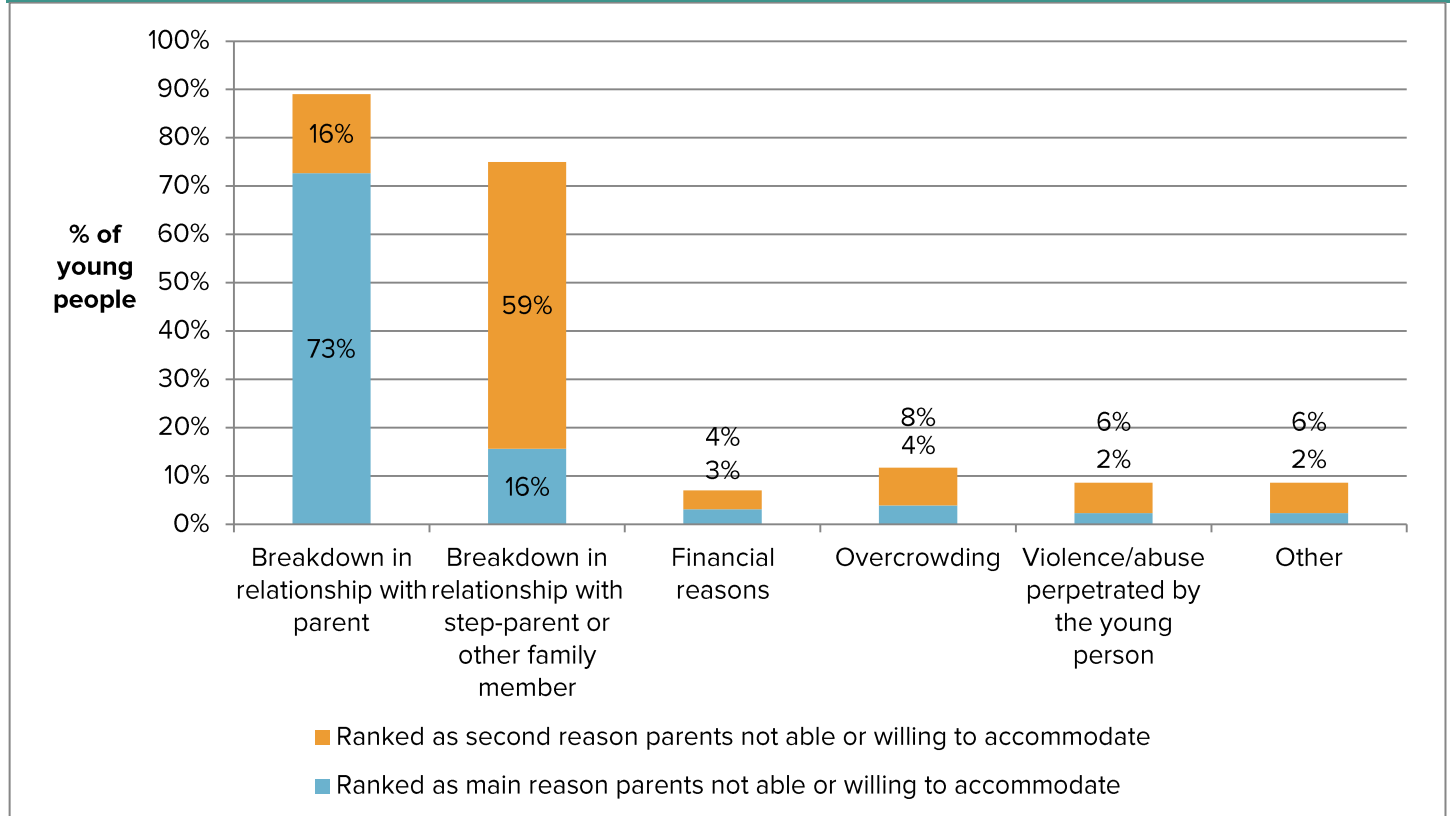
Graph 7: Why are young people becoming homeless?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=92; LAs: N=70

In more than seven out of ten cases (73%), a breakdown in relationship was the main reason for parents or carers being unwilling or unable to accommodate young people (Graph 7). Relationship problems with step-parents or other family members are also a common factor. These findings are consistent with findings from our previous youth homelessness surveys.

Graph 8: What were the main reasons for parents/carers not able to accommodate young people?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=76; LAs: N=52

Interviews with young people revealed that relationship breakdown with parents and family could be triggered by various problems including arguments, mental health problems, drug use and truancy. From young people's accounts, it was apparent that the deterioration in relationships often tended to happen over time rather than being the consequence of a single row, and that attempts had often been made to reconcile without success. In most cases, young people felt that their parent(s) were not able to help them with their problems and that they needed support from elsewhere.

Hannah's story

Hannah grew up with her mum, dad and sister. When she was ten her father, whom she was very close to, passed away. She subsequently developed anger management issues and had a strained relationship with her mother, resenting her for her father dying. She argued frequently with her mother and over time their relationship deteriorated further, with arguments resulting in pushing and shoving. The problems led to her falling behind on her coursework at college as she wasn't able to work at home and she eventually dropped the course. In time her mother found a new partner and had another child, resulting in the house being overcrowded. When things got too much she and her mother agreed she needed to move out. She applied for a place with her current accommodation provider, had an interview within a couple of days and was offered a place.

Staff at the organisation helped her work on rebuilding her relationship with her mother, which she was able to start a couple of months after leaving home. She also had emotional well-being support to help with her anger issues, as well as other forms of training and skills. She reported that she and her mother rarely argue now; 'Since moving out we have built a relationship so it is better'. She has also improved in confidence, has part-time work and is now planning to move into a flat with her boyfriend.

Other young people reported similar improvements in their relationships with family after leaving home. Even in cases where family breakdown may not have been the main trigger for leaving, the tensions caused by other issues were more easily resolved with distance between the young person and their family:

Ever since I've been here, it's been a lot easier to communicate with my family ... I came here because I needed help away from my home, and I had mental health issues that I needed help with ... If I was at my parents I wouldn't feel like I could move on. It doesn't really get lonely because there are always people around here. I wasn't homeless but I wasn't sleeping at my house, and I couldn't stay at my house. My parents would have me stay there but I couldn't be there. I was wielding a knife at my little brother ... I had to go.

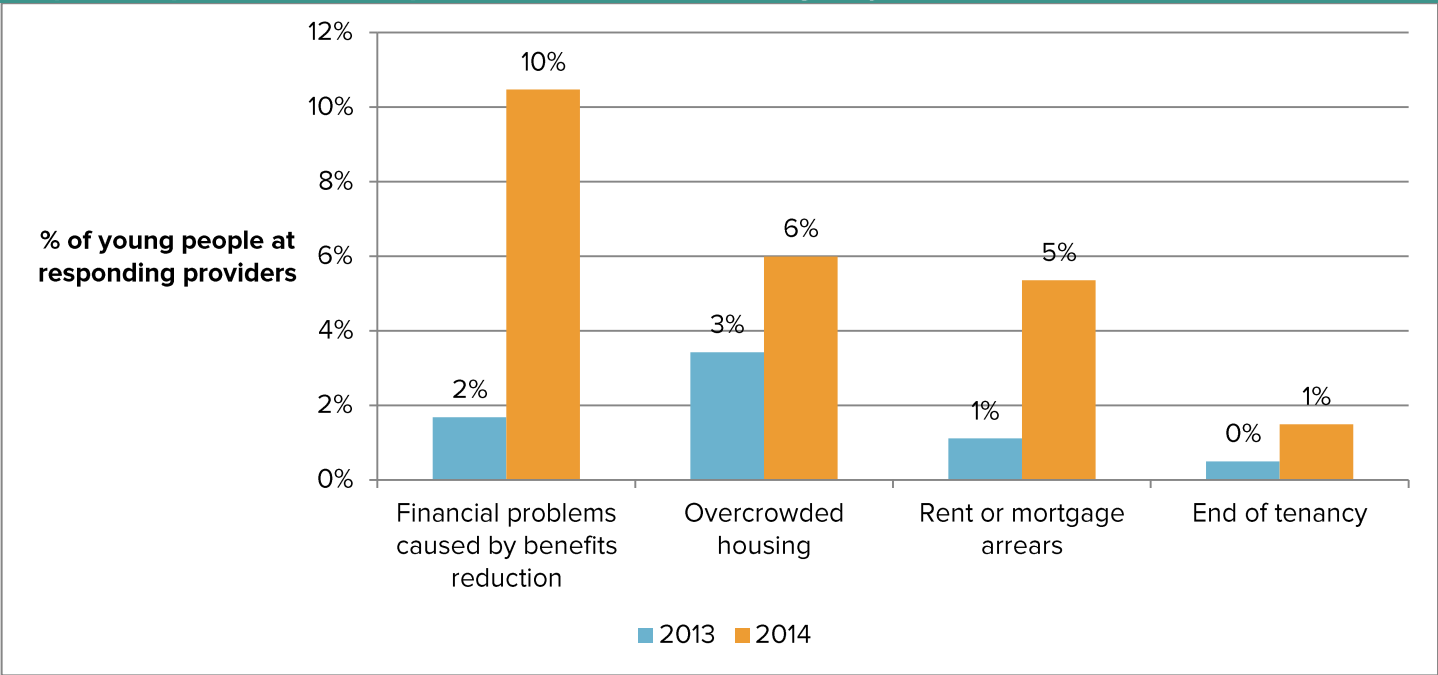
Client 2, service 1

Compared to previous years, the findings of the provider survey suggest that the structural factors that contribute to youth homelessness may be increasing. Respondents reported that homelessness caused by financial problems due to benefit reduction increased from 1.7% to 10% and overcrowding also doubled from 3% to 6% (Graph 9). For the first time the survey asked about unemployment and findings from both surveys showed that unemployment contributed to homelessness in one in ten cases (11%) and was as significant as drug or alcohol use. In some cases these issues are linked to family breakdown and this highlights the interplay of factors alluded to previously; interpersonal relationship difficulties may arise from young people's behaviour or from structural factors such as unemployment, and vice versa:

We are seeing an increase in the amount of young people presenting themselves as homeless especially in regard to the breakdown of relationships at home, overcrowding and parents not being able to support the young person because of their benefits situation.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

Graph 9: Impact of financial problems and overcrowding on youth homelessness, 2013 and 2014



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=92
Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2013: Providers: N=71

Existing evidence has shown how the effects of the recession and changes to welfare benefits have hit young people hard, for example young people are overrepresented among the unemployed and are more likely to be sanctioned²⁴ than other age groups²⁵. This year's survey results suggest that these wider pressures are contributing to young people's homelessness as eight out of ten survey respondents reported that sanctions are affecting young people 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' which can impact on ability to keep up with rent payments. Respondents also told us that other benefit changes and illegal evictions from landlords are leading to young people losing their existing tenancies:

Another major issue now are JSA sanctions and the impact of ability of our YP to pay their personal rent. We have put in strategies to support them to maintain their JSA claims to ensure they remain compliant and just encouraging them to work, which more now do.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

We have seen an increase in the overall number of people approaching homeless services reporting the key reason to be that they have to leave their private rented tenancies. CAB (Citizens Advice) are reporting an increase in illegal/retaliatory evictions from the PRS. We are meeting with them to discuss how the LA can help to address this.

LA survey respondent

Among survey respondents, providers were more likely than local authorities to identify financial problems caused by benefits reduction, drug or alcohol problems, and anti-social behaviour or crime as causes of homelessness. It is possible that this reflects a lower level of disclosure from young people in the local authority setting:

Young people often have difficulty communicating their needs at interview with statutory services.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

Homeless and in need of support

Even if prevention initiatives are available, homelessness can still occur if the support young people receive is insufficient, or staying in the family home is not in the best interests of the young person or their family. In circumstances where young people have an adequate network of professional and/or personal support, they may find or be placed in suitable accommodation early on, helping to alleviate some of the negative impact of homelessness. For several of the young people interviewed, workers from Connexions, health and mental health had been instrumental in helping them access supported accommodation when it was needed. Such a scenario relates to Step 4 of the Positive Pathway where young people have access to short or long-stay accommodation if required while their needs are assessed and they receive advice and support.

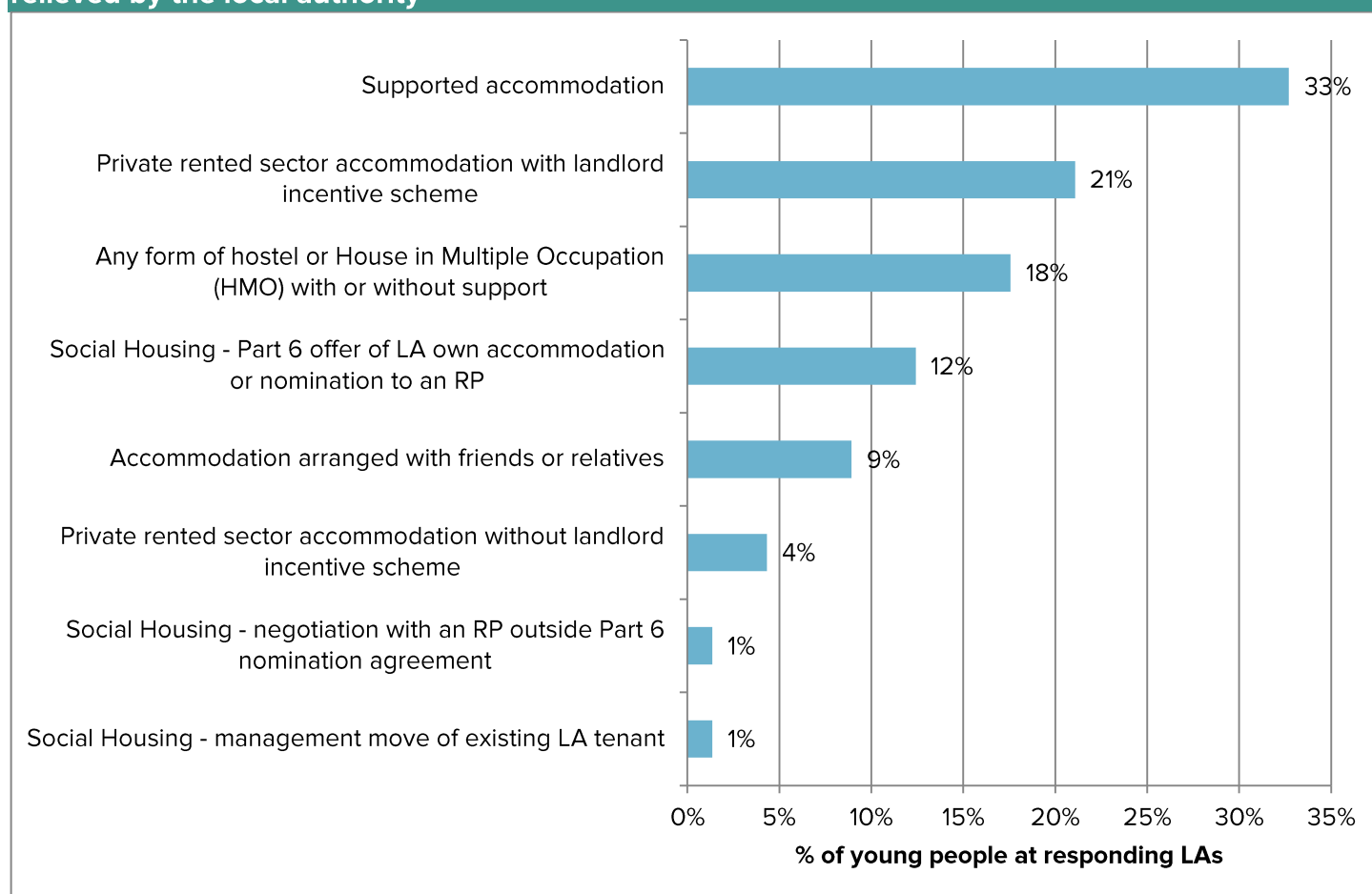
As part of their prevention work, local authorities can help prevent or relieve young people's homelessness by securing alternative accommodation. In August 2014, as a result of prevention and

²⁴ Since 2012, changes to the sanctions regime for JSA and ESA claimants increases the requirements they must fulfil to receive benefits and the amount of time they can be sanctioned for.

²⁵ Watts et al, 2014; Welfare sanctions and conditionality in the UK, available at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/Welfare-conditionality-UK-Summary.pdf>; Homeless Link, A High Cost to Pay (2013), available at <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/A%20High%20Cost%20to%20Pay%20Sept%2013.pdf>

relief work, young people were most commonly placed in supported accommodation (33% of young people). Other outcomes included the private rented sector (21%), hostels (18%) or social housing (12%), (Graph 10).

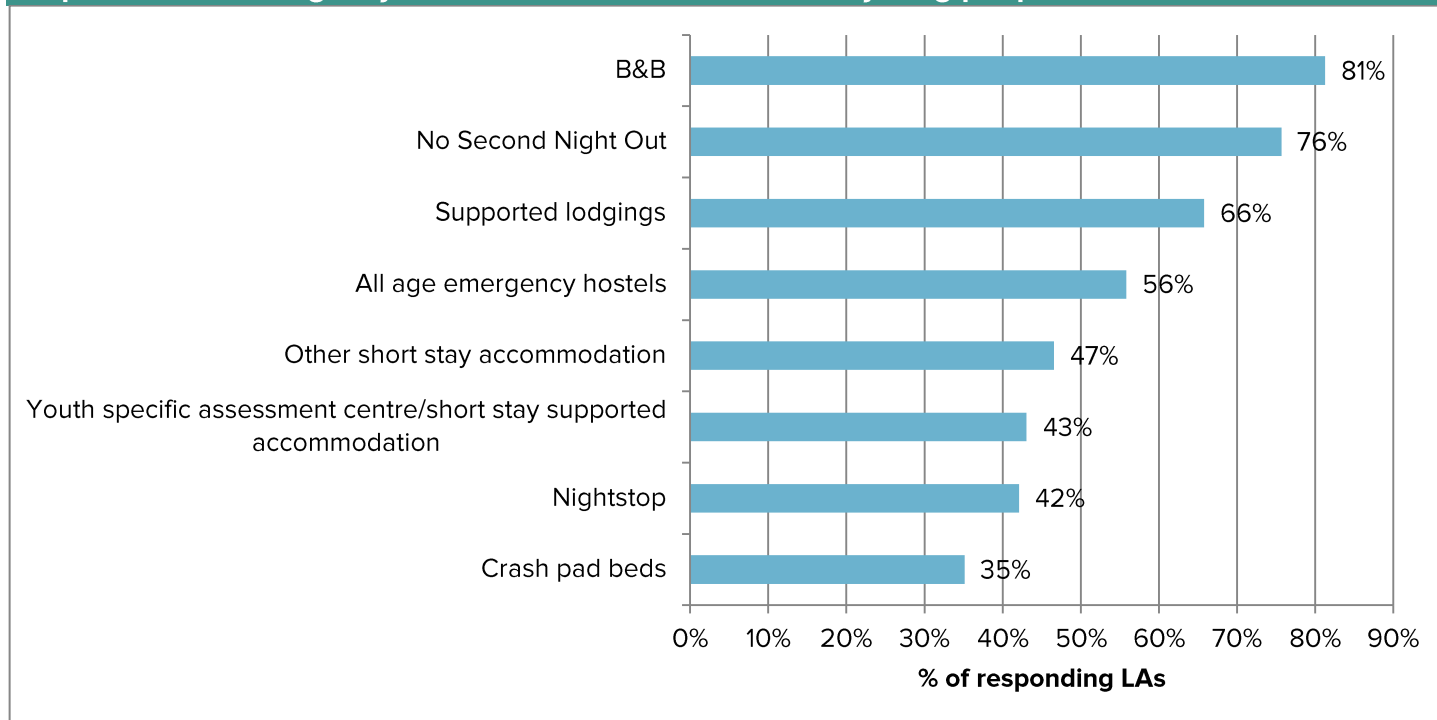
Graph 10: Alternative accommodation for young people whose homelessness was prevented or relieved by the local authority



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=60

When young people become homeless during a crisis, or their move from the family home is not planned, they may need to be placed in emergency accommodation. Youth specific emergency accommodation such as nightstop or emergency supported lodgings, where young people can stay with a host family receiving short-term support and respite from a crisis situation, can offer a more appropriate option for young people. However, this is not available in all areas. The local authority survey showed that crash pad beds are only available in 35% of local authority areas and nightstop is only available in 42% of areas.

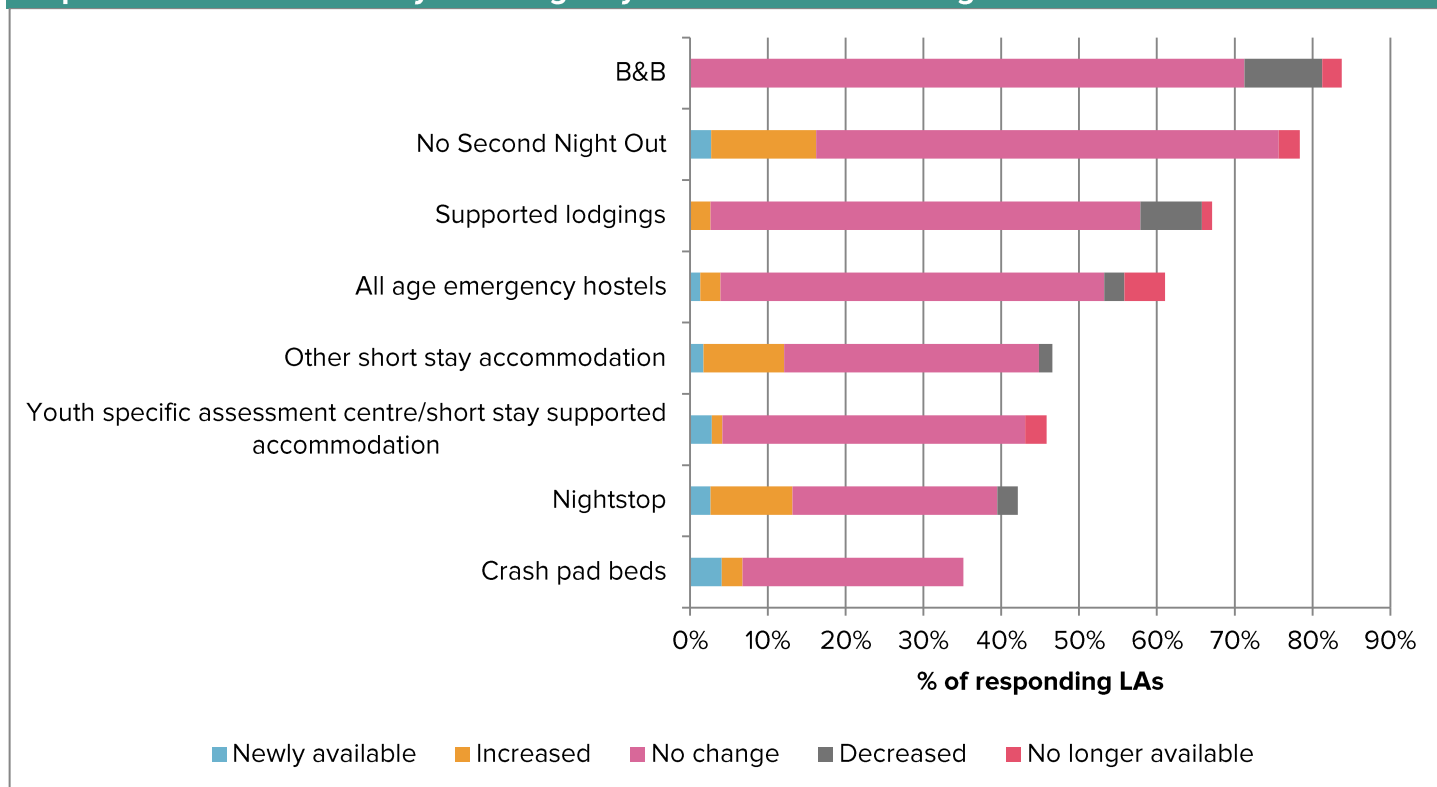
Graph 11: What emergency accommodation is available for young people?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=58-80

Just over half of respondents to the provider survey reported that there had been no change in the past year in the availability of emergency accommodation in their area (56%). According to local authority respondents, changes varied by type of accommodation; for example crash pad beds and No Second Night Out (NSNO) were introduced in some areas (4% and 3% of local authority areas respectively). In a small number of areas some types of provision ceased to be available (Graph 12).

Graph 12: Has the availability of emergency accommodation changed?

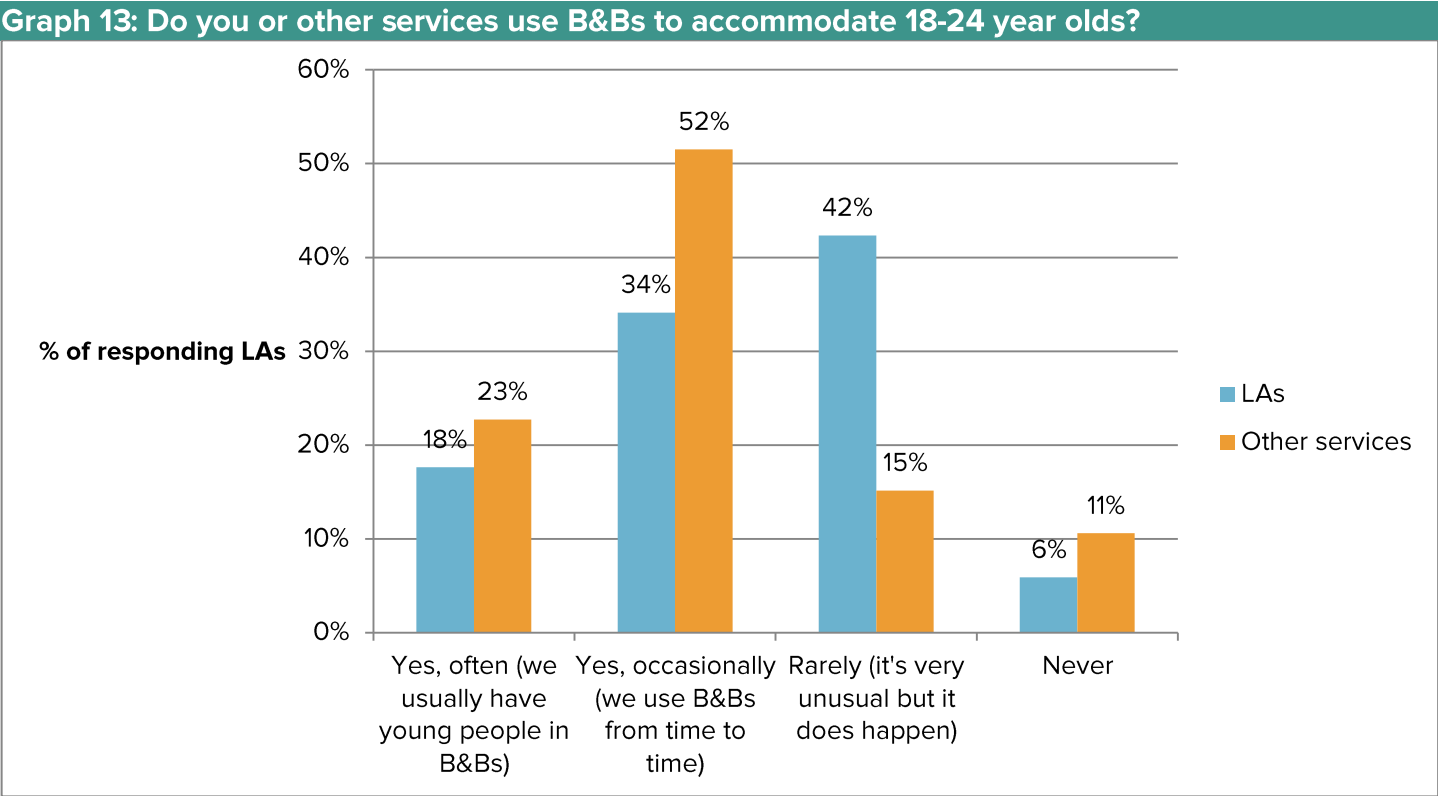


Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=58-80

Where suitable emergency accommodation is not available, young people are sometimes housed in unsuitable accommodation, such as Bed & Breakfast. These are deemed unsuitable as there is a lack of support, the quality varies, and there are major safeguarding concerns. Responses to the local authority survey showed that only 6% of local authorities never use B&Bs for young people, with 18% using them frequently and 34% using them occasionally (Graph 13).

Local authorities also reported that often other services within the area use B&Bs to accommodate young people, reporting that 23% of other services use them often and 52% use them occasionally. When asked which services use B&Bs, the most common response was Social Services (n=18) followed by Children’s Services (n=14). Other services included mental health (n=6), probation (n=3), social care (n=4) and homelessness services/voluntary organisations (n=2). Although B&Bs should not be used for 16/17 year olds, one respondent described how Children’s Services would use B&Bs for these young people:

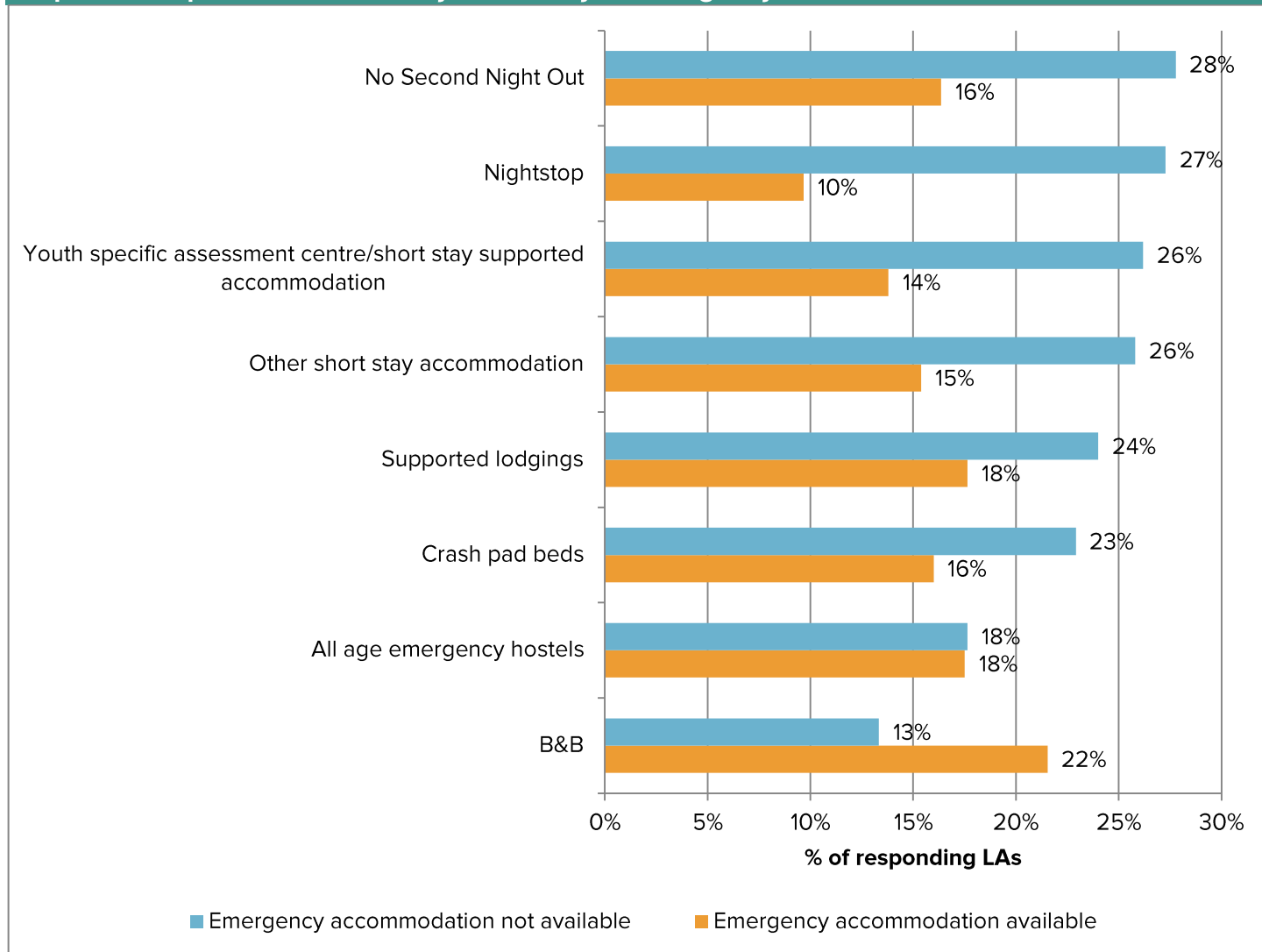
Children's Services use B&B for 16/17 year olds very often to meet a S.17 duty until 18, then end their B&B on their 18th birthday usually without any notice to the Local Housing Authority.
Staff member, homelessness organisation



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=85

In areas where emergency accommodation options are not available, local authorities are far more likely to report that they use B&Bs often compared to areas where emergency accommodation is available (Graph 14).

Graph 14: Frequent use of B&Bs by availability of emergency accommodation



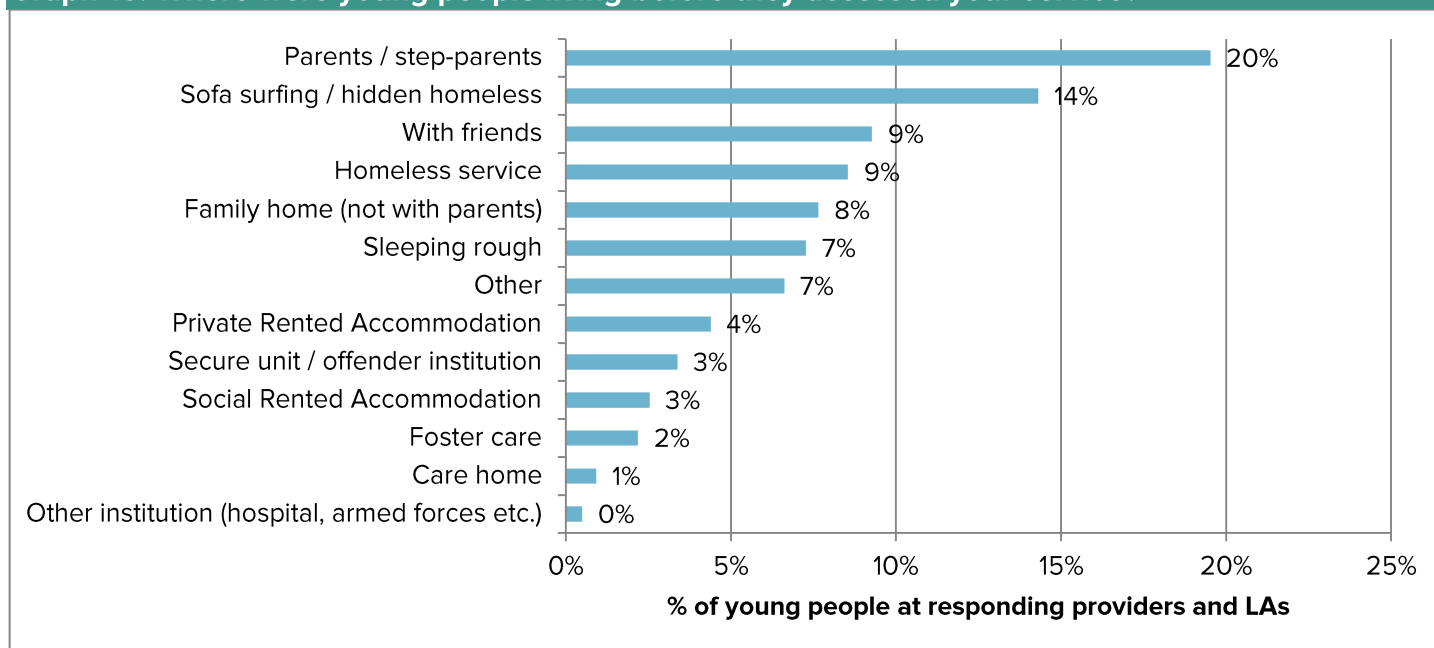
Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=85

Falling through the net

Unfortunately, there are numerous instances where young people do not transition from home to suitable accommodation or even emergency accommodation, but instead must manage or alleviate their homelessness through other means. This can happen when young people do not know where to go for support, are not in touch with services, or are turned away by services. Young people may stay with family members or friends, sofa-surf or sleep rough.

Our surveys showed that although parents/carers unable or unwilling to accommodate was a cause of homelessness for 36% of young people, only 20% of young people were actually living with parents or step-parents immediately before they accessed support (Graph 15). Fourteen percent were sofa-surfing or hidden homeless and 9% were staying with friends. Seven percent were sleeping rough.

Graph 15: Where were young people living before they accessed your service?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=88; LAs: N=67

Of particular concern is that some young people will sleep rough before they find support. The proportion of young people sleeping rough immediately before presenting as homeless is lower than previous years at 7%. More than half of all respondents (54%) reported that there had been no change in the number of young people rough sleeping, but 35% reported an increase. It is worth noting that more than a quarter (28%) of local authorities do not record whether young people are sleeping rough, so actual numbers may be higher.

However, respondents to the provider survey reported that 19% of young people had ever slept rough, up from 17% in 2013 and 10% in 2012. Of those who had ever slept rough, 35% did so for one to two nights only, down from around 50% the previous year. Consequently, young people were more likely than last year to spend slightly longer sleeping rough before receiving support.

One young person described how she and her boyfriend had to manage without anywhere to stay and at times had to resort to sleeping on a park bench:

We were trying to look for somewhere and get a deposit together. We couldn't find an organisation to help us with anything. So for a good couple of weeks we were just staying everywhere and anywhere we could ... I mean it isn't nice waking up in the morning and wondering where you're going to put your head down in the night. It never is. You have to work all day to find somewhere to sleep. Whereas you're trying to find somewhere to live and make some money and trying to sort your life out a bit. And starting from scratch and everything. With no belongings, no this, no that, because you can't store anything.

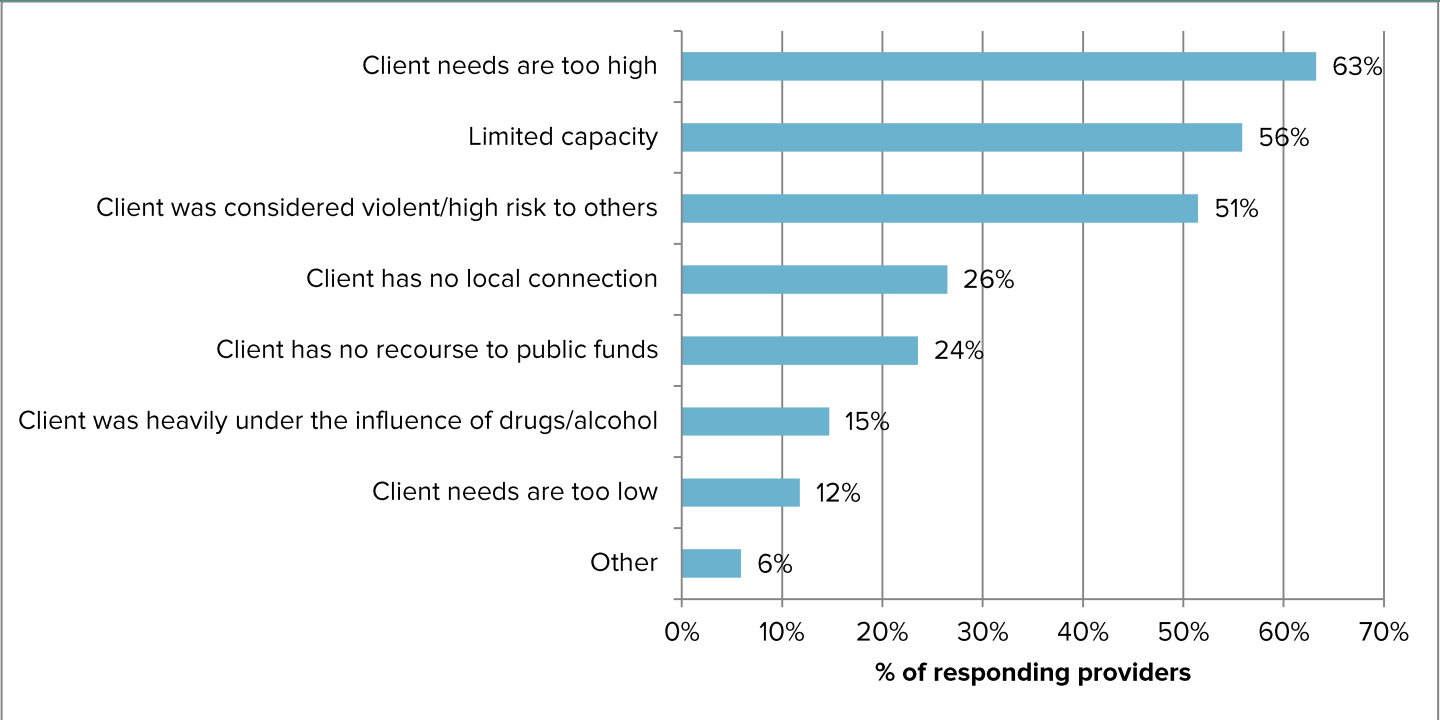
Client, service 2

When young people do approach services there is a risk that they may be turned away. Findings from the provider survey revealed that 74% of providers reported having to turn young people away at some point during August 2014 (Graph 16). Of these, the most common reason was due to client's needs being too high (63% of providers). More than half of services also reported turning young people away due to limited capacity (56%) and clients being considered violent or too high risk to others (51%).

Budgets have been cut in many areas this has made it hard to find outside support for higher need or complex clients. This results in staff being stretched to their limit and some clients having to [be] refused support as their needs cannot be met within the service.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

Graph 16: Have you been unable to assist any young homeless people because of the following reasons?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=68

In some areas, services are working together to fill gaps in provision for young people with complex or multiple needs:

We have identified a gap in accommodation and support for some young people with multiple and/or complex needs. We are working across the authority to address this through better communication between existing support services. Workshop planned for next week to develop a service model.

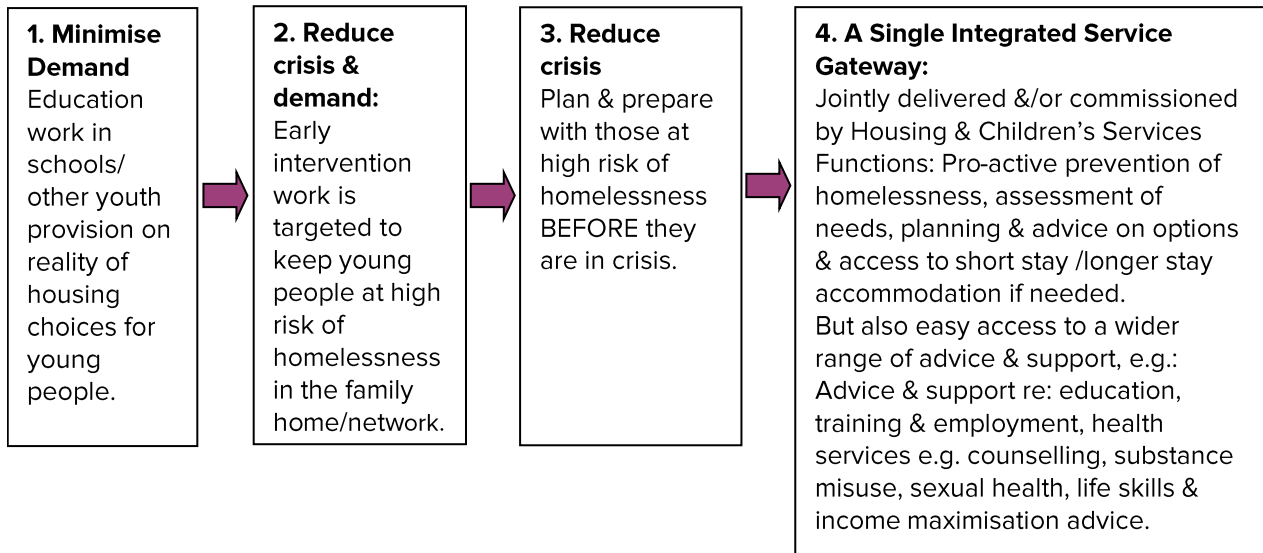
LA survey respondent

However, the fact many young people with complex needs are being turned away is alarming, and there is a lack of evidence regarding what happens to young people if this happens. In some cases young people may be able to find support elsewhere. However, others may have to return to attempting to manage their homelessness themselves through sofa-surfing or rough sleeping. Young people in this situation are more likely to become entrenched in homelessness as they lack not only the accommodation, but the support required for moving out of homelessness.

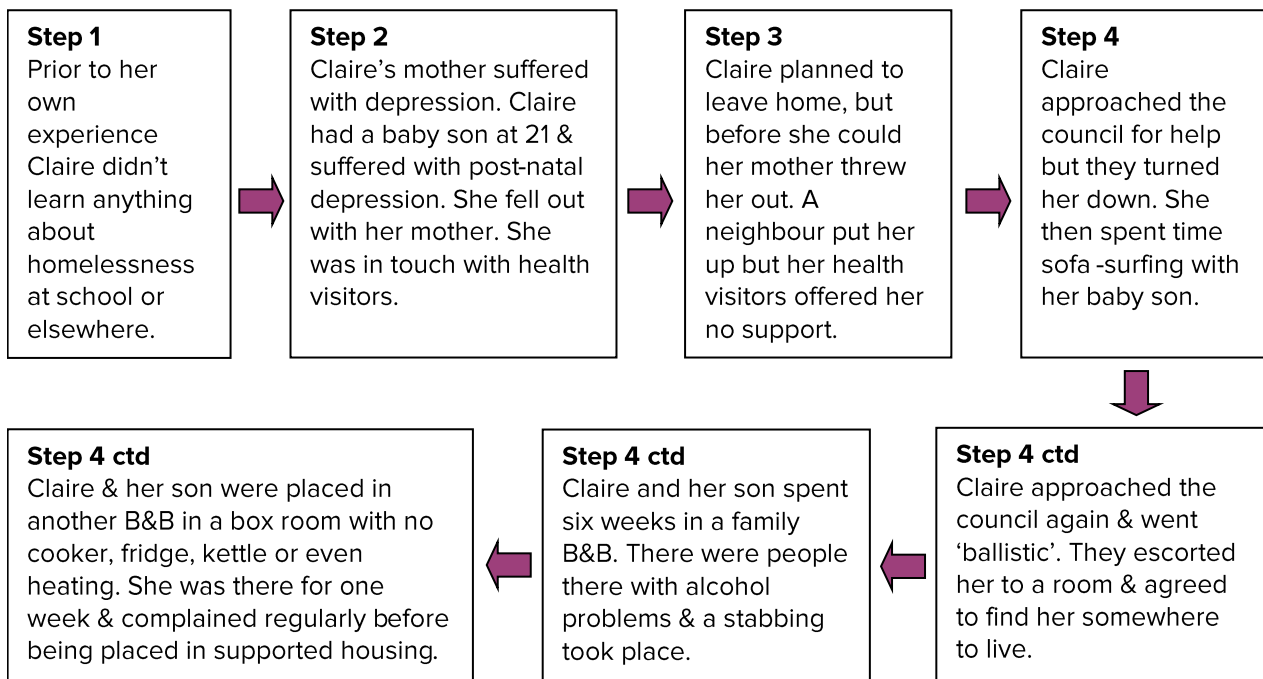
Case study: falling through the net

The case study below, based on an interview with a young homeless person, demonstrates what can happen when young people fall through the net. The study is contrasted with Steps 1-4 of the Positive Pathway which focus on preventing homelessness.

The Positive Pathway Steps 1-4



Claire's story



Claire's story is an example of what can happen when there are failings at each stage. Many other young people have more positive experiences, but nevertheless are frequently let down at some point along the way. Prevention can only be achieved when each stage is successfully managed. Claire's problems would have been alleviated if she had known more about homelessness from the start; if the professionals she was in touch with had identified her as at risk and worked to support her; and if the council had offered her support when she first approached them and had been able to place her in suitable emergency accommodation. Claire felt that her health worker offered her no support and believes that the fact that she was not in touch with social services means that she was assumed to be coping. After being placed in accommodation with support, Claire felt that she was finally able to make progress.

CHAPTER 3: BEING SUPPORTED

Young people experiencing homelessness need help with accommodation and other support needs:

- There is little change in the availability of accommodation for young people compared to previous years. Hostels and foyers are the most widely available form of accommodation (78% of local authorities reporting these are available in their area).
- Respondents reported that over half (57%) of young people needed support because they were not in education, training or employment, and 50% lack independent living skills.
- Nearly six in ten (58%) young people have complex needs, and half (50%) of respondents reported that young people's needs were more complex than last year.
- Homelessness agencies provide young people with a range of support, and have increased this support compared to last year. A third (34%) of providers reported they had increased the amount of support available.
- The availability of youth service provision has mainly decreased (57%) or remained the same (37%).
- Youth-only provision may be more suitable for young people due to safeguarding concerns and the ability of these providers to target provision according to young people's needs.

Help with accommodation is often only one of the areas a young person will need support with if they experience homelessness. Other needs may relate to the factors which contributed to their homelessness in the first place, such as relationship problems, disrupted education, substance misuse and mental health problems. Many of these issues can be exacerbated by the strain that homelessness places on young people's lives. Other support needs stem from the realities of homelessness, such as the need to manage benefits, find suitable accommodation, and develop the living skills required to live independently. Such a sudden transition into the demands of adult life for young people who may lack the emotional and mental skills to cope with these demands can be traumatic, so providing support for these needs is vital to reduce the risk of future homelessness.

Housing support for young people

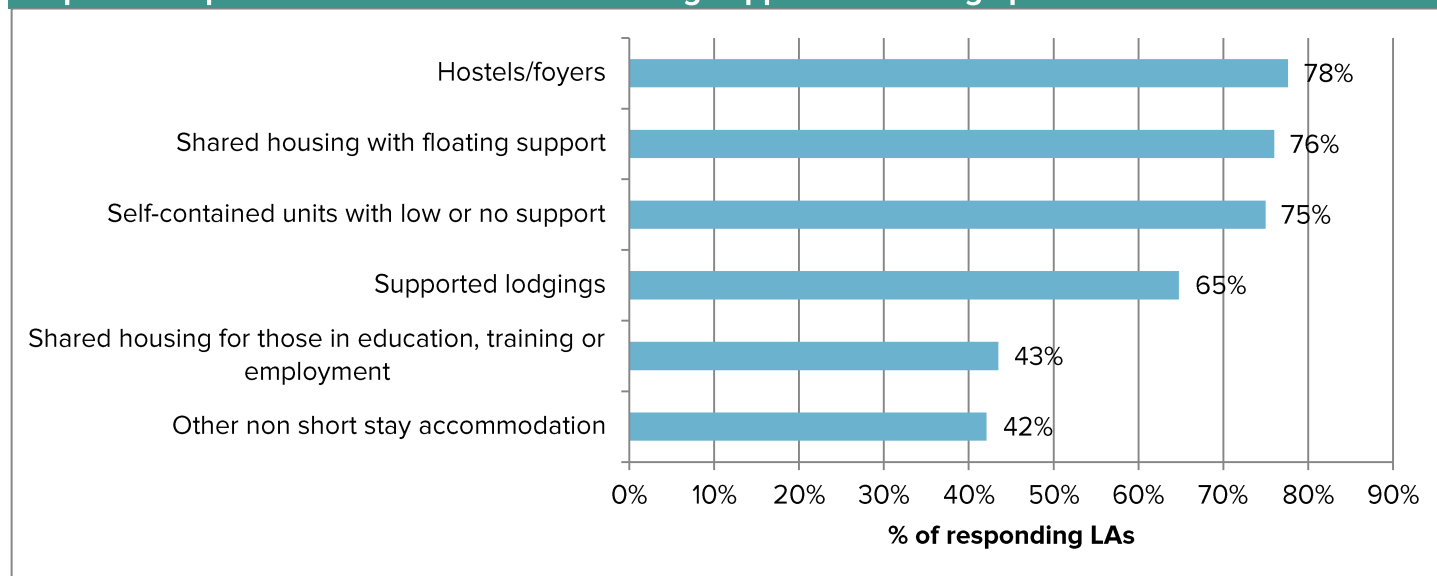
There are a range of accommodation options for young people, with varying levels of support. These include supported accommodation and hostels/foyers, often a starting point for young people until they are assessed as ready to move on. 'Floating' support is a service to support those living in their own tenancies and there are also a range of shared housing models, similar to student accommodation, for those in education, training or employment, which offer 'light touch' support.

The local authority survey showed that hostels and foyers are the most widely available form of accommodation, with 78% of local authorities reporting that these are available in their area (Graph 17). Shared housing for young people in employment, education or training is only available in 43% of areas, although availability has increased from 27% last year. This type of provision is reportedly being developed as local authorities and registered providers recognise it as a critical gap in provision²⁶.

²⁶ Whalen, A. 2013, CLG youth homelessness adviser paper: Developing positive accommodation and support pathways to adulthood, available at http://leavingcare.org/news?page_ID=14&news_ID=429

One in five (21%) local authorities reported increases in shared housing with floating support, but overall there was little change in the availability of the different types of accommodation compared to the previous year. Despite this, many local authority survey respondents reported difficulties housing young people due to either a lack of shared housing in their area, or a lack of affordable shared housing due to caps on the Local Housing Allowance rate.

Graph 17: Proportion of areas with the following supported housing options



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=57-76

The Positive Pathway recommends that not only are there a range of accommodation options available, but young people have the opportunity to move between them as needed (Steps 5-7). Some providers described having this kind of provision in place which allows for a smoother transition:

We now have an emergency unit of accommodation which complements our private landlords scheme (PLS). We have an Advice Service to provide an immediate response, then when they move to our PLS, they have support workers, we also have a Youth Inclusion Worker who delivers development activities.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

The pathway allows for step up and step down where appropriate, prior to permanent independent accommodation being secured.

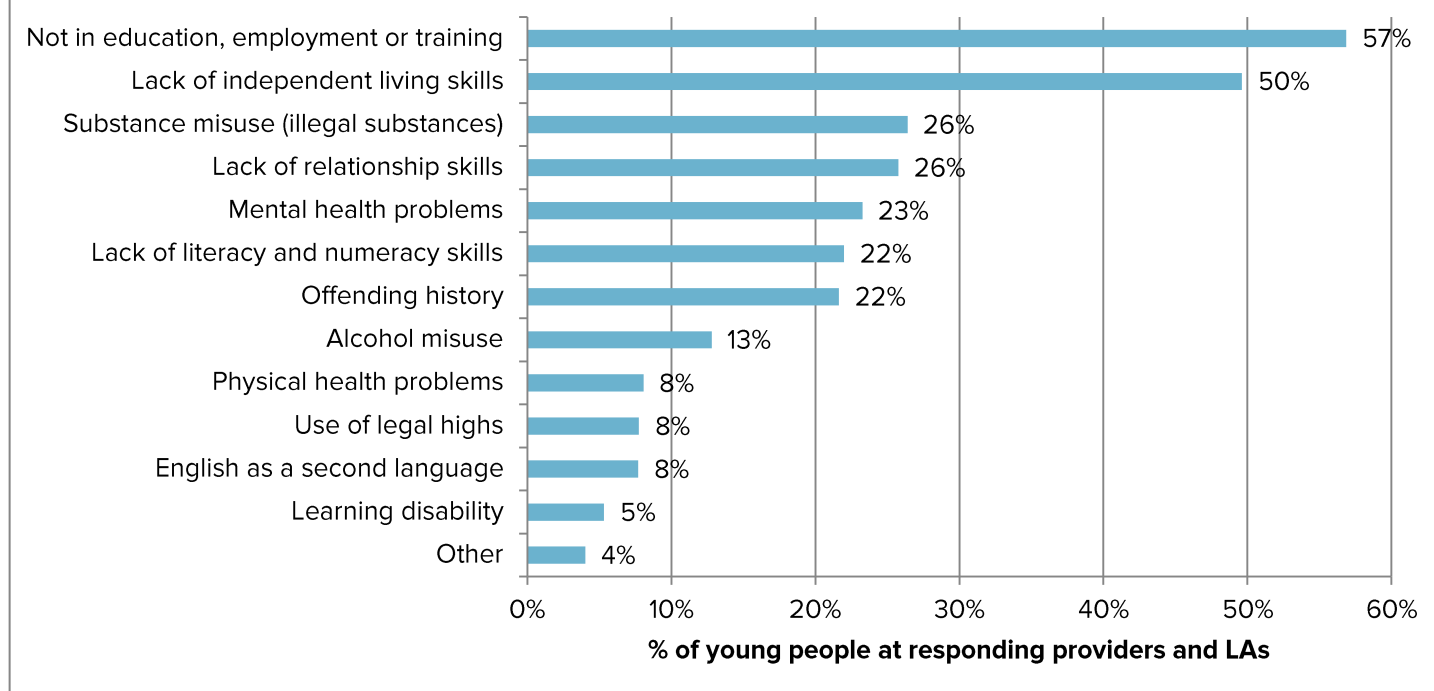
Staff member, homelessness organisation

What are young people's other support needs?

The kind of support that young people receive depends on both their needs and on what providers are able to offer. According to both surveys, not being in education, employment or training was the most common support need for young people (Graph 18). Half of young people (50%) also lack independent living skills. For the first time the survey asked about the use of legal highs, and this was reported to be an issue for 8% of young people.

Some young people also have complex needs defined as more than one of the following support needs: mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, offending behaviour, homelessness, family breakdown. Respondents from both surveys reported that as many as 58% of young people have complex needs.

Graph 18: What are young people's support needs?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=91; LAs: N=60

Differences between the two surveys showed that providers identified a greater number of support needs amongst the young people who accessed their services than local authorities. Providers were particularly more likely to identify young people as needing support with relationship skills, independent living skills, literacy and numeracy skills, and English as a second language.

Overall, half of all respondents (50%) reported that young people's needs had become more complex compared to last year, with 45% reporting no change. Only 6% felt that complex needs had decreased²⁷:

Young people are presenting with increasingly complex support needs and at much younger ages. Most of the current residents in our services have complex needs, including substance misuse, offending, being at risk of sexual exploitation and currently experiencing sexual exploitation and virtually all of them are or have experienced family breakdown.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

What kind of support do young people receive?

The Positive Pathway recommends that young people receive advice and support around their needs at Step 4 where the emphasis is on prevention. The support that young people require often has to continue (or commence for those without previous help) while young people are living in a hostel or supported accommodation, to help prepare them for moving forward.

²⁷ There were notable differences between local authorities and providers; 32% of local authorities reported young people's needs were more complex compared to 61% of providers.

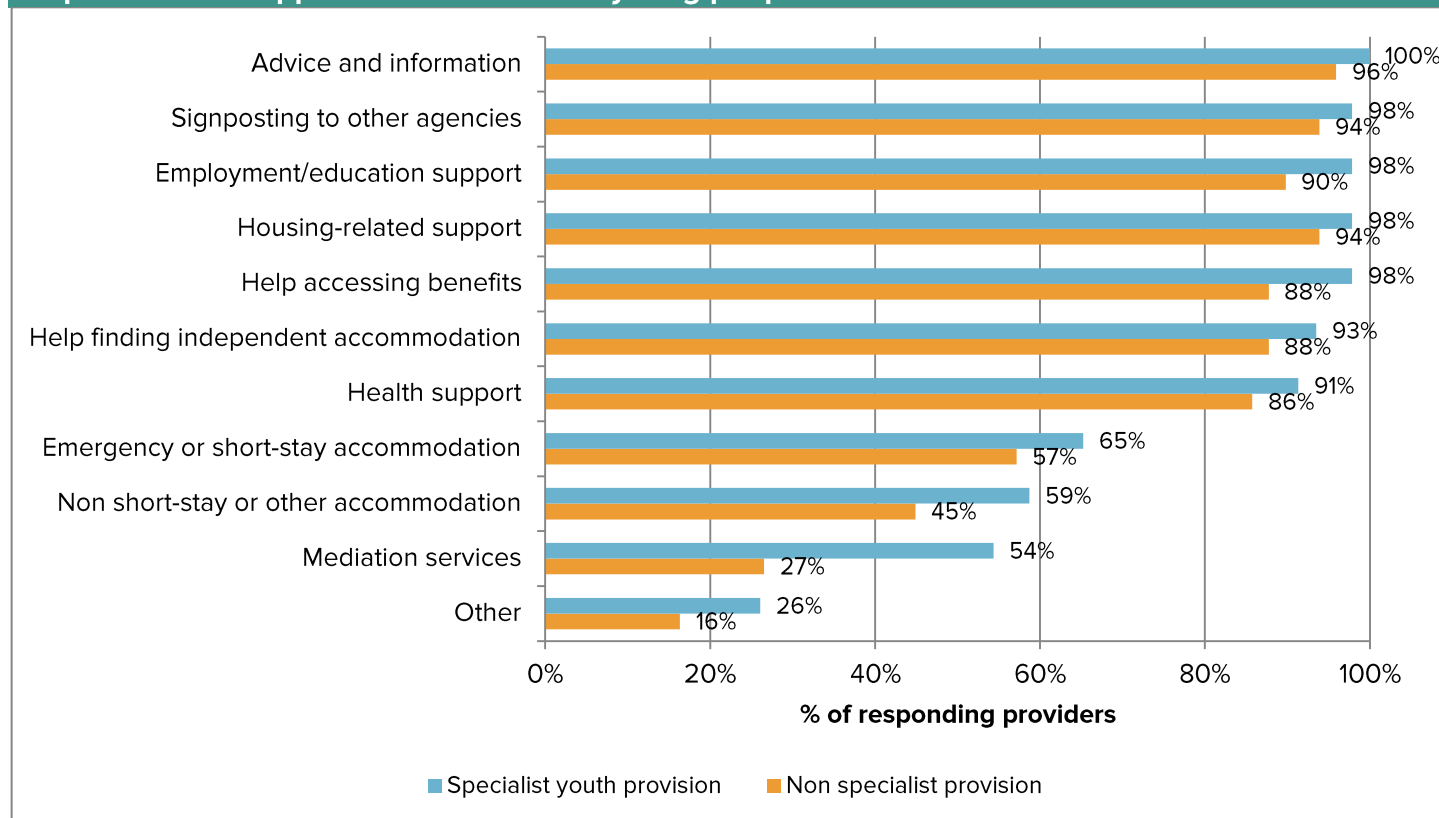
Young homeless people's needs are different to homeless people in older age groups. To reflect this, some providers consist of youth-only provision targeted at people under-25. Previous research has shown that half of second stage accommodation projects (49%) and 16% of hostels in England are exclusively for young people aged 18 to 25²⁸. A similar proportion was found in the provider survey, with half of the providers offering youth-only provision (49%). Youth-only providers saw 84% of the young people who approached homelessness organisations in August 2014, according to the provider survey.

More than 90% of all providers report that they offer young people advice and information, help with accessing benefits, housing-related support, help finding independent accommodation, employment/education support, and signposting to other agencies.

There were some differences between specialist and non-specialist youth providers, with youth-only providers more likely to report that they offer the different types of support. In particular, mediation services, an important form of support for young people experiencing breakdown in family relationships, were more common in youth-only projects (Graph 19).

On average, young people spend 34 weeks at projects, with length of stay ranging from less than a week to two years. Young people spend longer with youth-only providers; 38 weeks compared to an average of 29 weeks at nonspecific projects.

Graph 19: What support do services offer young people?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=96

²⁸ Homeless Link (2014) Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2014
<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Support%20for%20Single%20Homeless%20People.pdf>

Interviews with young people revealed that they value high levels of emotional support, for example accommodation that is staffed around the clock with staff members always available to talk to, and the freedom to talk to staff about any issues that might concern them. The impact of homelessness on young people's confidence and sense of security was evident in these cases and knowing that the support was there provided young people with reassurance. Young people also talked about loneliness and not having others in a similar situation to relate to:

Staff at the [organisation] do different shifts so there's always someone, so if you've got a problem in the middle of the night, they all carry a phone around with them, with night staff there's a phone in the office, you press 0, they'll talk to you about anything, come out if you need them.

Client 1, service 1

The most common quality young people said they value in staff is evidence that they care. They also value having people they can relate to; this includes younger members of staff and those who have had similar experiences. Volunteers were popular, as the fact that they do not get paid shows that they are there because they want to be.

A higher level of practical support was also valued by young people in helping them to prepare for the outside world. The need to provide young people with emotional support at the same time as addressing their practical or behavioural needs was recognised by a number of survey respondents:

As well as the obvious needs such as help to access health care, drug services, benefits in our service we find a lack of aspiration and self-belief in young people and the majority are very difficult to engage in constructive use of time and the idea that they can make a better life for themselves through ETE.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

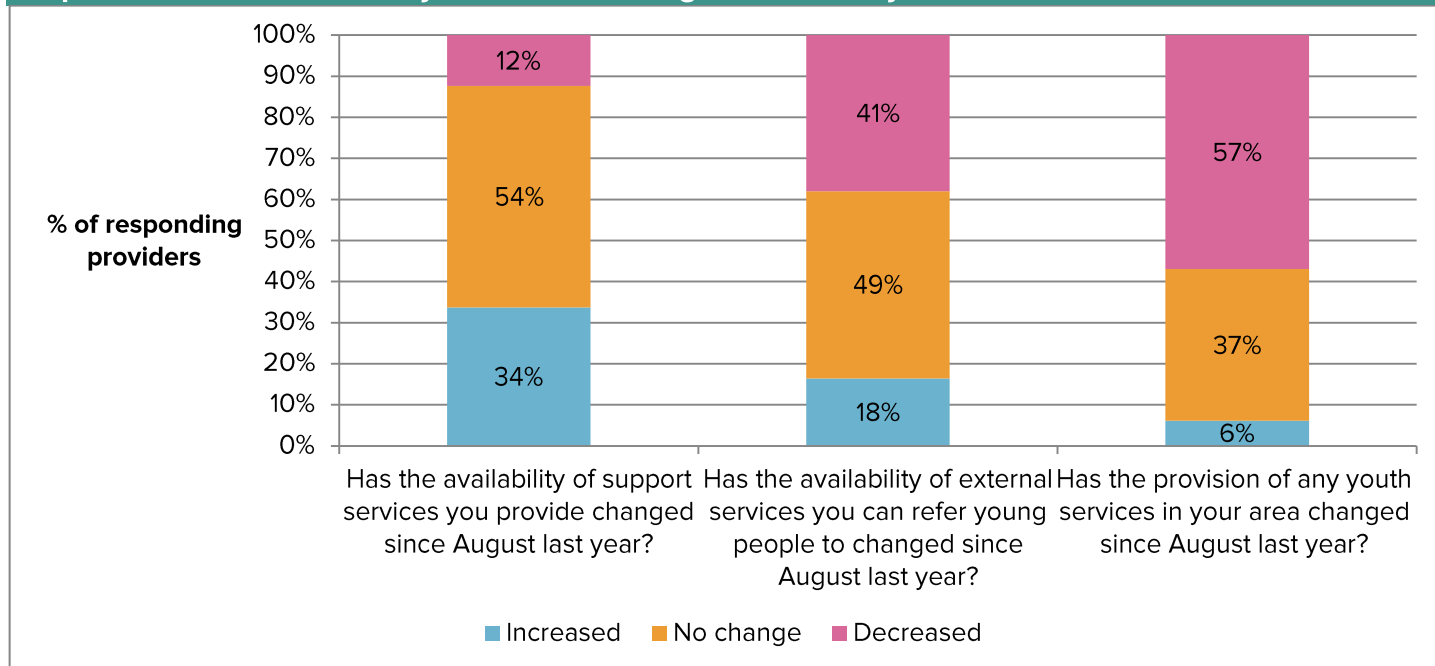
Compared to last year, the proportion of providers offering support services to young people increased across all types of support. This is supported by providers' responses to the survey, with a third of providers reporting that they have increased the amount of support available, and just over half reporting no change (Graph 20).

Increasing the support available to young people may be a response to the increase in the proportion of young people with support needs and complex needs. Services may also be increasing the outcomes expected from young people. An interview with one respondent highlighted how some providers are now expecting more from young people. This was seen as positive, as although young people may spend longer in services they feel more ready to cope with the outside world when they leave:

Previously you had to stick to your support plan and pay your rent and you would get your own place. Now, you have to stick to your support plan, go to training days, go to work club, paying rent, making sure you've got work, keeping up with everything so you're ready for it... I've been three years, two different hostels ... I think I'm ready for it.

Client 1, service 1

Graph 20: Has the availability of services changed since last year?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=65-89

By contrast, very few providers (18%) reported increases in the availability of related external services for young people in their area. Several survey respondents reported that external services in their area were dwindling, with some respondents reporting that they provide more support for this reason:

We provide generic housing related support - we are finding we are having to provide more specialist support then staff are qualified or able to give as there are extremely limited resources locally.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

Youth services are still present, but have been reduced year on year.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

Youth-only provision may be more suitable for young people for a range of reasons. Not only is it targeted at young people and therefore more likely to meet their needs, but it can also be safer for vulnerable young people to be accommodated with people in their own age group. Discussions with the NYRG echoed this view, with members of the group arguing that in youth-only accommodation young people feel more comfortable and there are fewer safeguarding issues, especially for young women. Due to vulnerability and a need to connect with others, young people may be at risk of being influenced by the negative behaviour of older adults. The location of projects was also described as significant, with examples given of projects situated near probation hostels which may create more issues for young people. It was also argued that young people need to have their aspirations raised and being accommodated with more entrenched homeless people may undermine this.

CHAPTER 4: MOVING FORWARD

Appropriate move-on accommodation is essential for helping young people move out of homelessness:

- A quarter of homelessness services report that young people moving on are most likely to return to family or friends (26%); councils report that young people are most likely to be placed in Housing Association accommodation (30%).
- Welfare reform is increasingly affecting young people’s ability to access accommodation, particularly the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate, levels of Local Housing Allowance and difficulties accessing local welfare assistance.
- Local authorities have a range of schemes to help improve access to private and social housing, although access to schemes decreased slightly compared to last year.
- Young people often require ongoing support when they move towards independent living, including both practical and emotional support.

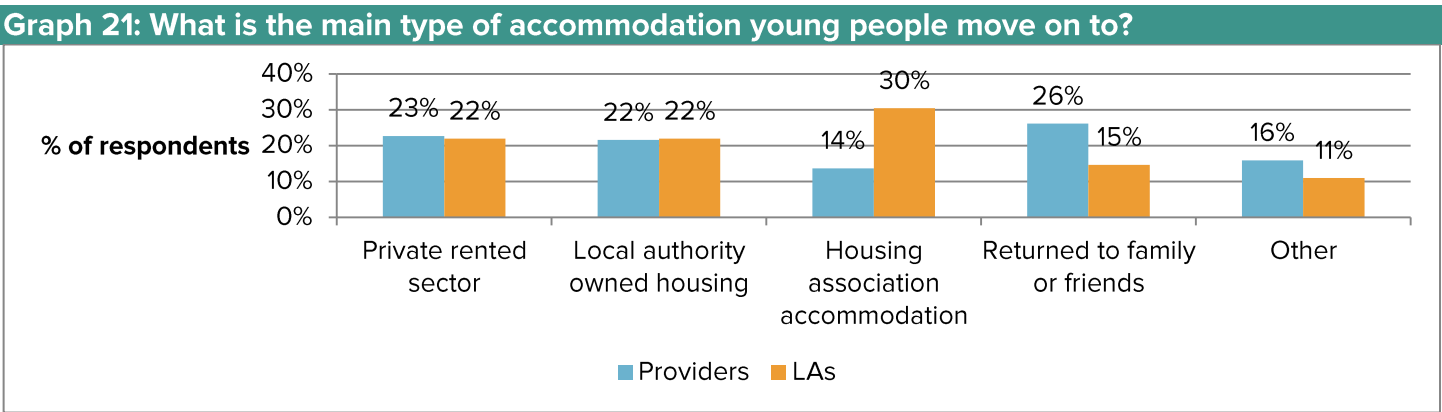
Move-on accommodation

For some young people, mediation and conciliation with their families, or even simply some time out, mean that conflicts are able to be resolved sufficiently for them to return to live with family or friends. One in four (26%) providers reported that this is the main outcome for the young people they work with (Graph 21).

This is less common for young people receiving support from their local authority with 30% of local authorities reporting that accessing Housing Association accommodation is the most common outcome. Young people accepted as statutorily homeless are more likely to be given preference in the allocations scheme, whereas this route is less common for young people in homelessness services. However, in some local authority areas, young people in supported accommodation are given priority on the housing register if they can demonstrate they are ready for independent living. Priority is also sometimes given to young people in certain groups (e.g. care leavers) and those who are sofa-surfing:

Applicants who have been assessed as ready to move on from supported accommodation, including young person's pathway and care leavers, have priority on the housing register.
LA survey respondent

Resettlement pathway is prioritised under housing register.
LA survey respondent



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=88; LAs: N=82

The majority of young people interviewed expressed a preference for social housing over the private rented sector. The benefits revolved around increased security in tenancy, a relatively simple process and higher standards:

[Council housing] is safe, they can't just throw you straight out. They have to give you something else if you have to move. There's a lot more security for you and your child, rather than they can just refer to section one or whatever. Private rent, that's like two weeks or two months or whatever and you've got to get out. And then you've got to find something else and the council has to help you anyway. And deposit, and funds and all that. And many places are just disgusting. I've viewed a lot of places when I was looking for something and some of them you just think, that is not habitable. That is just, I wouldn't even let my rat live here ... There has to be a certain standard. There are some places where you don't really want to live, but they still don't, they're alright for your health. A health and safety minimum.

Client 2, service 2

Affordable housing

Affordable accommodation for young people who are ready to live more independently is a gap in provision in many areas. Just over a fifth of local authorities and providers said that young people are most likely to move on to the private rented sector (23% and 22% respectively). Although this is becoming increasingly common as an option for homeless people, there are concerns about standards in the private sector due to the relative lack of regulation, and in some areas such as London and the South East, it can be difficult to secure a tenancy. Such difficulties have been exacerbated by changes to the Shared Accommodation Rate and levels of housing benefit available under Local Housing Allowance (see introduction).

Seventy-two percent of all respondents reported that young people have been affected 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' by the extension of the SAR (Graph 22). Compared to last year, a higher proportion of providers reported that young people are affected by changes to the SAR and LHA²⁹, and a higher proportion of local authorities reported that young people are affected by the changes to LHA³⁰:

Shared accommodation rate has made sourcing private rented accommodation more difficult, especially as shared tenancies in this sector are uncommon in the area.

LA survey respondent

Realistically cannot access decent private rented accommodation due to the reduction in LHA amounts.

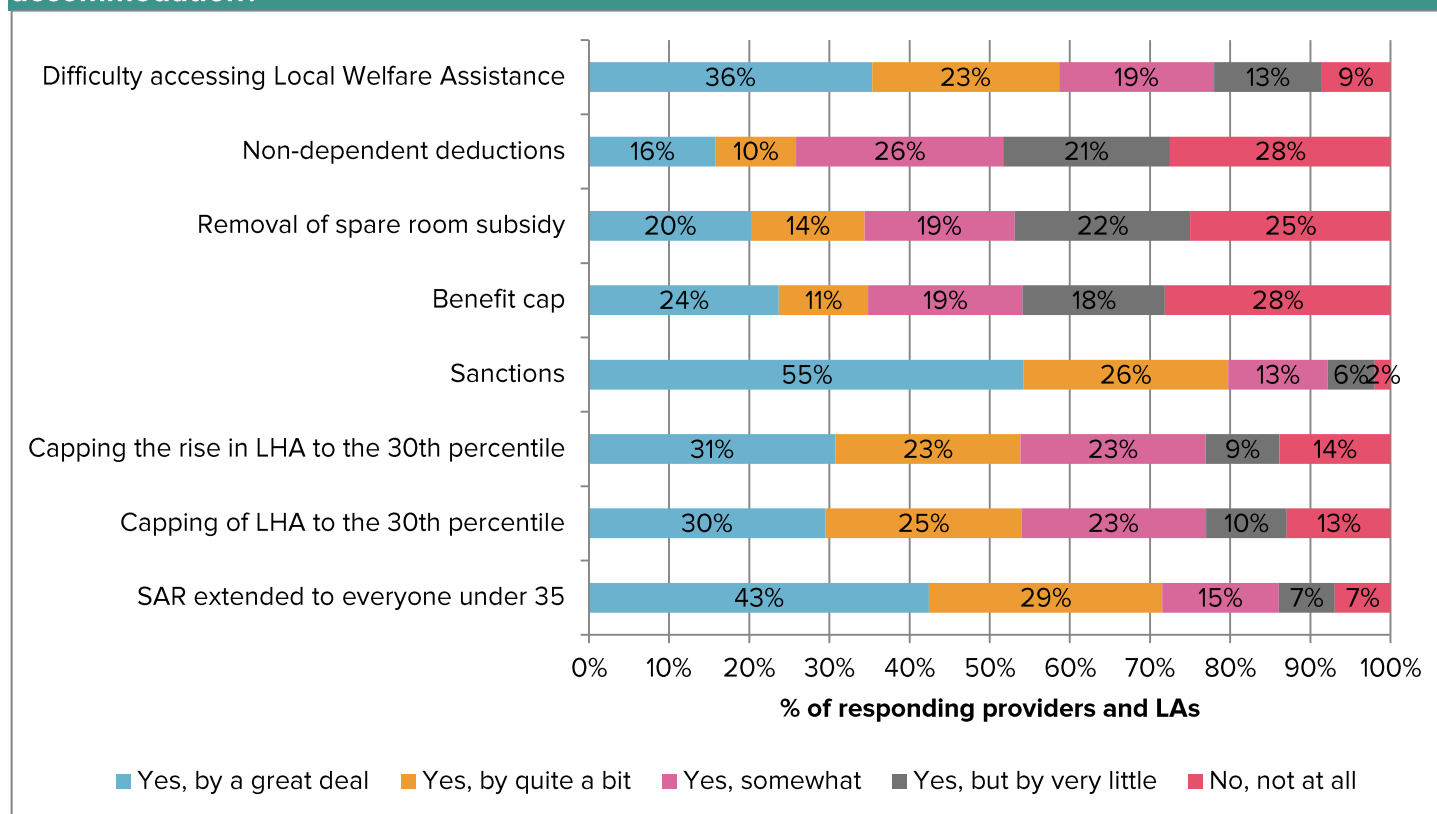
LA survey respondent

It can also be challenging for young people to be able to afford the amenities they need to set up their own place, with six out of ten respondents to the surveys reporting that young people have difficulties accessing local welfare assistance 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit'.

²⁹ Providers reporting that young people were affected 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' by the SAR (58% in 2013; 72% in 2014), cap on LHA (38% in 2013; 62% in 2014) and cap on rise in LHA (38% in 2013; 63% in 2014)

³⁰ LAs reporting that young people were affected 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' by the cap on LHA (37% in 2013; 46% in 2014) and cap on the rise in LHA (32% in 2013; 45% in 2014)

Graph 22: Have the following welfare changes affected young people's ability to access accommodation?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=60-86; LAs: N=59-76

One of the difficulties in finding accommodation in the private rented sector relates to the fact that landlords can be reluctant to rent to young people and people on benefits:

Everywhere you live they don't take housing benefits. And people have housing benefits for a lot of reasons, people that work still have housing benefit, but they won't take it.

Client 1, service 2

Landlords in this area can achieve higher rents than the LHA. This means anyone on benefit is unattractive to the private sector. Young people are even more disadvantaged as it has always been the case that landlords are wary of young tenants and think of them as potentially troublesome.

LA survey respondent

The lack of availability leads to fewer options for young people and accommodation that may be of a poorer standard. Young people may also resort to taking out high interest loans or other means to secure the money needed for a deposit, increasing the risk of debt:

This had affected young people's access, [X] has a huge PRS market and young people are subjected to fraud, loan sharks, inadequate properties, and insufficient properties as landlords are preferring to let to professional working people. Agencies charging unreasonable fees.

LA survey respondent

Having to remain in supported accommodation when they are ready to move on, or being forced to inhabit unsuitable properties can be damaging for young people:

Some young people are at risk of developing complex issues because routes out of homelessness are so limited. Social housing and supported accommodation such as we provide are in short supply locally.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

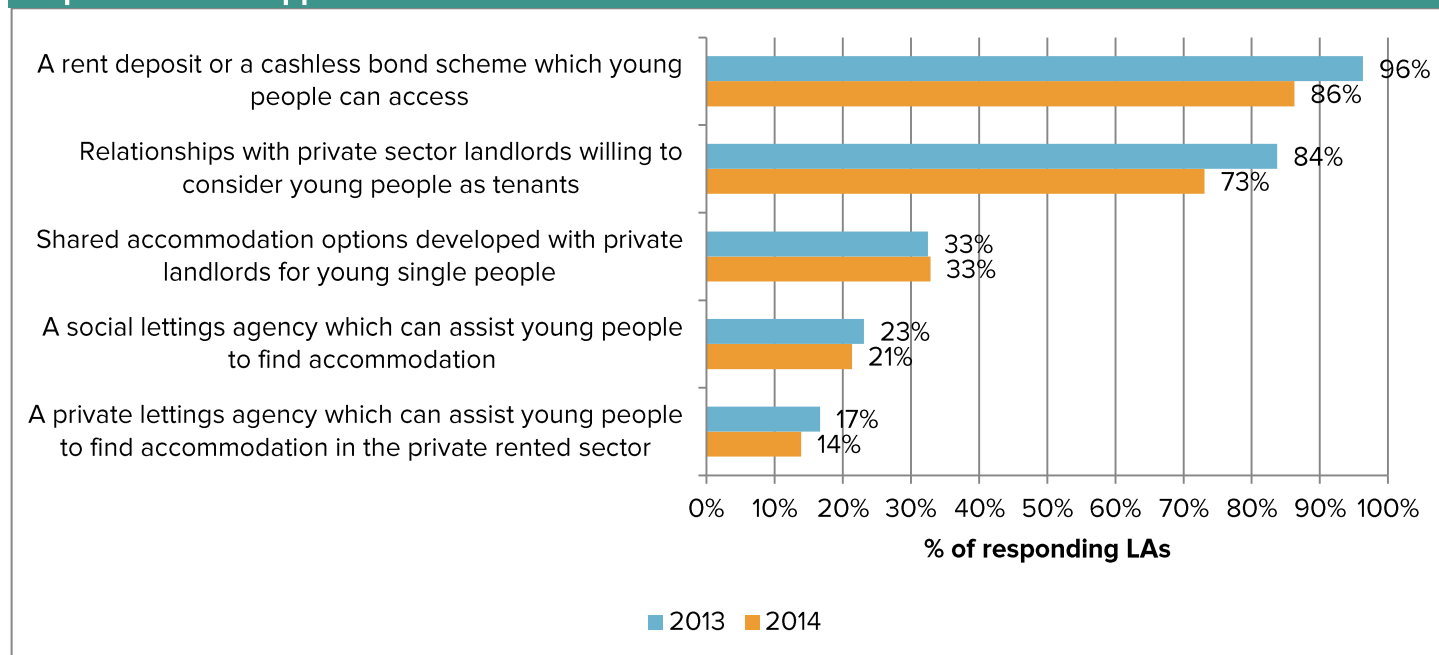
Although many young people express a strong preference for social housing over the private rented sector, this is also difficult to access in some areas. Finding a guarantor for young people can be challenging, with Housing Associations reportedly preferring an organisation over family or friends. There is also a lack of availability; in particular there is a lack of single or two-bedroom social housing properties:

There's a really big shortage on two-bedroom council places at the moment. They're actually building more, from what they say. But they say there's a shortage because there's a lot of people moving in, and they're getting pregnant and having trouble, and they have to go on the council list.

Client 1, service 2

To address the challenges associated with helping young people to find accommodation, local authorities often have support schemes or develop strategies, particularly to improve access to the private rented sector. The most common scheme was a rent deposit or cashless bond scheme (86% of local authorities), with many local authorities also building relationships with private sector landlords that are willing to consider having young people as tenants (73%) (Graph 23). However, the proportion of local authorities reporting that they have these schemes in place has fallen compared to last year.

Graph 23: What support schemes for move-on accommodation are available?



Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: LAs: N=80

Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2013: LAs: N=83

In [X] we have invested in units of accommodation with RP partners to provide affordable options for young people who are willing to engage in employment and training. These units are let via a lettings plan, but are also offered as move-on accommodation from the more intense supported projects. We are hoping to deliver more units of this type if we can make this model work.

LA survey respondent

We work in partnership with Children's Services and supported accommodation providers to meet the needs of those YP who cannot remain at home and offer supported accommodation until a YP is ready to be offered move-on, we then give a priority on the register for this and also offer deposit bonds for private rented accommodation.

LA survey respondent

[We have] created team of volunteers to assist young people with finding and financing private rent when [there is] no LA duty of care.

Staff member, homelessness organisation

Longer term support needs

The longer term outcomes for young people who leave supported accommodation are hard to track and are beyond the scope of this research. However, it is worth considering what young people perceive to be their longer term needs and what support they wish to continue to receive as they move forward.

Young people varied significantly in terms of what they regarded to be their ongoing support needs. Some young people wanted practical support, such as help with budgeting, bills, maintaining a tenancy and living skills. Others wanted ongoing emotional support, concerned that their contact with others would be reduced once they left supported accommodation:

Q: Do you think either of you will have any trouble, living independently?

A2: I do need some help with budgeting, but I'm doing that here.

A1: I do need some common sense. I'm scared that I will be one of these people that will leave the oven on and blow me and my child up, or one of these that would fall asleep with hair straighteners on. I'm really stupid like that.

A2: I don't think I'll have a problem living by myself.

A1: I think you'll get lonely.

A2: I will get lonely living by myself. I like living with people, just because.

A1: I will get lonely as well, but I can manage my loneliness better, because I have a mum where I can just go whenever I need. And you will struggle with cooking. I cook for her now, I feed her every day.

Clients 1 and 2, service 2

For a lot of the young people moving on was not simply about accommodation, employment and well-being, it was about being able to learn from their situation and make sense of it in order to be able to put it behind them. This included seeing homelessness as something that had made them a better person, giving them experiences that others lacked and making them appreciate the things they had achieved in life. Adopting attitudes such as these can help young people avoid feeling like victims of their experiences but instead recognise their own autonomy and ability to develop positive outcomes out of adverse circumstances:

I see homelessness as a curse and a blessing - it's a curse if you are mentally unfit to cope, if you are mentally strong enough it can prepare you for life and it teaches you not to judge people as you meet people with mental health problems/disabilities. I used to be arrogant and could be judgemental but have matured due to my circumstances.

Client 2, service 4

Those who have struggled the most in the past can do the best in the future.

Client 5, service 4

I think it builds you. Because you start to realise what's important and you take things for granted when you got a nice roof over your head and a nice dinner every day and that. When you don't, you start to realise how much those things actually do contribute to your happiness and your wellbeing.

Client 1, service 2

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Evidence shows that while statutory youth homelessness is going down, the number of young people accessing homelessness services is increasing. Furthermore, these young people are presenting with a higher incidence of more complex support needs. More than two-thirds of providers report that they have had to turn young people away due to their needs being too high.

While the main cause of youth homelessness continues to be parents or carers being unable or unwilling to accommodate young people, the impact of welfare reform and changes to benefits are affecting them directly, and also placing increasing pressures on their families. Overcrowding and loss of tenancy due to benefit changes have become more common.

In the context of funding cuts and extra pressure on local authority budgets, services are working hard to support young people who need help with homelessness. There is a wider range of prevention initiatives available in many areas, and providers have increased the support they offer young people. More areas are also reporting better joint working, and half have implemented a 'positive pathway' model to provide a framework for both prevention and the provision of suitable support and accommodation for those who do become homeless.

However, despite these efforts, it is a concern that four in ten Local Authorities do not think they have adequate prevention tools to deal with the demands from young people at risk of homelessness in their area. Added to this is both a lack of both emergency accommodation and longer term housing options for young people in some areas, leaving more at risk of being trapped in homelessness if this is not improved.

To counter these issues many services are again working hard with a broad range of local agencies to make sure young people get the help they need. New policies and initiatives are being introduced that aim to improve access to accommodation, improve health, help people reconnect with families, and ensure that priority is given to those most in need. However, the resources and leadership to continue these efforts are needed as local areas face tough decisions about future spending. With over half of people now using homelessness services under-25, we cannot afford not to invest in their future to turn this around.

Recommendations by the National Youth Reference Group

The National Youth Reference Group (NYRG) is made up of young people aged 16-25 from across England who are homeless or have experienced homelessness. The group exists to assist national and local government, and homelessness organisations, to develop and improve their involvement opportunities for young people. The NYRG was asked to provide practical recommendations based on the findings from this report. These recommendations have been supplemented by additional asks by Homeless Link.

Greater public awareness of homelessness and young homeless people's options

The NYRG recommends that:

- Early education on homelessness should start in primary schools. For many young people who experience homelessness by age 13 the problems have already begun and education programmes are too late.

- Education programmes in schools should include practical lessons where schools are able to engage with homelessness services.
- Greater awareness of homelessness needs to be raised to reduce the stigma and myths associated with it. The introduction of a national youth homelessness week (similar to national anti-bullying week) could help to combat this.

Prevention and advice

The NYRG recommends that:

- Mediation services should accommodate the wider needs of the young person and refer in to other support services e.g. mental health, education and training support.
- Peer youth support should exist within mediation services. Young people often do not want to talk to another adult when they are experiencing family breakdown and homelessness.
- Greater investment should be made in timeout projects across the country to allow some space for young people and their parents to rebuild their relationships before it gets to crisis point.
- Every secondary school should have a designated member of non-teaching staff who is trained in housing advice and can provide information for young people who need help.

In addition, Homeless Link recommends:

- Local Authorities to offer a range of prevention initiatives to young people at risk of homelessness, including adequate investment in mediation for those affected by family relationship breakdown, and schemes which offer quick access into suitable emergency accommodation.
- National Government to make a stronger commitment to act early to prevent homelessness. This should include continued investment in the national homelessness prevention grant, ensuring this remains an identifiable funding stream to support prevention activity at a local level.

Support services

The NYRG recommends that:

- Greater access to more youth focused mental health services, which should include a maximum waiting time of one month to receive an appointment.
- Counselling services and counsellors should be trained to deal with young people's needs.
- Accommodation projects should include a young person on their board who is a current tenant to give feedback on their accommodation, services and support they provide.
- There needs to be greater investment in a national youth peer mentoring programme for the homelessness sector.

In addition, Homeless Link recommends:

- National Government to build on its commitment to young people who become homeless with continued investment in homelessness support so that Local Authorities can adequately meet their local need.
- Local Authorities, the NHS, and homelessness services to utilise joint health and homelessness commissioning plans to ensure they adequately identify and address the specific health and social care needs of young people experiencing homelessness.

Welfare reform

The NYRG recommends that:

- The 16 hour rule on JSA should be relaxed to allow young people more flexibility to attend training courses over 16 hours a week.

In addition, Homeless Link recommends:

- The Government to take account, when planning future welfare changes, of the challenges young homeless people can face and ensure that reforms do not disproportionately affect young people. In particular, any proposals to withdraw Housing Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance for under-25s should be reconsidered to avoid the negative impact this would have on youth homelessness.
- The Department for Work and Pensions to prioritise the implementation of commitments made following the Oakley review to improve the sanctions process, to avoid the disproportionate application of sanctions to homeless young people.

Housing options

The NYRG recommends that:

- There should be greater flexibility within local authorities about the proof they require to show a young person is homeless and in need of advice and assistance.
- Ensure a range of emergency accommodation options for young people are available in every local authority area including increasing the availability of youth specific emergency accommodation such as Nightstops and Crashpads.
- The use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people should be prohibited.

To support this, Homeless Link recommends:

- Every Local Authority to implement the Positive Pathway model to ensure appropriate accommodation options are in place for young people depending on their personal needs.
- National Government works with Local Authorities and homelessness agencies to utilise learning from Fair Chance Fund and other initiatives to support development and investment in new models of accommodation for young people.

Training, education and employment

The NYRG recommends that:

- A national training programme should be provided through homelessness organisations to recruit young people who have experienced homelessness to work for them.

To support this, Homeless Link recommends:

- Future employment support programmes to take account of the additional pressures on young homeless people caused by their insecure housing situation. Tailored programmes with expert advisors are needed ensure the right support is there to help young people manage these pressures, and participate fully in a way which matches their own goals and aspirations.

Monitoring of youth homelessness levels and trends

Homeless Link recommends:

- Government and Local Authorities to improve data recording in order to help ascertain the scale of youth homelessness, identify trends and observe the impact of prevention work. This should include better recoding of the ages of every young person who approaches their local authority for homelessness assistance, the reason for their approach and the final outcome of this approach. This should be incorporated into the current P1E statutory homelessness and prevention and relief statistics.
- Improved recording of B&B use, Children's Services should be required to record and monitor the number of under-25s placed in B&B.

Appendix One — Methodology

The findings in *Young and Homeless 2014* are based on two surveys with local authority housing departments and voluntary sector homelessness providers. Interviews with twelve young people who have experienced homelessness were also undertaken. This is the fourth consecutive year the research has been carried out using the same survey methodology. Comparisons to previous year's results have been made throughout the report.

Surveys

In September 2014, Homeless Link sent a web-based provider survey to 470 members that included accommodation providers, advice services, day centres and housing providers throughout England. A similar local authority survey was concurrently sent to contacts in Housing departments of 312 local authorities in England. This year the surveys underwent a few revisions to improve the clarity and quality of the questions but still asked many of the same questions that were asked in youth homelessness surveys conducted in previous years.

Many of the questions were identical in both surveys, covering the number of young people that approached services in August 2014, the causes of homelessness, housing outcomes for young people, and related services in the area. The provider survey also asked providers about the support that they offer, and the local authority survey asked local authorities about the prevention work that they undertake. All survey respondents were asked to provide detailed comments in open text questions to help add context and explain the findings.

Due to the similarity of the questions in both surveys, some responses have been combined to present an overall picture of youth homelessness. Where responses refer to just one of the two surveys, reference is made to the 'provider survey' or 'local authority survey'.

In total, we received 211 usable responses from both surveys; this consisted of 116 usable responses from providers of homelessness services and 95 usable responses from local authorities. This represents response rates of 25% and 30% respectively.

Interviews

During September and October 2014 we conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 young people from four homelessness services in England. We chose a purposive sample based on our existing contacts and membership. The sample consisted of four men and eight women aged between 18 and 24, with an average age of 20 years.

A panel discussion was also undertaken with six members of the National Youth Reference Group³¹ to discuss preliminary findings and gain their feedback on recommendations. The contributions of all these young people are used throughout the report to reflect their experiences and views on how interested parties can work together to help end youth homelessness.

³¹ The National Youth Reference Group is made up of young people aged 16 to 25 from across England who are homeless or have experienced homelessness. The group exists to assist national and local government, and homeless organisations, to develop and improve their involvement opportunities for young people.

Appendix Two — Limitations of the data

The annual youth homelessness survey is a valuable source of information on the challenges and pressures faced by the services that work with this group, and on the work that is being undertaken to help reduce and ultimately prevent young people becoming homeless. Local authorities and homelessness organisations provide the data which enables this research to take place. As useful as this data is, it should be interpreted with caution based on the caveats outlined below.

Available data

Local authorities only record a small amount of data on young people who present as homeless. They are not required to record the exact age of young people other than their inclusion in certain categories³². This makes it difficult to gather data on the exact age of young people approaching their local authority, their support needs and their outcomes. Beyond the data they are statutorily obliged to collect, local authorities vary in terms of how much data they record; for example, more than a quarter do not collect data on rough sleeping. This means that the survey results will inevitably represent a partial or incomplete picture.

Although data is available on the number of homeless applications made to local authorities and the number of acceptances for young people, there is no information on the numbers and demographics of people who are not permitted to make a homeless application. Consequently it is not possible to discern whether the numbers are increasing or decreasing, and what proportion of this group are young people.

Likewise, there is no demographic data on people who make an application but are declined help as they are not in priority need, or are considered to be intentionally homeless. The number and proportion of young people who are homeless but declined assistance is therefore unknown. Consequently, although the number and proportion of homeless acceptances for young people can be tracked, it is not possible to know whether this coincides with an increase or decrease of young people in the other categories.

Accuracy of responses

We asked respondents to disclose if the figures they had provided for the whole survey were exact figures, best estimates or a mixture of both. A breakdown can be found below for both surveys:

	Local Authorities	Providers
All exact figures	28%	15%
Mainly exact figures but some best estimates	43%	49%
A mix of exact figures and best estimates	16%	12%
Mainly best estimates, but some exact figures	5%	7%
All best estimates	8%	17%

Source: Homeless Link youth homelessness survey 2014: Providers: N=95; LAs: N=76

³² 16-24 year olds, 16/17 year olds, 18-21 year old care leavers and 22-24 year old care leavers

Levels of disclosure

Providers of homelessness organisations and local authorities also vary in terms of how they obtain data on young people, and how they record it. A particular caveat pertains to the level of disclosure from young people. Discussions with the NYRG revealed that young people often do not reveal issues and problems readily, particularly if they have trouble trusting adults. In particular, professionals can be intimidating and young people say that they will not talk to professionals if they feel judged or ignored. Young people reportedly find it particularly difficult to discuss their needs in the local authority setting. Consequently, during initial interviews about homelessness young people may not disclose all their issues.

Data on young people may therefore be underestimated or underreported. Furthermore, observable differences between providers and local authorities may reflect differences in recording processes and levels of disclosure among young people in these settings, as well as possible variance in the profile of young people accessing these two services.

Data collection

For this year's report survey respondents were asked to provide data relating to young people during the month of August. This is a month earlier than previous reports. Due to seasonal variations, comparisons with previous reports should be made with caution as differences may reflect the timing of data collection. Trends and comparisons with previous years are only made in the body of this report where it is appropriate to do so.



What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England. We work to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Let's end homelessness together

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