

A SAFE AND SECURE HOME FOR ALL

Manifesto June 2020

“Youth homelessness occurs when an individual between the ages of 13 and 26 is experiencing rooflessness or houselessness or is living in insecure or inadequate housing without a parent, family member or other legal guardian”.¹

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. We aim to create the systemic and cultural change necessary to prevent and end youth homelessness in Wales.

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 21.² Further, 73% had been homeless more than once, showing that once you become 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.**



¹ FEANTSA European definition of youth homelessness 2020. Accessed at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/framework-for-defining-youth-homelessness_final_pdf3614092469143708469.pdf

² 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

The scale of the issue

Youth homelessness is, by its nature, a difficult phenomenon to measure. The data presented below, taken from Welsh Government homelessness statistics, is likely to be an undercount, since it will not cover those young people who, for example, sofa-surf with friends, or have spent time sleeping in cars or sheds, without presenting to local authorities.

Households where Assistance with Homelessness has been Provided by Age ³			
Dates	16-17	18-24	Total
2015-16	648	5,532	6,180
2016-17	810	6,963	7,773
2017-18	780	6,804	7,584
2018-19	732	6,966	7,698

There is no quick or easy fix for the challenge of youth homelessness, but we have set out some key asks of the next Welsh Government which, if implemented, will help prevent future generations of young people struggling without a safe place to call home.

Actions for change:

1. The next Welsh Government should publish a strategy for ending youth homelessness in all its forms:

This should focus on effective early intervention and prevention – treating homelessness like a public health emergency.

- Specifically, it should tie in with a comprehensive and renewed Child Poverty strategy, an issue at the root of much youth homelessness.⁴ Social deprivation is associated with enduring and complex physical and mental health problems for children, young people and their families.⁵ These issues are, in turn, linked to homelessness.

There should be significant support for targeted prevention, building on interventions that we know work (e.g. school-based intervention, such as Upstream Cymru, a Welsh pilot of the uniquely effective Australian model, the Geelong Project).⁶

The strategy should also clearly set out commitments to ensuring Wales-wide access to demonstrably effective, youth-focussed, crisis interventions, such as Family Mediation, Supported Lodgings and Housing First for Youth. Responses to the specific needs of those at greatest vulnerability to youth homelessness will need to be laid out within the strategy (e.g. housing-related support for care-leavers, ensuring Wales-wide availability of LGBTQ+ focussed projects, specific responses for those who have experienced trauma).⁷

³ Stats Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/householdsforwhichassistancehasbeenprovided-by-outcome-age-gender>

⁴ Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2017), Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?, Accessed at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

⁵ Lund C, Breen A, Flisher A, Kakuma R, Corrigall J, Joska J, et al. Poverty and common mental disorders in low and middle income countries: A systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2010;71:517-28 Accessed at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20621748/>

⁶ <https://projects.seattletimes.com/2020/geelong-project-australia-student-youth-homeless-prevention-comes-to-king-county-washington/>

⁷ End Youth Homelessness Cymru (2019), Out on the streets: LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales accessed at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/out-on-the-streets>

2. The next Welsh Government should set aside funding dedicated to tackling youth homelessness.

Ending youth homelessness requires a commitment from Government to ongoing funding and support. In conjunction with the strategy, funding should be made available specifically for youth homelessness prevention along with a commitment to ensuring that it is tackled as a cross-departmental priority.

3. A new, rights-based Housing Vision for young people.

Underlying almost all youth homelessness is a lack of suitable, affordable accommodation for young people in Wales, which must be addressed. We want the next Welsh Government to set out a new vision for housing for young people, which reflects what young people say they need and affirms a legal commitment to a human right to adequate housing.⁸ This vision should include:

- An increase in affordable accommodation designed specifically for young people and planned for in the Local Authorities' Local Development Plans.
- To facilitate an effective response to young people in crisis, the strategy should set out that all young people will be considered in priority need, when presenting as at risk of homelessness.
- New minimum standards of temporary accommodation, agreed in consultation with young people, and a commitment to dramatically limit the length of time that any young person should be expected to remain in TA.⁹

4. As a corporate parent, the next Welsh Government must commit to ensuring that no young person leaves the care system and becomes homeless.

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).¹⁰ This cannot be right. We ask that:

- The next Welsh Government oversees improved partnership working to prevent homelessness amongst care-experienced youth, to include:
 - Multi-agency reviews any time a care-experienced young person presents as homeless or at risk of homelessness. This should ensure that young person gets the help they are entitled to but also ensure that any gaps identified should be addressed to ensure that future cases are prevented.
 - Improved internal communication so no care-experienced young person has to 'prove' they have been in care, when presenting as at risk of homelessness.
 - Increased focus on peer-support for care-experienced young people.
- Transitions from care should be 'seamless, rights-based, and focus on housing stability'.¹¹ The next Welsh Government should explore the feasibility of a 'Right to Return to Care' policy.¹² Care experienced young people need to be able to make mistakes without losing touch with support to avoid the traumatic experience of homelessness. Young people should be given the option to return to their care placement or another support option after leaving care, just as others can return to and receive ongoing support from their parents.

8 Hoffman, S. (2019) The right to adequate housing in Wales: Feasibility Report, accessed at: <https://www.taipawb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RightToHousing-Full-ENG.pdf>

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

10 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>

11 pp23, Schwan et al. (2018) Preventing Youth Homelessness: an International Evidence Review, accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Preventing-Youth-Homelessness-full-report.pdf>

12 Sutherland, M. (2019), Somewhere to Call Home: Report on Homelessness and Care Experience. Available at: <https://www.whocarescotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Somewhere-to-Call-Home-Megan-Sutherland-August-2019.pdf>

5. Ensuring Mental Health support for all young people.

Young people who have experienced homelessness are significantly more likely to experience poor mental health than their peers; the two issues are inextricable.¹³

The next Welsh Government should address this by:

- Setting out an increased commitment to funding for provision of trauma- and psychologically- informed approaches in all young person-facing services.
- Reviewing the implementation of the recommendations of the CYPE committee Mind over Matter report under the current government and delivering, in full, any outstanding recommendations of this important work.¹⁴
- Improving the accessibility of family and young person support services, with a view to preventing poor mental health outcomes.¹⁵

6. Support for young people at risk of homelessness to access work.

In the wake of COVID-19, young people are predicted to bear the brunt of associated economic hardship, with a particular impact on job prospects.¹⁶ Many young people in Wales at greatest risk of homelessness (care-leavers, for instance) are also 'at the back of the queue' for employment. The next Welsh Government should urgently:

- Deliver a Wales-wide supported job-guarantee scheme.¹⁷
- Address the welfare issues which negatively affect the abilities of some young people living in supported housing to work.¹⁸
- Increase and protect traineeship funding to enable young people to achieve qualifications.

For more information, contact:

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13 Hodgson, K (2013), Study of the Experiences of Young Homeless People accessed at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/seyhope>

14 <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf>

15 pp25-28, Schwan et al. (2018) Preventing Youth Homelessness: an International Evidence Review, accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Preventing-Youth-Homelessness-full-report.pdf>

16 Henehan, K (2020), Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis, accessed at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2020/05/Class-of-2020.pdf>

17 <https://www.llamau.org.uk/symud-ymlaen-moving-forward>

18 <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/people-in-supported-housing-cant-afford-rent-after-finding-jobs-report-finds-59379>