

FEB
2023



End Youth
Homelessness Cymru

UPDATE



Youth Experiential Learning Simulation (YExLS)

In May, EYHC were delighted to host the first Youth Justice Simulation, or Youth Experiential Learning Simulation, to take place in Europe, working in partnership with our American friends from BakerMckenzie's Pro Bono team and the Youth Law Centre.

The YExLS attempts to imitate young people's experiences when they try to access help from systems, such as social services, youth justice and housing services. Key to its effectiveness is that it was developed by professionals who have worked in youth serving systems for decades in partnership with young people with lived experience of the justice, care and homelessness systems. The YExLS seeks to help participants get a better sense of what it is like to be a young person navigating the myriad of public systems while also pursuing their own dreams, following their own interests, and surviving their own traumas.

Such was the reaction to and feedback from the May simulation, it was of paramount importance to EYHC that we did everything we could to convince our North American partners to come back to Wales to not only run the simulation again for a larger number of attendees but also, ambitiously, we hoped they would be happy to train a team of us, led by EYHC, so that we'd be able to facilitate the YExLS independently.

We were delighted that Angela and Brian agreed to our proposals, and a more detailed write up the 'Story so far' for the YExLS can be found [here](#), which explains the initial conversations, the event in May, and provides a more detailed explanation of the 'simulation week', and the team that we managed to recruit and what our training entailed.

For the event in November we were delighted to have over 110 participants attend the simulation at the City Hall in Cardiff. Again, we were pleased to see such a diverse mix of attendees, from a range of backgrounds and sectors covering:

- Welsh Government Officials
- NHS Wales
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Office
- The Cardiff City Foundation
- Local Authority Team's covering: Housing, Youth Work and Social Services
- Housing Associations
- Parc Prison and the Youth Justice Board
- WISERD
- A number of third sector organisations including Shelter Cymru, Cymorth Cymru and Llamau

To be the first country in the world to have been entrusted to run the YExLS independently, is a huge honour for us and one that we are very grateful for. We also feel a huge responsibility to ensure that we deliver it in line with everything we were taught by Angela and Brian, maintaining its integrity and respecting the young people who helped to shape the simulation. We are so excited to take this forward, as we truly believe this has the power to be transformative in how we support young people across Wales, ensuring that the different parts of the 'system' work together coherently, whilst being more youth-led and flexible to each young person's situation and their own strengths and life ambitions. We have been so enthused by attendees' reactions to both simulations thus far, and we are currently underway in formulating plans for simulations throughout 2023, and importantly this will be across different parts of Wales, as we are conscious that the first two have been held in Cardiff. Please watch this space for future plans, and don't hesitate to get in contact if you have any questions or queries about the simulation

Exploring Youth Homelessness through the lens of Neurodiversity

For the past year we have been working on a research project to explore homelessness experiences of neurodivergent youth in Wales with the aim to provide recommendations on how to prevent youth homelessness for this group of young people and help make services more inclusive and accessible.

It was important for us to ensure that our research is led by young people and underpinned by youth voice. Hence at the start of the project we recruited five young people, four of which had lived experiences of youth homelessness, to become peer research and carry out the research project with us. The young people were trained in research methods to give them the skills to be meaningfully involved throughout the research process. To find out the information necessary to fulfil our research aims, we gathered the views of many young people and practitioners from across Wales. As part of the data collection process we have:

- Carried out a focus group with practitioners working within youth and housing sectors to find out more about their experiences of providing support and the constraints they face in their day-to-day work
- Conducted 12 in-depth interviews with neurodivergent young people who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness. The majority of interviews were carried out by our peer researchers
- Shared a survey with practitioners from which we received 60 responses
- Carried out a workshop with both practitioners and peer researchers to discuss the recommendations of the report

On the back of the findings, we have also developed a workshop which provides a space for practitioners to reflect on their practice and co-create solutions with their colleagues to improve the accessibility of their services. If you would like to find out more about the workshop, please contact MonikaConti@llamu.org.uk

Our research has already been showcased at two major housing and homelessness conferences:

In September we had the opportunity to present on our research methods, particularly the use of peer research and participatory approaches, during 16th European Research Conference on Homelessness in Bergamo, Italy organised by FEANTSA.

In December we presented our research findings at the Wales Housing Research Conference in Cardiff.

We are currently in the process of writing up the report which is planned to be published in March 2023.



Conferences, reports, and best practice guides

Conferences

Since our previous Newsletter, EYHC have been involved in a number of external conferences and events. In September, we were delighted that our Policy and Research Officer Monika Conti, was invited to present at FEANTSA's 16th European Research Conference on Homelessness in Bergamo, Italy, on our Neurodiversity research, particularly exploring our peer research and participatory methods. Monika was involved in a session with colleagues from Ireland, who also presented on their work around peer research and meaningful youth engagement.

In October, Project Manager Bill Rowlands, was invited to give a guest lecture, at FEANTSA's week-long study session focusing on Housing First for Youth. The lecture explored coalition building around youth homelessness prevention; contextualizing the formation of EYHC and the different

strands to our work, highlighting our Roadmap to Ending Youth Homelessness and how this was the result of our different networks; and also, the doors that being involved with FEANTSA and broader international coalitions have opened for us at EYHC. It was again encouraging to see the international recognition that Wales, and the work of EYHC, has around youth homelessness prevention.

In December, Monika was invited to present at Wales' Housing Research Conference, presenting on our Neurodiversity research. Highlighting both the peer research methods utilised and also the initial findings and recommendations of the report. The presentation stimulated a really interesting discussion with a number of interested individuals and organizations in attendance and has resulted in a number of really useful follow up conversations.

Reports

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, over the past few months we have been working on undertaking reviews of previous two key reports, *Out on the Streets* and *Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks*. These reviews will assess the progress made since the publication of the reports with regards to preventing youth homelessness and improving services for young people. Our review of *Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks* can be found [here](#), whilst our series of articles exploring LGBTQ+ homelessness in Wales will be launched in February, so please watch this space.

Best Practice Guides

We have recently published our next three Best Practice Guides. Designed to supplement our Roadmap for Ending Youth Homelessness in Wales, our series of Best Practice Guides highlights different schemes, projects and approaches across Wales that are proven to be effective in preventing or tackling youth homelessness. These three guides respectively focus on, Pobl's Shared Accommodation scheme, Carmarthenshire's Training Flats and Pembrokeshire's Furniture Scheme. They can all be found [here](#).

Youth Action Group Update

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My electricity bill has quadrupled over the last six weeks. The amount I'm spending on food has doubled. I buy the cheapest food possible, use minimal energy, and still find myself in disbelief at how quickly money disappears. You can utilise all the expert advice, fixate on tips and tricks to save money, share the burden with others to ease pressure. It won't be enough to beat the system. Nobody should have to be worried about whether or not they should turn the heating on, or where their next meal might come from, ”

Last year as part of our Youth Action Group, one of our group members carried out a focus group on the cost of living crisis, to find out how the crisis was affecting young people who had experienced homelessness.

The young people shared their difficult stories, as they struggled to afford to feed themselves, pay for gas and electric, see their friends and family, or participate in the lives of their communities because of increased transportation costs and the prices of activities.

Following on from the meeting, we were able to offer two of the Youth Action Group members the opportunity to speak directly to Mike Drakeford and other members of the Cabinet on the cost of living crisis, where they represented the voices of young people in Wales.

If you would like to find out more, you can read 'The longer this carries on, the worse it gets' - Young People's Reflections on the Cost of Living Crisis article here.

If you know of a young person – or you are a young person – who is interested in being involved we would love to hear from you.

Members of EYHC YAG need to be:

- Have experienced homelessness or have been at risk of homelessness in Wales
- Be willing to respect and listen to other people's views and opinions
- Be able to work as part of a team
- Be passionate about wanting to end youth homelessness in Wales

If you would like to find out more about the EYHC YAG or have an informal chat about being involved please get in touch with Monika EYHC's Policy and Research Officer by email on: MonikaConti@Llamau.org.uk

One of our current YAG members had this to say about their involvement:

“

I'm going to part of another project. It's a youth music project. And I think I only really, I wouldn't have applied for that without having this, I wouldn't have felt the confidence. I wouldn't have felt like I was sort of like adequate or experienced enough, or really worth it actually without having done this. It's opened up so many new opportunities for me that I'd never would've envisaged. And as well, like when you're making connections with people, like they sort of ask you, what's your thing? What do you do? And I never really have much to say, but I can say this now. And it's just been like so important for me. ”



Research/Events

Crisis have recently published their Homelessness Monitor: Great Britain 2022, which compares the state of homelessness across England, Scotland and Wales. **The research** fits into their wider 'Homelessness cannot be ignored any longer' campaign, with the sobering estimate that up to 300,000 households across Great Britain could be pushed into the worst forms of homelessness this year.

Research published in September 2022 by Cymorth Cymru shone a light on the shocking impact of the cost-of-living crisis on frontline homelessness and housing support workers in Wales. Evidence from over 720 frontline workers has revealed the huge financial pressures they are facing as they provide critical support to tens of thousands of people across the country. The new report "Struggles from the Frontline" details how low wages combined with higher rents, energy costs, and fuel costs are putting extraordinary stress on their lives.

'Young, Homeless and Hungry': the impact of food insecurity on vulnerable young people, is a piece of **research** recently published by Centrepoin. Over the last decade, recorded levels of destitution and food insecurity have risen sharply across the UK, while

the cost of food and basic goods has increased significantly in the last six months due to high inflation. Access to enough safe and nutritious food for health, wellbeing and development is essential for young people as they transition into adulthood. However, this research shows that some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in our society are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity.

Feantsa's 2023 **conference** 'Reunited in times of crisis' will be their landmark event of 2023, bringing together over 300 people towards the eradication of homelessness in Europe from homeless services, civil society, governments, healthcare providers, think tanks, and more. The conference is on the 2nd and 3rd of June, in Stockholm, and registrations open next month.

The Bevan Foundation are hosting a **webinar** on 'A lifeline in hard times: the Discretionary Assistance Fund'; exploring Emergency Assistance Payments and Individual Assistance Payments. The webinar will provide insights into how the DAF can support your service users and clients, an in-depth understanding of how the DAF operates and the opportunity to question DAF administrators.

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