



Care Experienced and LGBTQ+ Young People at Risk of Homelessness – Discussion Paper

The purpose of this short paper is to inform the discussions that local authorities and partners are having, as we move to Phase 2 of the response to homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis. Fundamentally, this paper aims to highlight the disproportionate overrepresentation of both care-experienced and LGBTQ+ young people in the homelessness system and inspire discussion about how they can be effectively supported.

This paper pulls together evidence from 2 papers written by End Youth Homelessness Cymru (more info on EYHC available at the end of this document): 2019's [Out on the Streets: LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales](#) and *Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks: Care-Experienced Young People's Experiences of Homelessness in Wales*. The latter paper is in final draft stage but given the current pace of change, and in discussion with the Housing Network, we decided it would be helpful to share key findings & provisional recommendations from it now.

LGBTQ+ Young People

“LGBTQ+ (youth homelessness) is a major public health concern that has significant consequences for a young person's physical and psychosocial well-being.”¹

“(My family) treated it like it was a mental illness: ‘You can get help for this’, ‘You can be cured’. It was definitely one of the main reasons why I (became) homeless.”²

Our research found that LGBTQ+ young people are disproportionately overrepresented in the homeless population (24% of the youth homelessness population across the UK identified as LGBT³), though inconsistent data collection, combined with a reluctance by many to out themselves upon presentation, means they lack visibility and consequently few services exist to support their specific needs.

The [full list of recommendations can be found in the report](#). Two examples of good practice are provided below featuring Denbighshire and the Vale of Glamorgan LAs:

¹ McCann, E. & Brown, M. (2019). Homelessness among youth who identify as LGBTQ+: A Systematic Review. Journal of Clinical Nursing. 2019: 1-12. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30786099>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

² Participant in EYHC Research (2019)

³ Bateman, W. (2015). LGBT Youth Homelessness: UK National Scoping Exercise. Albert Kennedy Trust. Retrieved from: https://www.theproudtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/AlbertKennedy_ResearchReport_Youth-Homelessness.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

1. In 2019, Ty Pride was opened in Rhyl: this is a **supported housing project for LGBTQ+ youth run** jointly by Llamau, Denbighshire Council and [Viva](#), which is supporting 6 young people presently (3 in the house, 3 in the community). Though still in its early days, the model is based on good practice from other countries and should be considered as an example of the type of service that young people told us was much needed in Wales.

2. Included below is a **set of commitments made by the Vale of Glamorgan Council as part of their 2019-23 Homelessness Prevention Strategy**, following the release of our report, which we consider to be exemplary and worthy of consideration of by other LAs as plans are put in place for future service delivery.

- Include actions within the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2019-2023 to address LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness outlined in the 'Out on the Streets' Report'.
- Provide data on the numbers of LGBTQ+ people accessing homelessness services
- Regularly consult with local LGBTQ+ groups and maintain a strategic commitment.
- Map, link in and learn from LGBTQ+ young people services available within the Vale of Glamorgan area.
- Commission specialist LGBTQ+ training for front line staff working in Housing and Homelessness.
- Obtain advice from Stonewall Cymru on ways to make homelessness services more welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people with visible commitments to equality and implement recommendations.
- Ensure young people presenting to homelessness services are proactively offered a private space to talk about their situation.

Care-Experienced Young People

Care experienced young people are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness (33% become homeless in the first two years after leaving care, and 25% of all single homeless people have been in care at some point in their lives).⁴ We interviewed 27 homeless, care-experienced young people across Wales who highlighted key areas for improvements to systems. To inform the response to Phase 2, we present their thoughts on **temporary/emergency accommodation**.

“There were smack heads going in there, you could smell drugs as well. It was making me sick...I didn't have a TV in my room, you had to share a living room which was shut off at 10PM and then you are staring at blank walls.”

“... toilet seats hanging off, no locks on the doors, toilets downstairs. So you had to get up in the middle of the night get dressed and go downstairs. One of the B&B's I was put into there was a guy and his girlfriend and they just got out of jail.”

⁴ Stirling, T (2018), *Youth Homelessness and Care Leavers: Mapping Interventions in Wales*, Accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Youth-homelessness-and-care-leavers-Mapping-interventions-in-Wales.pdf>

Care-experienced young people told us about their recent experiences of temporary/emergency accommodation. Their stories were often troubling. They helped us to create a list of minimum standards:

Young People's Golden Rules of Temporary Accommodation

1. No damp
2. Security (a lockable door)
3. Privacy
4. Access to a private shower and toilet
5. Hygiene products provided e.g. a toothbrush, sanitary products, and a hairbrush.
6. Connectivity (this is about being able to access services as well as having access to Wi-Fi).
7. Kitchen tools provided e.g. a kettle and a microwave
8. Easy access – young people spoke about ensuring the accommodation was accessible by public transport, as well as having keys to the front door and for there to be no curfew
9. A window
10. First aid access/ first aid trained staff
11. Caring staff who they could talk to
12. If shared, then not with older people, especially if they have harmful substance use issues.

Provisionally (subject to final draft consultation with stakeholders), our report will recommend that:

- Welsh Government should introduce new minimum standards of temporary accommodation, agreed in consultation with young people & informed by the 'golden rules' set out in this paper.
- Welsh Government should, at the same time, deliver a commitment to dramatically limit the length of time that any young person should be expected to remain in temporary accommodation before being found settled housing, as has been done in Scotland.⁵ This is in line with the current stated approach of rapid-rehousing in long-term accommodation.
- Welsh Government and Local Authorities should address the lack of suitable temporary accommodation for care leavers and other vulnerable young people across Wales. Building on the findings in Stirling (2018)⁶, local authorities should comprehensively map available temporary accommodation, which meets the new minimum standards, and compare that data with existing and predicted need. Where gaps exist, these must be filled as a matter of urgency with central funding provided, as required.

⁵ <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/article/unsuitable-accommodation-order-extended-to-all-people-experiencing-homelessness>

⁶ Stirling, T. (2018) Youth homelessness and care leavers: Mapping interventions in Wales. Available at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Youth-homelessness-and-care-leavers-Mapping-interventions-in-Wales.pdf>.

Background to End Youth Homelessness Cymru

[End Youth Homelessness Cymru](#) is a national coalition, led by [Llamau](#), determined to end youth homelessness within 10 years; a mission we believe is both vital and achievable. We believe that every young person should have a safe place to call home with the support needed to leave homelessness behind and lead a happy, fulfilled life.

Young people experiencing homelessness are at a key developmental period. They often have no experience of independent living and lack the resilience of adulthood. Some will have involvement with youth-specific systems, notably the care system, which increase their risk of homelessness. **For all of these reasons, youth homelessness requires a distinct approach from that taken to combat adult homelessness.**

Research shows that in a sample of homeless people in Wales, 48% first became homeless before the age of 21.⁷ Further, 73% had been homeless more than once, showing that after becoming homeless once, it is likely to recur. This shows that **to build on the response to homelessness during COVID-19 and effectively end adult homelessness, it is necessary to intervene early and prevent young people from becoming homeless.**

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⁷ Mackie, P. (2014), *Nations apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain*. Accessed at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20608/crisis_nations_apart_2014.pdf