



Youth Homelessness in the North East Survey Report 2017

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Executive Summary

- In May 2017, Youth Homeless North East (YHNE) conducted its sixth annual survey into youth homelessness in the North East. Each year.
- The research aims to establish the nature, extent and causes of youth homelessness in the region and to identify how the wider social, political and economic context is impacting on the experiences of young people, as well as levels and the nature of service provision over time.
- In total, responses were received from ten local authorities and ten housing and homelessness service providers.
- Respondents typically reported a decrease in the number of homeless young people engaged with in February 2017, compared to February 2016.
- Ten local authorities indicated that just 56 young people presented as homeless in February 2017, representing 4% of all presentations.
- Five local authorities perceived that youth homelessness had decreased in their areas compared to the previous 12 months; just two reported an increase.
- A total of 449 young people sought housing advice and support in February 2017. Seven local authorities reported that requests for support had decreased compared to the previous 12 months.
- A total of 103 young people – of an even gender split – were being supported by responding providers in February 2017. Providers were divided in their opinions as to how demand for support had changed over time.
- The most common characteristics of homeless young people in the region were: being aged 16-17 and young parents/pregnant young people. Again, levels of homelessness among care leavers and offenders were lower than expected.
- As expected, parents no longer being willing or able to accommodate young people was the most significant cause of youth homelessness, followed by relationship breakdown with other relatives or friends. But, notable is the general increase in the breadth of causes of homelessness, suggesting more wide-ranging problems within families and among young people.
- The most common needs of homeless young people were said to be: mental health problems, lack of independent living skills and NEET. Poor mental health among young people becomes ever more prevalent each year.
- A quarter of respondents thought the number of young people presenting with complex needs had increased in the 12 months leading up to February 2017 and a third that the complexity of young people's needs had increased.
- The level and range of services offered in-house by providers has generally increased or remained stable across the region. However, a less positive picture emerged regarding the availability of external provision which they can refer young people to.
- Most providers reported having to refuse clients in February 2017, typically due to client needs being too high and clients being considered violent or a high risk to others.
- Local authorities reported 61 positive actions to prevent youth homelessness and 22 cases of successful homelessness relief in February 2017.
- Most judged there to be an adequate range of prevention services available in their area to meet the needs of young people at risk of homelessness in February 2017.
- The most effective prevention activities were assessed as family mediation and conciliation support, crisis interventions providing emergency support and support regarding PRS tenancies.
- In February 2017, most of the local authority respondents reported joint working with Children's Services to be very effective or effective. But, many also pointed out that joint working arrangements need to be reviewed and improved.
- Local authorities report to be using Homelessness Prevention Grants primarily for rent deposits.

- A more strategic approach to tackling youth homelessness in the region could be adopted. Less than half of local authority respondents reported to have any kind of youth homelessness strategy in place and just over half said they have a Positive Pathway in place.
- There are mixed levels of optimism regarding the impact of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) on levels of, and the management of homelessness. Some are hopeful that the new measures will result in additional support being offered to non-priority, single homeless people. Positively, part of the optimism of respondents was tempered by a majority feeling that their organisation already adopts some aspects of the HRA. Others are concerned, however, that the Act will place additional administrative burdens on local authorities and that the effects of welfare reform and funding constraints may undermine its effectiveness.
- While slight changes in emergency provision were reported, most respondents reported levels of emergency and short-stay provision to be unchanged. While this is positive, a shortage of bed spaces – particularly for clients with high level needs – was still reported.
- A worrying trend is emerging in respect of what appears to be the increasing use of B&B accommodation for young people.
- The most common move on destinations for homeless young people were reported to be: movement into housing association- and local authority- owned properties. Returning to the family home or moving into the PRS were rarely cited as the most common outcomes across the region.
- Respondents were almost consistently highly or very confident in the quality of their move on accommodation for young people, attributing this to effective partnership working with Children's Services and a range of housing associations and homelessness organisations.
- There was concern, however, that it is becoming harder to secure affordable and good quality move on accommodation for young people, in both the social and private rented sectors, due to a combination of welfare reforms and changes to housing allocation policies. Providers also reported that it is currently difficult to secure rent deposits for young people.
- Looking ahead, the automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit for certain 18 to 21year olds is a concern. The government reports a commitment to protecting those for whom it is inappropriate to live in the family home, but has provided little detail on how this will be assessed. For many young people, staying at home is not an option. It is vital that the sector continues to campaign for policies that are not to the detriment of vulnerable young people.

Introduction

Research Overview

This report outlines the findings of the sixth year of Youth Homeless North East's (YHNE) annual survey of youth homelessness. The survey aims to establish the nature, extent and causes of youth homelessness in the North East and identify how the wider social, political and economic context is impacting on the experiences of young people and levels and the nature of service provision over time. Specifically, the key questions explored through the research are:

- How many young people are homeless in the North East?
- What are the main causes of youth homelessness?
- How many homeless young people have had adverse life experiences?
- What are the primary needs of homeless young people in the region?
- What homelessness prevention, accommodation and support services are in place to assist vulnerable young people and how effective are these?
- What are the upcoming challenges facing young people and youth homelessness services?
- What should be the region's future strategic and operational objectives in respect of youth homelessness?

Going forward, it is hoped that the findings of this report are useful in informing regional and national policy and practice.

Methodology

This year's research was carried out through two online surveys: one tailored to local authorities and one to homelessness agencies and housing associations (collectively referred to as 'providers' in this report). The surveys largely reflect those used by Homeless Link's annual 'Young and Homeless' research, which looks at the nature of youth homelessness across England each year. This is to ensure that the regional and national data collected are comparable.

The surveys consisted of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions and asked for information relating to single homeless people, aged 16-24. Furthermore, it focused on two timeframes: February 2017 for snapshot figures and the previous 12 months for the assessment of changes over time. Ten responses were received from local authorities and providers, respectively. Seven providers described themselves as specialist youth organisations. Not all respondents answered every survey question, so baseline figures are given for the findings presented. The smaller the baseline (denoted by 'n'), the fewer respondents received and the less confident we can be that the findings are representative of the picture in the North East. Individual responses have been anonymised within the finding. Where relevant, comparisons are made between regional and national figures and figures from previous regional surveys.

Survey Findings

The Scale of Youth Homelessness

Estimating the scale of youth homelessness in the UK is highly problematic due to the limitations of official data and the hidden nature of the problem. Although the numbers of statutory homelessness among young people have decreased over recent years, overall levels are thought by the sector to have remained stable, if not increased, in recent years. As such, youth homelessness remains a significant challenge in our society (Centrepoin, 2015; Watts et al, 2015).

Regionally, the survey results suggest a decrease in youth homeless presentations. Ten local authorities indicated that a total of 1,386 persons of all ages presented as homeless in February 2017. Of these, just 56 (4%) were young single people between the ages of 16-24. These figures compare favourably to February 2016, where 1,255 individuals of all ages and 66 young people specifically presented as homeless (Irving, 2016). Furthermore, five local authorities (50%) perceived that youth homelessness had decreased in their areas compared to 12 months previous and just two (20%) that it had increased. The remaining local authorities reported no change. As such, the regional findings can broadly be considered to reflect national trends, which tentatively suggest a small decline in statutory homelessness among young people or at least, fewer young people presenting to local authorities as homeless (Homeless Link, 2015a).

Equally, nine local authorities reported that a total of 449 young people sought housing advice and support in February 2017. This compares to 622 young people in February 2016 (Irving, 2016). What is more, reflecting perceptions in 2016 (Irving, 2016), 7 of 8 (or 78% of) local authorities said the number of young people seeking advice and support had decreased compared to the previous 12 months. Both the quantitative and qualitative data, therefore, do suggest a decrease in requests for advice and support over the past 12 months.

Eight providers reported that 103 young people – of an even gender split – sought support from their service in February 2017. This compares to 224 in the previous year (Irving, 2016). As the providers who responded to the two surveys are to some extent different and even where there are commonalities, the nature of provision may have changed over time, it is unclear whether this represents a genuine decrease in demand for support. Providers were also divided in their opinions as to how demand for support has changed over time. Of ten responses, four (40%) reported a decrease in demand for support three (30%) reported an increase, two (20%) reported no change and one (10%) did not know. It may be that there is a variable picture of demand across the region.

Young Homeless People's Experiences

Both local authorities and providers were asked about the different categories of young people seeking support. In the case of local authorities, the question asked was about the categories of young people applying as homeless in February 2017. For the housing associations and homelessness charities, the question was how many young people in each category had been supported during that month. The questions were, therefore, slightly different and there is likely to be an element of double counting.

Of the homeless young people who presented to a local authority, the most common categories identified were: being aged 16-17 years old and being a young parent or pregnant young person. This stands in contrast to previous surveys, where being a young parent or pregnant young person has not emerged as a prominent category.

Positively, few young people were identified as care leavers or having a history of offending. This reflects a trend over recent years (see Harding et al, 2015 and Irving, 2016) where the prevalence of these categories has decreased. The positive picture could be due to the provision and effectiveness of support offered, particularly to care leavers, in the region. Indeed, five of six (83%) local authorities reported that young people who have been in care are given the option of longer-term support from the local authority after leaving the care system, one reported that support is provided to young people until the age of 21 if they are in full-time education, one reported recently receiving funding to expand their range of services available to care leavers and several reported to run very effective supportive lodgings schemes for this client group.

Moving on to consider the provider responses, again, the most common categories identified were being aged 16-17 years old and being a young parent or pregnant young person. However, being a care leaver, having an offending history and identifying as LGBT were still relatively common among the young people being supported (at 47%, 44% and 33%, respectively). Interestingly, this is the first year which identifying as LGBT has featured as a category in the survey. The number of young people captured in the survey sample as identifying as LGBT is higher than expected.

The local authority and provider responses were conflicted in respect of their reports and perceptions around rough sleeping. Providers reported that 24 young people supported during February 2017 were rough sleeping *immediately prior* to accessing support. This figure is more than double the number of reported cases in February 2016 (where just 12 cases were reported) (Irving, 2016). In the context of a potential decrease in the scale of youth homelessness, the scale of this potential increase is perplexing and concerning. Equally perplexing is that just three (30%) providers reported an increase in rough sleeping, while five (50%) reported no change and two (20%) reported a decrease.

Meanwhile, however, just one case was reported by local authorities and respondents were broadly of the consensus that there had been no increase in the scale of rough sleeping among young people across the region over a 12 month period.

The Causes of Homelessness

Both local authorities and providers were asked about the reasons for homelessness among young people. Local authorities were asked about those who presented as homeless, while providers were asked about the young people who they had supported. The prevalence of each cause of homelessness is shown in the graph below. Reflecting long-standing trends, parents no longer being willing or able to accommodate young people was by far the most common cause of youth homelessness, followed by relationship breakdown with other relatives or friends, eviction and homelessness because of abuse/domestic violence.

Interesting to observe, however, is the general increase in the breadth of causes of homelessness. In previous years, youth homelessness because of overcrowding, eviction from the PRS or homelessness following leaving institutional care, for example, was highly rare.

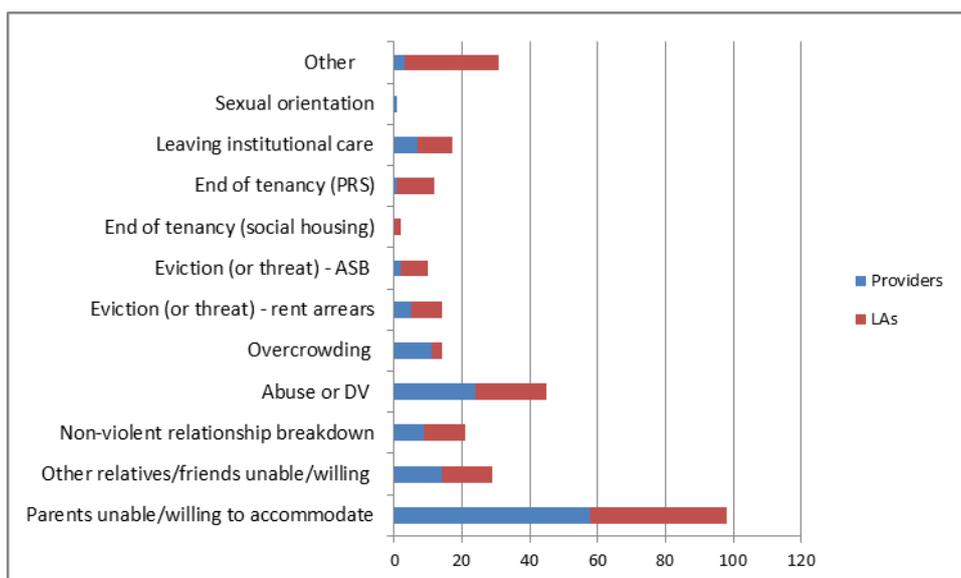


Figure 1: The Causes of Homelessness among Young People in February 2017

Local authorities and providers were asked to rank the prevalence of a range of reasons for parents or caregivers no longer being willing or able to accommodate young people. There was a consensus between the local authority respondents about the reasons for this and between the providers. But, there were differences between the perceptions of the two groups. The rankings to emerge are listed in the table below.

Reason for parents unable/unwilling to accommodate	LAs	Providers
Breakdown in relationship with parent	1	1
Breakdown in relationship with stepparent or other family member	2	2
Overcrowding	3	6
Financial difficulties	4	4
Violence/abuse perpetrated by the young person	5	5
Substance misuse	6	3
The young person's sexual orientation	7	7

Table 1: Ranking of the Reasons for Parents being unable or unwilling to Accommodate

As can be seen, there was consensus that relationship breakdown between parents and step-parents or other family members were the most common causes of young people leaving the family home, while sexual orientation was the least common reason. However, local authority respondents reported overcrowding and financial difficulties to be common reasons also, while providers reported financial difficulties and substance misuse to be more common reasons.

Surprisingly, there was limited discussion about Universal Credit in the survey. But, one local authority respondent did report that delays in payment had resulted in an increase in arrears among some young people in their area.

Young People's Support Needs

Providers were asked about the number of young people accessing their services in February 2017 that had different types of support need.

The same question was asked of local authorities, with reference to those young people who approached them as homeless. However, due to the lack of local authority data provided (both across the board and in relation to specific needs which are not recorded), the few responses received had to be discounted.

Accordingly, the most common support needs identified by the providers were: mental health difficulties, lack of independent living skills, a history of offending and not being in education, training or employment (NEET).

Notable, here, is the dramatic increase in the scale of mental health needs among young people. Over the course of conducting this survey, lack of independent living skills and NEET have always been identified as the most common needs of young people, but mental health has gradually increased in its prominence as a support need. This was specifically discussed in 2016 also (Irving, 2016).

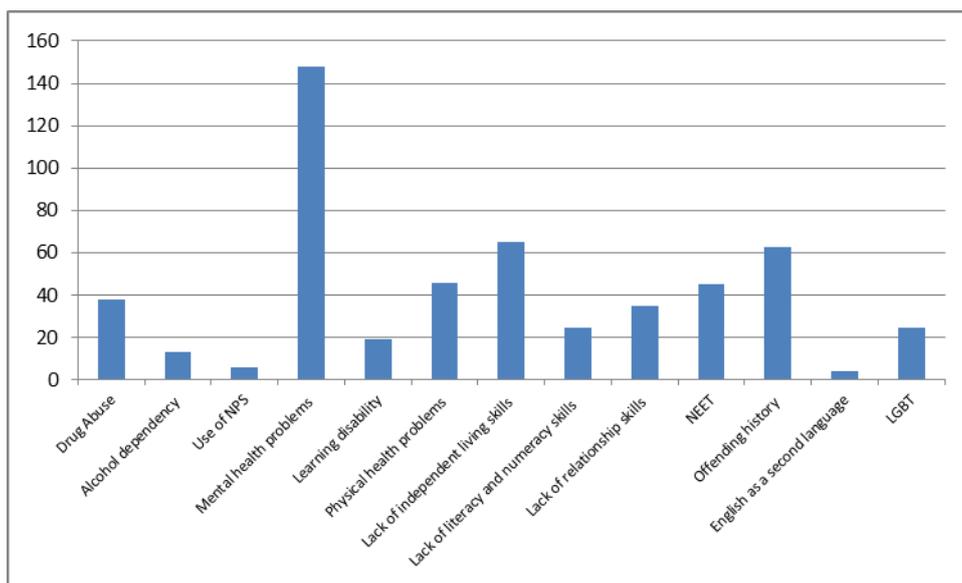


Figure 2: The Support Needs of Homeless Young People in February 2017

Year on year, respondents report increases in the proportion of young people with complex needs and the complexity of needs (see Irving, 2014; Harding et al, 2015). Nationally, however, there appears to have been a small reduction in the proportion of young people presenting with complex needs (Homeless Link, 2015a). How the plight of young people in the North East, compares to the national picture this year, is unclear.

All respondents were asked to judge the number of young people approaching them for support with complex needs. Rather worryingly, five (26%) respondents thought the number of young people presenting with complex needs had increased in the 12 months leading up to February 2017. Having said that, eight (42%) reported no change and six (32%) reported to be unsure.

Regarding the complexity of needs, six (30%) respondents reported that the complexity of young people's needs had also increased, seven (35%) reported no change in the complexity of young people's needs and seven (35%) reported to be unsure. One respondent who was particularly concerned about complex needs among care leavers they are working with explained:

'The biggest issue going forward is young people with more and more complex needs that are coming through the care system and will soon be turning 18. Already, a lot of these young people are finding it difficult to maintain placements in residential and foster placements which can mean that they are thrust into supported accommodation, despite

not quite being ready for this jump. In addition, supported accommodation providers are under pressure to deal with these increasingly challenging young people and the danger is that they will terminate their accommodation, leaving these vulnerable clients homeless and thrust into inappropriate accommodation which can exasperate their wellbeing in a very negative way'. (Local Authority respondent)

When asked about a range of support services that they provided, six of ten (60%) providers reported an increase in the range or scale of services that they provide and four (40%) reported that they remained unchanged compared to February 2016. This is immensely positive in the current climate. As can be seen from the table below, despite funding cuts in recent years, providers generally continue to provide the suite of services needed to address young people's needs – including support to address their health, education and employment needs.

Service Provision	Number of Providers
Advice and information	9
Mediation services	3
Help accessing benefits	9
Emergency/short-stay accommodation	6
Non short-stay or other accommodation	5
Housing-related support	10
Help finding independent accommodation	10
Health support	7
Employment and education support	8
Signposting to other agencies	10

Table 3: Service Availability for Homeless Young Clients

In addition to this, however, several also pointed out the importance of support which they offer in terms of: access to food parcels, parenting skills, digital inclusion, social events and pro-social activities

A less positive picture emerged regarding external provision. Two of ten (20%) providers reported that the range of services which they can refer young people on to has increased, four (40%) reported no change and four (40%) reported a decrease.

What's more, six of eight (75%) reported decreases in youth services in their area. Just one reported an increase and one reported no change.

Finally, providers were asked whether they had been unable to assist any young people in February 2017 for a range of reasons, as outlined in the chart above.

Like the findings of 2016 (Irving, 2016), the most common reasons for being unable to assist young people were client needs being too high and clients being considered violent or a high risk to others.

Reasons for refusing clients	Number of providers who have declined clients
Limited capacity	1
Client needs are too low	1
Client has no recourse to public funds	1
Client was heavily under the influence of drugs or alcohol	2
Client has no local connection	3
Client needs are too high	4
Client was considered violent/high risk to others	5
Other	1

Table 4: Reasons for Providers being Unable to Assist Young People in February 2017

Local Authority Prevention Activities

Eight local authorities reported on the level of prevention activities undertaken with young people in February 2017. The definition of prevention used was ‘when someone avoids homelessness and is assisted to obtain alternative accommodation or remain in their existing home’. A total of 61 positive actions to prevent youth homelessness were reported during the month. Local authority respondents were also asked to report on homelessness relief activities. The definition of relief used was ‘when youth homelessness cannot be prevented but the young person is supported to secure accommodation even though the local authority is under no obligation to do this’. A total of 22 cases of successful homelessness relief were recorded for February 2017. These figures are broadly similar to those reported 12 months previously (Irving, 2016).

Seven of nine (78%) local authority respondents judged that they had an adequate range of prevention services available in their area to meet the needs of young people at risk of homelessness in February 2017; just one (12%) respondent stated that their area did not and one (11%) did not know. Considering the qualitative comments here, one respondent reported that their Children’s Services is currently expanding in-house provision for 16 and 21 year olds, while another reported that a key challenge to effective prevention is the affordability of accommodation.

In addition, local authority respondents were asked what they considered to be the most effective prevention activities in operation in their areas in February 2017. As indicated in the table below, family mediation and conciliation support, crisis interventions providing emergency support and support regarding PRS tenancies were most frequently cited as being most effective.

Prevention Activity	Number of Las who reported this to be most effective
Family mediation	4
Conciliation including home visits for family/friends threatened exclusions	3
Crisis intervention providing emergency support	3
Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure that someone can remain in PRS accommodation	3
Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund	2
Resolving HB problems	1
Resolving rent or service charges in the PRS or SRS	1
Sanctuary scheme measures for DV	1
Children's service use of section 17 for ST financial support for 16/17 year olds	1
Education work in schools or other youth work	0
Partnership working with local Troubled Families initiative	0
Other	3

Table 5: Local Authority Views on Effective Prevention Activities

It has long been the case that there are joint working arrangements in place between local authority Housing and Children's Services teams to support the needs of 16 and 17 year olds. In February 2017, three (33%) local authority respondents reported these arrangements to be very effective. To this, one respondent commented, *'We have a robust Joint Protocol between the two departments which has been in place for many years and is very successful'* and another reported that their joint working arrangements had been praised by OFSTED. Another respondent stated:

'[Name of area] homelessness team and Children's Services have an excellent working relationship and both teams have dedicated officers who regularly communicate with each other about current issues, clients, securing move on etc. This extends to the commissioned services within [name of area] especially for young people and Care Leavers, and our accommodation panel and forum that we hold to discuss good practice, ongoing issues/concerns, changes in legislation, etc'.

Five (56%) reported arrangements to be effective and one (11%) reported these to be ineffective. Reflecting a trend in recent years, therefore, these figures suggest that joint working arrangements may be less effective in the region than they were several years ago, where most respondents would report arrangements to be very effective.

In support of this, one respondents commented that new processes were currently being developed to improve joint working arrangements and another added that their working arrangements are in need of review and staffing changes have resulted in less staff awareness of relevant protocols.

In December 2015, the government announced a package of measures to help tackle homelessness, including additional funding for local authority homelessness prevention activities.

So, for just the second time in the survey, local authorities were asked about their use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) for young people. The number of local authorities which used the grant for various purposes are outlined in the table below.

Use of HPG	Number of LAs (2016)	Number of LAs (2017)
Rent deposits	8	5
Rent arrears	7	3
Crisis payments	6	1
Core funding/staff costs	3	3
Other	5	3

Table 6: Use of the HPG by Local Authorities

The current survey findings suggest that local authorities are using the grant for a smaller range of activities. But, the grant remains most commonly used for rent deposits.

A Strategic Approach to Tackling Youth Homelessness

Considering many policy changes affecting young people’s lives, it seems only appropriate that central government and local authorities have a good understanding of the impacts of existing and proposed policy on vulnerable young people and develop a strategy for supporting adversely affected individuals in response.

Although no local authorities reported to have a youth-specific homelessness strategy, four of nine (44%) reported to have a youth homelessness strategy outlined within their overall homelessness strategies. This figure is low, however, and could be significantly improved.

Endorsed by local authorities, however, the YHNE Regional Youth Housing Strategy and Action Plan (2016-19) include priorities set through consultation with the region’s authorities and wider providers to: increase early intervention and prevention work; increase training and employment for young people affected by homelessness to enable them to secure a long-term future; influence policy makers and support joint commissioning in order to prevent, tackle and resolve youth homelessness in the North East; and improve the quality and range of temporary and supported accommodation.

Additionally, the Positive Pathways model aims to prevent young people becoming homeless by giving local authorities and homelessness services a clear framework regarding the necessary services and support needed to help young people who become homeless. Positively, six of ten (60%) of local authority respondents said a Positive Pathway is in place in their area. One (10%) said it is not and three (30%) did not know.

Multi-agency working continues to be cited as essential for tackling youth homelessness.

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), likely to be implemented in 2018, will be the first piece of significant homelessness legislation implemented for 15 years. The Act places a new duty on local authorities to help prevent the homelessness of all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness.

Key measures include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days, and clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 8 (1) or section 21 (2) notice. These provisions represent a shift in focus to early intervention, and aim to encourage Local Housing Authorities to act quickly and proactively, addressing concerns that some previously only intervened at crisis point.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need. This extends the help available to people not in priority need, with Local Housing Authorities supporting them to either stay in their accommodation or help them find somewhere to live and should mean fewer households reach a crisis.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Those who have a priority need will be provided with interim accommodation whilst the Local Housing Authority carries out the reasonable steps.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they meet someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It is hoped that this measure will ensure that a person's housing situation is considered when they meet wider public services, and encourage public services to build strong relationships based on local need and circumstances (Homeless Link, 2017).

Of 21 respondents, just one (5%) was highly optimistic that the HRA would have a positive impact on levels of and the management of homelessness, five (24%) were optimistic, eight (38%) were cautiously optimistic, four (19%) were not optimistic and three (14%) did not feel able to comment. There were similar levels of optimism among local authority and provider respondents.

Some are hopeful that the new measures required by the Act will result in additional support being offered to, and additional time being given to support non-priority, single homeless people. Positively, part of the optimism of respondents was tempered by a majority feeling that their organisation already adopts some aspects of the HRA. Others are concerned, however, that the Act will place additional administrative burdens on local authorities and that the effects of welfare reform (particularly Universal Credit), insufficient funding given to local authorities to implement the required measures, further funding cuts to the voluntary sector and limited partnership working between the local authority and voluntary organisations in some areas, may undermine the effectiveness of the Act.

Nonetheless, implementation efforts are already underway. Some local authorities are undertaking a fundamental review of all policies and procedures (such as choice-based lettings policies), staff training needs, IT systems and service delivery models to place a greater emphasis on prevention and relief. One local authority has even appointed a dedicated officer to oversee the implementation of the Act. A regional meeting has also been organised for local authorities to share ideas and good practice around implementing the Act with each other. Where authorities are already working in line with the Act, they anticipate that implementation will require only small changes to policies, procedures and services.

Emergency and Short-Stay Temporary Accommodation

Local authority respondents were asked whether the supply of a range of forms of emergency accommodation had changed in the 12 months leading up to February 2017: crash pad beds, youth specific assessment centres/short stay accommodation, all agency emergency hostels, No Second

Night Out provision, supported lodgings, bed and breakfast hotels and other short stay accommodation. Reflecting the findings of previous surveys, in all cases, most respondents reported levels of provision to be unchanged (see Irving, 2014 and Harding et al, 2015). As such, provision in the North East appears to be more widespread than the national picture suggests. Some slight changes in provision were nonetheless reported. Increases in crash pad beds and supported lodging were reported by two respondents, respectively, while decreases were reported in all-age emergency hostels and youth specific assessment centre/short stay supported accommodation, in one area, respectively.

Less positively, however, some respondents reported that some of this provision will increasingly only accept clients with low risk factors, resulting in it becoming increasingly difficult to find emergency provision for clients with complex needs and those deemed to be higher risk clients. Conversely, where such providers will accept higher risk clients, the nature of the emergency provision is not necessarily suitable for the clients. Here, one respondent commented, *'There are limited supported accommodation options for 16-25 year olds. [Name of hostel] is the default option, but it is not suitable for all'*. To tackle this, one respondent reported that within their area, they have commissioned some emergency supported lodgings provision, to provide clients with a *'safer, nurturing environment for clients that present as homeless and in crisis'*. Another respondent explained that to meet demand for emergency support – where placements break down – their local authority has developed relationships with a range of non-commissioned services, while their Children's Services has begun to manage a portfolio of properties on behalf of a local social landlord which can be used to house young people who are then supported to prepare for managing a tenancy of their own. Furthermore, it is important to note that although service levels have been relatively stable over time, concerns around insufficient bed spaces remain, particularly in rural areas.

Relatedly, a worrying trend is emerging in respect of what appears to be the increasing use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation for young people. In the initial years of the survey, almost all local authorities reported to never use B&Bs to accommodate young people. But, this seems to be creeping up over time. Indeed, in February 2017, of ten local authority respondents, three (30%) said they never used B&B accommodation for young homeless people, but four (40%) reported that it is used rarely and three (30%) that it is used occasionally. This is still a very positive picture for the region, nonetheless, and more favourable than the national picture (Homeless Link, 2015a).

Regarding short-term accommodation options, most of the local authority respondents said that there had been no change in the provision of hostels/foyers, supported lodgings, shared housing for those in education, training or employment and other non-short stay accommodation. However, there were three forms of provision that three respondents said had decreased: supported lodgings, shared housing with floating support and self-contained units with low or no support. No increases in provision were reported.

Providers generally agreed that temporary accommodation was largely unchanged in their area. However, increases in supported lodgings and shared housing with floating support were reported by one provider respectively (although one also reported the loss of shared housing with floating support in their area) and two providers reported an increase in self-contained units with support in their area.

Moving On

Both local authorities and providers were asked about the most common move-on outcomes for homeless young people.

Both sets of respondents reported these to be movement into housing association- and local authority- owned properties, with few reporting young people returning to the family home or moving into the PRS as the most common outcomes.

Move-on Option	LAs	Providers
Housing association owned accommodation	5	2
Local authority owned housing	4	5
Young people returning to live with family and friends	1	0
Movement into the PRS	0	2

Table 7: Most Common Move-On Outcomes for Homeless Young Clients

Local authorities were asked about the range of move on services available to young people in their areas. By far, the most common support available was rent deposit or cashless bond schemes. Providers however reported that it is often very difficult to secure rent deposits for young people. Finally, they were asked about their level of confidence about different features of the accommodation that young people move on to in their area, in line with the standards set by young people and outlined within the YHNE Youth Housing Charter. The results are shown below. In all cases where the respondents could comment, they were almost consistently highly or very confident in the quality of move on accommodation for young people. Respondents were most confident about the provision of housing with adequate facilities, security and locks on doors.

Aspect of accommodation	Highly confident	Very confident	Confident	Unconfident	Don't know
Housing with adequate facilities, security and locks on doors	3	4	0	0	2
Secure permanent accommodation they can call their own rather than moving between temporary accommodation	1	8	0	0	0
Housing in an area they know, feel safe, where they are aware of available facilities and services, where to go for help, what the transport links are and close to training and employment	2	5	1	0	1
Where they want it, housing in an area close to family, carers, friends and other support networks	1	7	0	0	1

Table 8: Local Authority Confidence in the Quality of Move-On Accommodation

The above responses were attributed to effective partnership working with Children's Services and a range of housing associations and homelessness organisations to provide young people with good quality accommodation and ensure that young people have received all the pre-tenancy support and training which they require.

There was concern, however, that it is becoming harder to secure affordable and good quality move on accommodation for young people, in rural areas, where social housing providers are becoming reluctant to accept young people as tenants in light of the proposed changes to Housing Benefit, with housing associations having developed lettings policies which exclude those out of work from accessing their accommodation.

Conclusion

Once again, the survey results reveal that youth homelessness remains a serious – yet perhaps somewhat stable – problem within the North East. Notable findings are ongoing, problems around support for young people aged 16 and 17 years old, the complexity of young people's needs, the rapid increase in mental health problems among young people and ongoing financial pressures and tension within family households.

In addition, while the region continues to respond to the needs of homeless young people with determination and ingenuity, and is doing well to stave off the adverse effects of counter-productive central government policies, it seems that the number of structural and systemic challenges facing young people and the sector continues to escalate. The North East, faces ongoing problems around poverty and deprivation (which underpin all pathways into homelessness) and housing affordability and accessibility, whilst unemployment amongst young people remains the highest in the country. It is important that work around education, training and employment opportunities, and partnership working with landlords continues. Supporting young people to secure housing and engage in pro-social behaviours, however, will be difficult without continued work to prevent and address personal difficulties. For the North East it seems that a concerted focus on understanding and responding to mental ill-health and its' relationship with homelessness is needed.

There have been some positive developments at the national level such as government agreement not to cap LHA rates in the supported accommodation and social rented sector. But, other national challenges continue. In addition to the already significant hurdles which homeless young people must tackle to access public funds and well-versed concerns about existing welfare reforms, the wider roll-out of Universal Credit and the proposed removal of the automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit for certain 18 to 21year olds remain a concern. Regarding the latter, the government has committed to protecting those for whom it is inappropriate to live in the family home, but has provided little detail on how it intends to assess these criteria. Indeed, for many young people, staying at home is not an option. Housing Benefit is a lifeline. It is vital that the homelessness sector continues to push for clarification on this issue and seeks to ensure that any changes are not to the detriment of vulnerable young people.

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