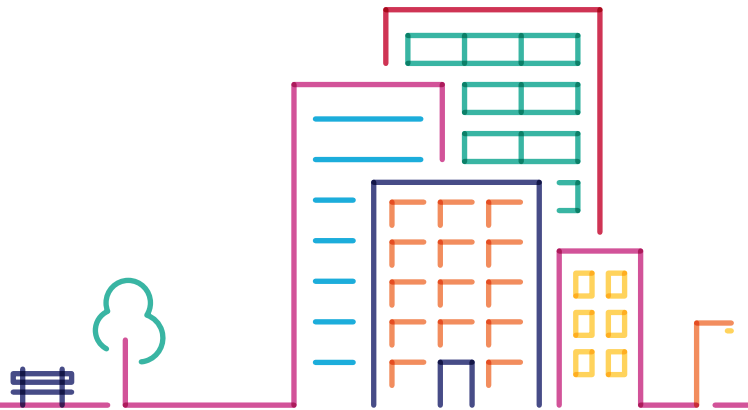


OUT ON THE STREETS

LGBTQ+ Youth
Homelessness in Wales:
FULL REPORT AUGUST 2019



Thanks

Thanks to the following organisations for funding this report and 'Cai's Story', a short film available on the Llamau website, which will be used alongside this report to raise awareness of the issue of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness in Wales:



The Research Team

Peer Researchers

For reasons of anonymity, the details of the peer researchers involved are not shared here. The peer research team are a group of young people who identify as LGBTQ+ and have experienced homelessness in Wales. The group were trained by Shelter Cymru in peer research methodology and ethics.

End Youth Homelessness Cymru

The peer researchers were supported by the End Youth Homelessness Cymru team. End Youth Homelessness Cymru is a coalition of organisations, ranged across a variety of sectors and led by Llamau, working to end youth homelessness in Wales by 2027. The team consisted of: Hugh Russell – Project Manager; Emily Jenkins – Project Coordinator; and Jemma Bridgeman – Policy and Research Officer.

Shelter Cymru

Edith England contributed significantly to this report, inputting data from her work with trans homeless people. Edith has worked in the fields of equalities and welfare/ housing rights for many years. She is currently a PhD Researcher in the School of Geography and Planning at Cardiff University, supervised by Dr Peter Mackie. Her thesis explored the changing nature of rights and responsibilities under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Foreword by the Director of Stonewall Cymru

For young LGBTQ+ homeless people in Wales the extent and depth of challenges is stark. This report details their experiences and highlights the additional factors they experience because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. These include greater risk of psychological harm, substance misuse problems and exposure to sexual exploitation.

We know that LGBTQ+ young people are overrepresented in the general homeless population, more likely to leave stable accommodation to escape family rejection, domestic or sexual abuse and at greater risk of harm when homeless than non-LGBTQ+ young people. Despite this, they are underserved by support services designed to respond to their specific needs. It is unsurprising, though no less concerning, therefore that levels of trust in services are low amongst LGBTQ+ young people.

This research also includes the views of those working with young people and research from around the globe. We have highlighted examples of best practise and made a series of recommendations for all those responsible for eradicating and preventing youth homelessness.

Ultimately, we all have a responsibility to listen to young people and hear what it is they say is needed. Reading the first-hand accounts of LGBTQ+ young people in the pages which follow should move each and every one of us to action.

Andrew White
Director, Stonewall Cymru



Aim

The purpose of this report is to enhance the knowledge and capabilities of policy makers and practitioners on how best to deliver services which improve the situations of young LGBTQ+ people who are vulnerable to homelessness in Wales.

We set out to achieve this aim by meeting a set of objectives, noted below:

- To develop an understanding of what specific issues are faced by young LGBTQ+ people who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness
- To learn what interventions and support are needed, contrasting this with an understanding of what is currently available.
- To amplify the voices of young LGBTQ+ people on the issue of youth homelessness.
- To recommend a series of proposals which will ensure that LGBTQ+ youth homelessness becomes rare, brief and non-recurrent.



A Note on Terminology and Definitions

For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to use the term *LGBTQ+* (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans and Queer, with the + representing inclusion of other identities to represent other non-cisgender and non-heterosexual groups). This decision was made in consultation with the young people who worked on the project as peer researchers, as they felt it was the term most likely to resonate with their peers. This definition will be deviated from only when making reference to data collected by others (e.g. the Office for National Statistics' use of LGB) or when making specific differentiation between members of the wider group, e.g. when discussing the specific experiences of trans people. Where the term 'trans' is used, it is included as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth, as per Stonewall's guidance.¹ Some trans people are also LGBTQ+.

At the time of writing, a European definition of youth homelessness is under development by FEANTSA, the European homelessness network. Pending its publication, for the purposes of this report, the Canadian definition (as recently used in influential reports on the subject by the Wales Centre for Public Policy) has been used:

“Youth homelessness” refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence.’²

¹ Stonewall. (no date). *Glossary of Terms*. Retrieved from: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#>. Last accessed 29th June 2019.

² Canadian Observatory of Youth Homelessness. (2016). *Canadian Definition of Youth Homelessness*. Retrieved from: https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Definition_of_Youth_Homelessness.pdf. Last accessed 29th June 2019.

Part 1: Introduction

Why study LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness?

The decision to research the issue of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness was, in large part, reached due to the rising numbers of LGBTQ+ young people accessing the services of Llamau, a charity which supports young homeless people in Wales and which is the lead partner in the End Youth Homelessness Cymru coalition.

Llamau's in-house data monitoring service has demonstrated a year-on-year increase in the proportion of LGBT young people (under 25) accessing supported housing. Statistics for 2017/18 demonstrate that 9% of those accessing Llamau's supported housing services classify themselves as LGBT, up from 8% in the previous year and 7% the year before that.³ By contrast, the ONS' most recent data collection on this issue showed that "in 2016 in the UK, 4.1% of the population aged 16 to 24 identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)."⁴ There are no equivalent figures for the trans population, but it is believed to be less than 1% of the population as a whole.⁵

This suggests that the LGBTQ+ community is disproportionately affected by youth homelessness. This assertion is supported by similar findings in research undertaken elsewhere in the UK (Albert Kennedy Trust found that 24% of the youth homelessness population across the UK identified as LGBT, for example).⁶ Research from elsewhere in the world supports this point: a recent study in America found that "young adults, ages 18 to 25, who identified as LGBTQ experienced homelessness within the last 12 months at over twice the rate of their heterosexual peers who identified as their birth gender", for instance⁷.

The in-house data collected by Llamau also demonstrates that LGBT young people are more likely to be made homeless as a result of family breakdown than their non-LGBT peers. The data for the last 5 years shows a year-on-year (with one slight exception, when the figure dropped by 1% in 2017/18) increase in this reason being given for young LGBT people's homelessness, up from 26% in 2013/14 to 35% in 2017/18. By contrast, the number of young people who do not identify as LGBT becoming homeless due to family breakdown has stayed static at between 22 and 23% over the same period.

Llamau's data suggests a significantly higher preponderance of mental health issues among LGBT young people; in 2017/18 72% of the young homeless LGBT people accessing supported housing were experiencing mental ill health at the start of support, compared to 64% of their non-LGBT peers. The last 5 years' data suggest that mental ill health is broadly rising amongst non-LGBT young homeless people at the start of support (up from 46% in 2013/14 to 64% in 2017/18). The figure for LGBT young people has remained relatively stable, from a peak of 78% in 2013/14 to 72% in 2017/18.

The statistics show that the vast majority of those in Llamau's supported housing record that they have made progress with their mental health during their support period. However it is more likely that non-LGBT people will make progress with their mental health (87% of non-LGBT young people reported making progress on mental ill health during support in 2017/18 compared to 80% of LGBT young people).

The reasons for these statistics are open to interpretation but, by this measure, a disproportionately high number of young people who experience homelessness in Wales are LGBTQ+. This fact, plus a lack of recent research on the issue in Wales, meant that it was imperative that LGBTQ+ youth homelessness was better understood as part of End Youth Homelessness Cymru's wider goal.

³ Source: Llamau's bespoke data capture tool 'Demon'.

⁴ Office of National Statistics. (2017). *Sexual Identity, UK: 2016*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2016#people-aged-16-to-24-are-more-likely-to-identify-as-lesbian-gay-or-bisexual-than-any-othe>. Last accessed 29th June 2019.

⁵ Government Equalities Office. (2018). *Trans People in the UK*. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf. Last accessed 29th June 2019.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Morton, M. H., Samuels, G. M., Dworsky, A., & Patel, S. (2018). *Missed opportunities: LGBTQ youth homelessness in America*, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from: <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/VoYC-LGBTQ-Brief-FINAL.pdf>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

Legislative Context

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 aims to ensure more is done by local authorities and their partners to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.⁸ An objective of the law is to ensure people facing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness receive help as early as possible, with a strong focus on prevention. It places a duty on local authorities to work with people who are at risk of losing their home within 56 days to find a solution to their housing problems. All 16 and 17 year olds in Wales are automatically considered to be in priority need, which may entitle them to somewhere to stay in an emergency while the council considers their case. Young people aged 18-20 who are at particular risk of sexual or financial exploitation are also considered to be in priority need.

In the UK, the Equality Act (2010) outlawed discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity.⁹ Local Authorities are expected to pay due regard to the Equality Act when exercising their functions under The Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Welsh Government guidance on exercising the functions of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 states that local authorities and their partners should ensure allocation policies are sensitive to the particular difficulties experienced by LGBT people such as homophobic harassment.¹⁰ The guidance also states local authorities and their partners should ensure their staff receive training on trans issues. The guidance lists the needs of LGBT people amongst particular households that need specific types of information and advice, particularly when this advice is needed to prevent homelessness.¹¹ Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, local authorities (and other bodies performing a public service, such as housing associations) have a duty to advance equality of opportunity among groups with protected characteristics.¹²

⁸ Welsh Government. (2018). Housing. Retrieved from: <https://gweddiill.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/homelessness/?lang=en>. Last accessed 25th April 2019.

⁹ Matthews, P., Payner, C. and Kjellgren. (2018). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer experiences of homelessness and identity: insecurity and home(o)normativity. *International Journal of Housing Policy*. 1-22. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19491247.2018.1519341>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

¹⁰ Welsh Government (2016). *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Retrieved from: <https://gweddiill.gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>

¹¹ As 10 (WG Code of Guidance for LA's)

¹² Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2019). *The Public Sector Equality Duty*. Retrieved from: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

Methodology

Evidence for this report has been collected via a mixed-methods approach, outlined below. In summary this consisted of:

- Semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ young people in receipt of support;
- Longer, semi-structured interviews with young trans people, including both those who had received help and support from homelessness services, and those who had not;
- A survey of local authority and third sector homelessness staff;
- Several meetings of a working group of experts in the fields of LGBTQ+ issues and youth homelessness;
- A desk-based literature review.

Participant Group 1 (LGBTQ+ Young People in Receipt of Support)

Shelter Cymru provided training in research methods for a group of young LGBTQ+ people who had experienced homelessness and were living in supported housing, with either Llamau or GISDA. The training was undertaken over two days and included time to discuss and agree terminology, as well as to confirm the questions to be included in a peer survey. 7 young people participated in this process, of whom 5 went on to work as peer researchers.

Participant recruitment for this element of the study was more time-consuming than had been anticipated and ultimately provided fewer interviewees than had been hoped, despite an incentive (a shopping voucher) being offered and a number of recruitment methods being employed. Posters and flyers were shared online and posted on the walls of supported housing for young homelessness people across Wales; flyers were

distributed at Pride in Cardiff and we asked that the peer researchers participate in recruitment by telling their peers about the project (N.B. peer researchers were never paired with individuals they already knew, for ethical reasons). To increase the numbers of participants, additional interviews were undertaken with the peer researchers directly, carried out by members of the research team. The research team also interviewed participants directly at times when Peer Researchers were unavailable.

The interviews were all undertaken using the same co-designed survey, with prompts to expand offered to the participants, where appropriate. In all, 10 interviews were undertaken between Summer 2018 and Spring 2019.

Participants were assured of anonymity and all names and identifying details have been changed.

A key distinction between the two participant groups is that, despite efforts to recruit more broadly, the first participant group were ultimately recruited exclusively from among young people who were in supported housing or had recently moved on, so had all been through the homelessness system. The participants from group 2 (more on whom anon) were not recruited via services and thus had, in some cases, markedly different experiences. Almost all of this second group had some involvement with services, notably youth services, social care services and/or mental health services. However, only around half had formally made a homelessness application, despite these services typically being aware of their homelessness.

The report is structured around, and draws primarily from, the interviews with Participant Group 1, who were predominantly LGB. Where appropriate, interviews with the second group are used to supplement these findings.

Participant Group 2 (Young Trans People)

The element of the study which covers trans homelessness was undertaken by Edith England, as a part of a study of trans homelessness in general (as opposed to our youth-focussed approach), ‘Homelessness Among Trans People in Wales’.¹³

The Shelter Cymru study consisted of long, narrative interviews with 25 trans people who had experienced homelessness. A majority of these had first been homeless before the age of 25, and around half were still under 25 at the time of interview. Participants were recruited for the Shelter Cymru study primarily via social media and approaches to gatekeeper organisations. Recruitment and interviews took place between early 2018-19.

Trans participants had a mixture of gender identities, with the majority identifying as trans men or trans women. However, a significant minority identified as non-binary or had another trans identity. It is also important to note that some trans people are also members of the LGBTQ+ community, and their comments were informed by this experience.

Interviews lasted between 60-120 minutes on average. They were recorded and transcribed professionally. An interview schedule was used to guide the questions.

As with group 1, participants were assured of anonymity and all names and identifying details have been changed.

An early decision was taken to incorporate some of the findings from the ongoing Shelter Cymru study into the study above, despite significant methodological differences. This was primarily to avoid re-sampling the same small group, and hence reduce participant burden: the trans community is small, and of intense curiosity for researchers, and there is increasing concern about the impact upon community members of being over-researched.

Youth Homelessness Workers

For comparative purposes it was important that we studied the experiences and attitudes of adult staff working with young homeless people. We took two approaches to doing so. This was done through an electronic survey, via Survey Monkey, to individuals who have contact with homeless young people, or those at risk of becoming so. These surveys were distributed via the following networks:

- The Local Authority Homelessness Network, to garner the views of local authority homelessness team staff;
- Cymorth Cymru, to garner the views of third-sector support providers;
- ADSS Cymru (the association of Directors of Social Services in Wales), to garner the views of local authority Directors and Heads of Children’s Services and Heads of Adults Services.

Insight from Experts

Further to the surveys of young people and those working with them, we have also included the findings of a working group made up of experts in the areas of homelessness and LGBTQ+ issues, which met 7 times across 2018 and 2019 to discuss the issue of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness. A summary of their findings is included as part of this report.

Desk-Based Literature Review

This report is underpinned by a literature review, the purpose of which is to ensure that the recommendations are supported by up-to-date research findings from other, relevant studies.

Review of findings with young people

The findings of the report have been discussed with homelessness-experienced LGBTQ+ young people, in order to ensure that what we propose is acceptable to those for whom the changes would be made.

¹³ England, E. (2019). *Homelessness among trans people in Wales*. Retrieved from: https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Homelessness-among-trans-people-in-Wales_Website.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

Part 2: Literature Review

Key Findings of the Literature Review:

- LGBTQ+ young people are disproportionately overrepresented in the wider homelessness population. Despite this, they are underserved by support services designed to respond to their specific needs.
- The predominant cause of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness is family breakdown, with abuse at home a greater risk for LGBTQ+ young people. LGBTQ+ young people are increasingly coming out to friends and family at a younger age, suggesting an increased level of vulnerability amongst future LGBTQ+ youth.
- Young, LGBTQ+, homeless people are highly likely to experience mental ill-health and more likely to leave home as a result of this, than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Similarly, they face greater risk of violence, discrimination and sexual exploitation than non-LGBTQ+ young homeless people.
- LGBTQ+ youth homelessness is an under-researched area; issues worthy of further examination include the use of social media within the LGBTQ+ community to gain access to accommodation and, in the few instances in which they are available, the effectiveness of LGBTQ+ focussed services to prevent youth homelessness.
- Accurate data collection is an area of considerable difficulty, but services can improve understanding of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness by both looking to their own data-capture methods and taking steps to provide a welcoming and trustworthy service for LGBTQ+ youth.

“LGBTQ+ homeless youth is a major public health concern that has significant consequences for a young person’s physical and psychosocial well-being.”¹⁴

¹⁴ 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.

Introduction

This review aims to present the key points from the (limited) literature on LGBTQ+ youth homelessness, covering both the specific issues faced by young LGBTQ+ people who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness and presenting information on how services might effectively respond to this issue. Much of the available literature comes from North America and the UK, so it is from these areas that most of this review draws its source material.

There is a paucity of research on the housing experiences of LGBTQ+ homeless youth. Tunaker explains that as both homeless young people and LGBTQ+ people are seldom heard populations, locating the intersection of homeless LGBTQ+ youth is challenging.¹⁶ The literature suggests there is even less research on trans populations, in particular. McCann and Brown note there are no international multi-centred studies or research into the needs of homeless trans populations.¹⁷

“Homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are one of the most marginalised and disenfranchised groups in society. Nevertheless, the multifarious pathways to homelessness in LGBTQ+ youth remain understudied.”¹⁵

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Tunaker, C. (2015). “No Place Like Home”. *The journal of Architecture, Design and Domestic Space*. 12 (2), 241-259. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17406315.2015.1046300>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

¹⁷ As 15 (McCann, E. & Brown, M).

Young LGBTQ+ People's Experiences of Homelessness

Extent of the representation of LGBTQ+ Youth in Homeless Populations

Although limited, the available literature on LGBTQ+ youth homelessness consistently points toward an overrepresentation of young LGBTQ+ people among wider homeless populations. The University of Chicago undertook a nationally representative phone survey to identify how common, or prevalent, youth homelessness in America.¹⁸ They interviewed 26,161 young people during 2016 – 2017. The findings indicate one in 10 young adults, aged 18 to 25 and one in 30, 13 to 17 year olds, experience homelessness over the course of a year. According to the findings of the survey LGBT youth had a 120% increased risk of experiencing homelessness than heterosexual and cisgender (i.e. someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth) youth.¹⁹ In the UK, research from the Albert Kennedy Trust found that LGBT young people were more likely to find themselves homeless, than heterosexual and cisgender youth, reporting LGBT young people make up 24% of the homeless population.²⁰

Coolhart & Brown suggest that because LGBTQ+ youth experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate, it logically follows they represent a disproportionate number of young people using housing and homelessness services.²¹ Respondents to a UK study looking at the extent to which sexual orientation played a part in individuals' housing crises suggested that their sexual orientation had played a significant role in triggering housing breakdowns and that for up to a third of LGB people this crisis had been prompted by their family's inability to accept their sexual orientation.²² Young people reported they had been physically abused and/or kicked out of home once they revealed their sexuality. The same report described the hitherto invisible and increasing population in England of LGB young homeless people and again, their fieldwork suggested a disproportionate overrepresentation of LGB young people in the wider homeless population.²³ Moreover, because their needs may differ from the needs of non-LGBTQ+ peers, they are not being addressed by service providers. This could be because LGB youth are making themselves invisible to avoid homophobic bullying or because they are being made invisible by the heteronormative assumptions of others. This in turn can reinforce LGBTQ+ young people's invisibility in the planning

and delivery of housing services and contributes to their scarce coverage within research.²⁴

Trans people are specifically more likely to experience homelessness than non-trans peers. McNeil et al (2012) found that a fifth of trans adults had experienced homelessness over the lifespan, with a tenth having been homeless repeatedly.²⁵

Causes of LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness

The literature suggests that young people are coming out at younger ages; the average age at which people come out to their communities has dropped from post-university age in the 1990s to 16, meaning more and more young people are coming out while they are still economically dependent on their families.²⁶ While this may imply that younger people are feeling more comfortable expressing themselves (and possibly that younger people are more accepting and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues), the response from family is not always positive: the most common reason for a young LGBTQ+ young person to become homeless is parents' rejection of sexual orientation or gender identity.²⁷ There is thus a risk that future LGBTQ+ youth who experience homelessness will be younger and thus even more vulnerable than they are now.

Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Risk of other Harms to Homeless LGBTQ+ Youth

De Paul's 'Danger Zones and Stepping Stones' report notes that of a survey of 712 young people who have experienced homelessness across the UK 16% were LGBT.²⁸ This group showed a number of vulnerabilities which suggest that they are more likely to come to harm than non-LGBT young people who experience homelessness:

18 Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M. (2017). *Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from: <https://www.opressrc.org/content/missed-opportunities-youth-homelessness-america>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

19 As 18 (Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M)

20 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.

21 Coolhart, D & Brown, M. T. (2017). *The need for safe spaces: Exploring the experiences of homeless LGBTQ youth in shelters.* *Children and Youth Services Review.* 82, 230-238. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319661703_The_need_for_safe_spaces_Exploring_the_experiences_of_homeless_LGBTQ_youth_in_shelters. Last access 30th July 2019.

22 Dunne, G. Prentergast, S. & Telford, D. (2002). *Young, Gay, Homeless and Invisible: A Growing Population.* *Culture, Health & Sexuality.* 4 (1), 103-115. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/136910502753389404>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

23 As 22 (Dunne et al, 2002)

24 As 22 (Dunne et al, 2002)

25 McNeil, J. Bailey, L., Ellis, S., Morton, J. & Regan, M. . (2012). *Trans Mental Health.* Retrieved from: http://worldaa1.miniserver.com/~gires/assets/Medpro-Assets/trans_mh_study.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

26 Abramovich, A. (2015). *A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness.* Prepared for Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/a-focused-response-to-prevent-and-end-lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

27 Coolhart, D & Brown, M. T. (2017). *The need for safe spaces: Exploring the experiences of homeless LGBTQ youth in shelters.* *Children and Youth Services Review.* 82, 230-238. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319661703_The_need_for_safe_spaces_Exploring_the_experiences_of_homeless_LGBTQ_youth_in_shelters. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

28 McCoy, S. (2018). *Danger Zones and Stepping Stones: Phase Two, A quantitative exploration of young people's experience of temporary living.* Retrieved from: <https://uk.depaulcharity.org/sites/default/files/DANGER-ZONES-REPORT-FINAL-EMBARGOED-TILL-00.01AM-THURSDAY-22-MARCH-2018.pdf> Last accessed 30th June 2019.

“The majority (59 percent) of survey respondents lost their stable accommodation when they were younger than 18, and were, therefore, in temporary living arrangements as children... LGBT young people were more likely than non-LGBT young people to say they had left stable accommodation: to escape emotional or mental abuse (36 percent compared with 17 percent); to escape violent abuse (21 percent compared with 12 percent), or because of their own mental health issues (21 percent compared with eight percent).”

The clear indication is that this is a group of people at greater risk of abuse at home, as well as one which suffers from mental ill-health to the extent that it harms their ability to remain in stable accommodation. LGBTQ+ youth are subject to specific stressors, including stigma and discrimination. A consequence of this is mental and physical ill health, with this manifesting in a number of ways, including risky sexual behaviour and substance misuse.²⁹

Rosario et al found that homeless LGB youths initiate substance misuse at an earlier age than non-homeless youth and that most substance misuse occurs alongside or subsequent to an initial episode of homelessness.³⁰ Evidence from elsewhere shows that substance misuse issues are most often a consequence rather than a cause of homelessness.³¹

As well as the risk of psychological harm and substance misuse, the literature states that there are many more challenges facing LGBTQ+ youth; these can include obtaining safe shelter, staying in school, earning money and accessing social support and health services³². Whilst these are challenges shared by non-LGBTQ+ young people, they are often compounded by risks encountered on the streets and within support services which heterosexual and cisgender homeless youth are highly unlikely to experience, largely due to homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination³³. These additional risks mean that homeless LGBT youth are more likely to experience violence and discrimination, develop substance misuse problems, be exposed to sexual exploitation, and engage in higher levels of risky

sexual behaviour, than their non-LGBT counterparts.³⁴ Prock & Kennedy note that LGBTQ+ homeless youth report higher rates of sexual victimisation, mental illness and substance misuse when compared to their heterosexual, cisgender homeless counterparts.³⁵

Survival Sex

With limited legal methods of supporting themselves, research suggests that many LGBTQ+ young people are forced to engage in sex work to meet their basic needs.³⁶ Walls and Bell define this as survival sex – a consequence of poverty and economic dependence.³⁷ Homeless youth who engage in survival sex are at increased risk of mental illness and at significant risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections.³⁸ Prock and Kennedy show that LGBTQ+ youth who experience sexual abuse before their first incidence of homelessness are more likely to report considerably greater sexual victimisation when homeless than LGBTQ+ young people who had not been abused as children.³⁹ Sexual victimisation can include unwanted sexual encounters, sexual assault or rape, or engaging in survival sex⁴⁰.

While survival sex, sometimes known as sex for rent, is not a new issue, the use of social media platforms to advertise accommodation in return for sex means it is perhaps easier to solicit than before.⁴¹ WHQ (2018) cite the findings of Shelter Cymru’s 2017 YouGov survey that 3% of women and 2% of men who were private tenants were propositioned for sex in exchange for rent by their landlord in the last five years.⁴² This could equate to 6,900 women and 4,600 men at risk of this phenomenon in Wales.⁴³

29 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.

30 Rosario, M., Schrimshaw, E. W. & Hunter J. (2011). *Risk factors for homelessness among lesbian, gay and bisexual youths: A developmental milestone approach*. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 34, 186-193. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3279927/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019

31 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

32 As 29 (McCann, E. & Brown, M.)

33 Abramovich, A. (2015). *A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness*. Prepared for Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/a-focused-response-to-prevent-and-end-lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness>

34 As 31 (Bateman AKT)

35 Prock, K. A. & Kennedy, A. C. (2017). *Federally-funded transitional living programs and services for LGBTQ+ identified homeless youth: A profile of unmet need*. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 83, 17-24. Retrieved from: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-53025-004>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

36 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.

37 Walls, E. & Bell, S. (2010). *Correlates of Engaging in Survival Sex among Homeless Youth and Young Adults*. *The Journal of Sex Research*. 48 (5), 423-436. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00224499.2010.501916?needAccess=true>. Last accessed 30th June 2019.

38 As 36 (McCann & Brown)

39 Prock, K. A. & Kennedy, A. C. (2017). *Federally-funded transitional living programs and services for LGBTQ+ identified homeless youth: A profile of unmet need*. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 83, 17-24. Retrieved from: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-53025-004>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

40 As 38 (Prock and Kennedy)

41 WHQ (2018). *Call for Action to End Sex for Rent*. Retrieved from: <https://www.whq.org.uk/2018/12/03/call-for-action-to-end-sex-for-rent/> Last accessed 25th April 2019.

42 As 41 (WHQ)

43 As 41 (WHQ)

Rice et al examined the prevalence and usage of mobile phones amongst homeless young people, finding that mobiles have a positive impact on young people's ability to access housing.⁴⁴ Linked to this, research on social media usage by homeless young people found that it enabled them to build networks in order to meet their immediate needs, for example, to find a bed for the night if they were sofa surfing.⁴⁵ There is an apparent gap in the available literature for research that considers the use of social media and hook-up apps, such as Grindr, by LGBTQ+ young people to access accommodation and how this links to survival sex. Recent criminal cases, such as that of the murderer, Stephen Port, indicate the significant risks inherent with use of hook-up apps; given the heightened vulnerability of young LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness, further work is needed to improve understanding of this phenomenon and how the risks can be reduced.

Service Responses to LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness

Data Collection

While evidence suggests that LGBTQ+ young people are overrepresented in the youth homeless population, as laid out above, we do not know the true extent of the issue because providers do not always collect data on sexual orientation or gender identity and, even when they do, there is a reluctance to disclose on the part of the presenting young person.⁴⁶ Research on LGB housing issues in Wales in 2006 found that a lack of monitoring data acted as a barrier to understanding LGB housing need and prevented the provision of appropriate responses.⁴⁷

Not only does the literature suggest that data collection is an area for improvement from the perspective of service providers, but a lack of reliable data is compounded by the (entirely understandable) issue that young people might be unwilling to disclose this information as part of monitoring or an induction process.⁴⁸ LGBT Youth Scotland found that young people were not comfortable coming out to services, having often experienced homelessness as a result of the response to their coming out to their families.⁴⁹ Shelton reports service access and acquisition is often complex and can be particularly dangerous for trans and gender expansive young people, who often experience stigma and discrimination and also face systematic barriers including sex-segregated programs and institutional practices.⁵⁰ Such experiences may form the basis of a lack of trust in services which may inhibit honest responses to monitoring questions.

In order to help young people feel more confident in sharing information on their sexual orientation and gender identities, thus informing the development of improved LGBTQ+ services, services can take a variety of steps. Fundamentally, improving staff

understanding of the issues faced by LGBTQ+ people, to avoid the breakdown in trust between LGBTQ+ young people and youth-facing services, is a necessity. Beyond this, it has been suggested that homelessness projects, housing programmes and youth serving organisations could publically display appropriate and diverse resources for LGBTQ+ young people. These could include leaflets, flyers, posters on walls, information on coming out, on LGBTQ+ safe sex as well as information on local LGBTQ+ services and events.⁵¹ The creation of a welcoming environment, coupled with staff training on LGBTQ+ issues, may help young people feel more comfortable revealing sexual orientation or gender identity to service providers.

It must also be recognised that asking young people to share information about their gender identity and/or sexual identity is potentially extremely vulnerabilising. It is imperative that, where information is sought, this is for a specific purpose, and it is kept confidential and anonymised. Where gender or sexual orientation information is linked to other information, such as progress of a homelessness application, these concerns are significantly greater.

44 Rice, E., Lee, A and Taitt, S. (2011). *Cellphone Use among Homeless Youth: Potential for New Health Intervention and Research*. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of New York Academy of Medicine*. 88 (6), 1175-1182. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3232411/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

45 Palzkill Woelfler, J & Hendry, D. G. (2012). *Homeless Young People on Social Network Sites*. Washington: University of Washington. Retrieved from: <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2207676.2208686>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

46 Abramovich, A. (2015). *A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness*. Prepared for Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/a-focused-response-to-prevent-and-end-lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

47 Boucher, D. (eds). (2006). *The Housing Needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Wales*. Cardiff: Triangle Wales, Trothwy Cyf, Stonewall Cymru and Welsh Government. Retrieved from: <https://www.tai pawb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/LGB-Housing-Homelessness-Report.pdf>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

48 Dunne, G. Prentergast, S. & Telford, D. (2002). *Young, Gay, Homeless and Invisible: A Growing Population*. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 4 (1), 103-115. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/136910502753389404>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

49 LGBT Youth Scotland "LGBT Youth Commission on Housing and Homelessness". Retrieved from: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/national-programmes/policy-and-influencing/youth-commission-housing-and-homelessness/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

50 Shelton, J. (2018). *LGBT Youth Homelessness: What are You Going to Do about it?* *Public Integrity*. 20 (6), 542-545. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10999922.2018.1441963>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

51 Abramovich, A. (2015). *A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness*. Prepared for Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/a-focused-response-to-prevent-and-end-lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

Training for Practitioners

Many LGBTQ+ young people need support to prevent potential homelessness, but practitioners report they do not always feel confident in supporting LGBTQ+ young people, often because they do not have the appropriate training.⁵² A UK-based systematic review of LGBTQ youth homelessness identified concerns about the limited availability of appropriate education and training.⁵³ The need for LGBTQ+ cultural diversity training for all practitioners working with young people is recommended throughout the literature⁵⁴. Abramovich argues that when cultural diversity training is not made mandatory staff and management do not feel prepared to intervene in situations of homophobia and transphobia.⁵⁵ Research with practitioners working with young people suggests that without trained, culturally competent staff who can deliver services, young LGBTQ+ people will receive inadequate care or avoid the services they need all together.⁵⁶ Sherriff et al suggest there is considerable value in co-designing training with young people and using their experiences as a learning tool, either working directly with homelessness-experienced young people or offering them the opportunity to participate by telling their stories in audio or film recordings.⁵⁷

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- 52 LGBT Youth Scotland “LGBT Youth Commission on Housing and Homelessness”. Retrieved from: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/national-programmes/policy-and-influencing/youth-commission-housing-and-homelessness/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 53 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.
- 54 Dolamore, S. & Naylor, L. A. (2017). Providing Solutions to LGBT Homeless Youth: Lessons from Baltimore’s Youth Empowered Society. *Public Integrity*. 1-16. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10999922.2017.1333943?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=mpin20>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 55 Abramovich, A. (2015). A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness. Prepared for Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/a-focused-response-to-prevent-and-end-lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 56 Maccio, E. M. & Ferguson, K. M. (2015). Service to LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth: Gaps and recommendations. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 63, 47-57. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294122487_Services_to_LGBTQ_runaway_and_homeless_youth_Gaps_and_recommendations. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 57 Sherriff, N., Hamilton, W. E., Wigmore, S. and Giambone, B. L. B. (2011). “WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THEM?” INVESTIGATING AND SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) YOUNG PEOPLE. *Journal of Community Psychology*. 39 (8), 939 – 955. Retrieved from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jcop.20479>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

LGBTQ+ Specific Services

Despite the overrepresentation of young LGBTQ+ people amongst the homelessness population, services are rarely set up with LGBTQ+ users in mind. Indeed, often services can be exclusionary and contribute to forcing young LGBTQ+ to find their own, potentially unsafe, solutions to their relationship programming that discusses only opposite-sex partnerships.⁵⁸ Researchers have noted that homeless projects may not adequately meet the needs of LGBTQ+ people, given their sexual orientation or gender identity, complex trauma history and mental health needs.⁵⁹ It has been argued that the lack of understanding of LGBTQ+ young people’s needs means that, at best, homelessness services are not meeting their unique needs and, at worst, services alienate them due to heteronormative bias.⁶⁰

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- 58 Maccio, E. M. & Ferguson, K. M. (2015). Service to LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth: Gaps and recommendations. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 63, 47-57. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294122487_Services_to_LGBTQ_runaway_and_homeless_youth_Gaps_and_recommendations. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 59 Prock, K. A. & Kennedy, A. C. (2017). Federally-funded transitional living programs and services for LGBTQ+ identified homeless youth: A profile of unmet need. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 83, 17-24. Retrieved from: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-53025-004>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 60 As 58 (Maccio & Ferguson)
- 61 Shelton, J. (2018). LGBT Youth Homelessness: What are You Going to Do about it? *Public Integrity*. 20 (6), 542-545. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10999922.2018.1441963>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 62 As 61 (Shellton)
- 63 Abramovich, A. (2015). A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness. Prepared for Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/a-focused-response-to-prevent-and-end-lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.
- 64 Prock, K. A. & Kennedy, A. C. (2017). Federally-funded transitional living programs and services for LGBTQ+ identified homeless youth: A profile of unmet need. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 83, 17-24. Retrieved from: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-53025-004>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

The literature suggests service access and acquisition can be complex and/or dangerous for trans and gender expansive young people, who in addition to stigma, discrimination and transphobia will face systematic barriers including sex-segregated programmes and institutional practices.⁶¹ Shelton argues that because housing projects for young people have been designed by a cisgenderist ideology, they have not been designed to meet the needs of trans and gender expansive young people.⁶² Abramovich argues that instead of a “one size fits all approach” policies and programmes need to address the diverse needs of young people experiencing homelessness and accessing services.⁶³

It has been suggested that effective LGBTQ+ specific services should be LGBTQ+ affirming, effect non-discriminatory practices including both sexual orientation and gender identity and might include gender-neutral bathrooms and safe sleeping areas, as well as supporting access to medical treatment for services such as hormone replacement therapies.⁶⁴

Part 3: The Experiences of Young LGBTQ+ People who have been homeless.

“(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 did become homeless.”

Key Findings from Interviews with LGBTQ+ Young People

- Family breakdown was a predominant factor in almost every participant’s experience of homelessness. Their families’ response to finding out their sexual orientation or gender identity was a clearly contributing factor in this breakdown in most cases.
- Participants called for earlier intervention to prevent family breakdown. The introduction of an Upstream service, as demonstrated in Geelong, Australia, would offer a potentially effective solution to future young people’s experiences of intervention, by flagging those at risk at an earlier point.
- LGBTQ+ young people face considerable harm when homeless, turning to survival sex in some cases.
- Mental ill health is present in every case and participants’ experiences of access to and support from mental health agencies were mostly negative. A more proactive offer to engage young people in mental health support before their situations deteriorated may have prevented much of the trauma experienced by some participants.
- Some participants noted that their schools were extremely important sources of support for them, but this was not an experience shared by all, with some participants clearly traumatised by experiences at school or feeling very let down by a lack of intervention from school staff.
- Trans people are known to be at elevated risk of domestic abuse; in this study, abuse was often compounded by previous familial rejection, meaning that young people typically had nowhere to turn when they were in an abuse situation, leading to homelessness.⁶⁵
- Economic precarity also underpinned many young trans people’s experiences, with difficulties in obtaining and keeping employment, compounded by benefits restrictions for young people, making it very difficult for them to escape homelessness.
- Young trans people typically had poor experiences of homelessness services. Very few found them helpful. A large minority were put off approaching the services because they believed that they would be unhelpful or even judgemental; in several cases this was as a result of hearing of negative experiences with homelessness services from other trans people.

⁶⁵ Stonewall. (2018). *Supporting trans women in domestic and sexual violence services: Interviews with professionals in the sector*. Retrieved from: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/stonewall_and_nfpsynergy_report.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

Pathways to Homelessness and Prevention

Participants’ routes to homelessness differed but relationship breakdowns with family members were noted as key. For example, one participant stated that:

“In April in 2018 I had a breakdown in the relationship with my mum, big time, and it turned into constant arguing and she made me homeless overnight and when she was away on holiday and I was at army camp, I rung up (third sector agency) and got emergency accommodation in the hostel.”

Participants stated that they felt the fact that they are LGBTQ+ had, in some way contributed to the situations which led to their homelessness. One young person stated: *“I think that the majority of my family are homophobic”*. That the response to their sexual orientation or gender identity was a contributory factor in their relationship breakdowns was clear in some cases:

“My Dad used to beat me because I was bi-sexual and I have had a lot more female partners than male partners and my Dad didn’t accept that”

⁶⁶ Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G. & Grossman, A. H. (2018). *Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 62 (4), 503-505. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29609917>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

A lack of acceptance of the participants’ sexual orientation or gender identity was not noted by any participant as the sole reason for their homelessness, but it was a key contributory factor to family breakdown.

“Yes, I would say it had an impact. I wouldn’t say it’s fully the reason (for becoming homeless) but I would say it was a big part”

“It was a big part of it yes, obviously with being accepted or not.”

For young trans people, family rejection was often characterised by a refusal to use their correct name or pronouns, a practice which is understood to have severe mental ill health consequences.⁶⁶

“They just refused to call me by my name, kept calling me she. Well I’m not she. Kept calling me by my deadname. Well that’s not who I am. Truth be told, I’ve never been her. It’s not like this should have been a surprise. I’d been telling them for years. So that’s when I left. Packed all my stuff and left. Just like that. I had to get away. But I had nowhere to go.”

Two clear themes emerged from participants’ responses to questions about what might have prevented them from becoming homeless. Firstly a number of participants noted that they felt that had their relationships with certain key family members been better that they might not have become homeless, for example:

“I would say that if I had got on with my Auntie’s partner, there could have still been a chance I was living with her and the same with my Nan.”

Early intervention by family-focussed support services may have been helpful in these cases, but without engagement from parents/ guardians there is a limit to the effectiveness of such services:

“I did try and get mediation between me and my mum to try and sort it out but she was stubborn basically, she wouldn’t change anything so there wasn’t anything that I could do to stop it at the end of the day.”

Cases such as this one indicate a need for greater societal understanding of LGBTQ+ issues.

The other clear trend in response to questions about prevention was a desire for social services to have either intervened earlier or, in one participant’s case, to have demonstrated significantly greater sensitivity in disclosing his sexual orientation to his parents, in relation to a child sexual exploitation matter. In that case, the participant noted:

“I think social services were massively detrimental to my situation. My Dad would never have known I was gay if social services didn’t tell (my parents)... I think that social services made things worse and after that I could just see the breakdown in the relationship. At that point, it created so much tension. I really didn’t sleep in my house more than four nights a week. I was sleeping at a friend’s house just because I couldn’t bear to go back to them and feeling embarrassed and ashamed”

Participants described missed opportunities for early social services intervention:

“Social services were involved from when I was 4 up until I left and they didn’t do anything. They knew we were being beaten, they knew everything that was going down. They knew that they were trying to turn me straight but nothing was being done. Social services need to pull their finger out.”

“(My homelessness could have been prevented) if social services had interfered sooner. I think they saw the signs but my dad is quite good at covering his tracks when he used to hurt me.”

“I was looking after my sister but I honestly do think that social services and stuff need to buck up their ideas, and any other supporting child system, because if someone rings them to say “my mum’s doing this” or “my Dad’s doing that” or “My siblings are doing this”, they need to get that child out. It annoys me that they left me there with my mum for a longer time than they should have. I don’t think the really bad things would have happened if they’d really listened.”

The reasons for social services’ response, or lack thereof, in these cases were not explored in further detail and from a small sample it is hard to make generalised comments. Clearly, however, a greater understanding of the sorts of experiences LGBTQ+ young people go through would have made a big difference in some of these cases, so specific training may have helped. Earlier intervention may have been achieved with the introduction of an Upstream-style service, as detailed in the WCPP report ‘Preventing Youth Homelessness’, which explains how the Geelong Project, an Australian system, identifies young people at risk at an early stage, through universal screening at school and has achieved a 40% reduction in youth homelessness as a result.⁶⁷

Experiences of homelessness

The participants noted numerous situations, throughout the interviews, in which they were at considerable risk of harm while homeless.

Using social media to find a place to stay was something noted by a number of participants. Some mentioned the use of Grindr both for romantic liaison and for shelter and food.

“I have used Grindr lots. I used to start going on it when I was 14, I would go out to meet someone anyway but if they offered the opportunity to stay over I would definitely. If it was a night away from my parents then I would... Since I’ve been 14 I’ve used it to stay over guys houses or since I’ve been homeless I’ve used it to get a meal”

One participant noted explicitly the protective measures they felt they needed to take to avoid harm on these encounters:

“I have used Grindr to hook up. It’s like a gay tinder. It’s not about having meaningful relationships. Every time I’ve gone to meet a randomer I’ve had a knife in my boot.”

Most participants were clear that they had put themselves in harmful situations to gain shelter since becoming homeless, either by sharing accommodation with drug users or by putting themselves in situations in which they were likely to be asked for sex in return for a place to stay:

“I was staying at my mate’s and my mate’s boyfriend is a drug addict and it was either go there or sleep on the streets. I would rather go there and just keep out of the way than stay on the street.”

“I used to hang around with all the men and people I knew would have drugs. We would be having a party just so I could be in someone’s house instead of having to sleep wherever.”

“Sometimes I have gone over to someone’s house just to stay over there and I have had no interest or intention of sleeping with them but they have. I’m just kind of like no and they are like well you’re over my house. No, especially when it comes to sex I am assertive and I will say no. I’ve had someone verbally challenge that but never physically challenge. If they were to physically challenge that I would leave or depending how drastic it was, do something else.”

“I’ve been in homes where I’ve felt and known that I’m not wanted there, which has put me out of my comfort zone.”

Others described experiences of rough sleeping, on occasion to avoid harm at home or in another place of shelter:

“I was staying with a heroin addict whilst sofa surfing. I walked into her room one night and caught her with foil and I caught her smoking it. I would rather sleep on a bench, so I did. I slept on a bench for 2 weeks. I’ve had my fair share of drugs so I just left that, it wasn’t for me.”

Young trans people also engaged in risky behaviours in order to secure somewhere safe to stay. However, they typically entered relationships which were unsafe and which became abusive, yet, particularly in the absence of supportive family, they were often left with few options to allow them to leave.

⁶⁷ Schwan, K., French, D., Gaetz, S. Ward, A., Akerman, J. & Redman, M. (2018). Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Available at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/preventing-youth-homelessness/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

“My girlfriend at the time was abusive, yeah. You know, 20/20 hindsight – great, isn’t it? But I was only 15, I didn’t have anywhere else to go. My step-dad- well he’s not a very nice person, shall we say? I just got on with it. No one was interested anyway.”

“Yeah I guess that relationship...I guess you’d call it coercive control. It took me a long time to realise. How do you even realise when the only person in the world who is ever there for you is a big part of the problem? Social services, the hostel, college, they were all useless, didn’t want to know. They were the only one who ever looked out for me”

For trans participants, survival sex *per se* was not a significant finding. However, several participants reported sexually predatory behaviour by acquaintances, peers, or within support services, which they were exposed to as a result of being homeless and having few alternative options. Here, trans identity was typically a factor in sexual victimisation: young trans people were the subject of fetishisation or curiosity.

Mental Ill Health

Experiences of poor mental health, whether before homelessness or as a result of becoming homeless, were rife amongst participants.

“I felt quite lost and abandoned and I already had attachment disorder but I saw it got a lot worse when I felt that I was being abandoned and moved around so much. It made my mental health go downhill.”

“I was trying to make myself straight again... I’ve only recently opened back up to the fact that I can’t change who I am.”

“My Bi-polar and PTSD was from before I was made homeless, and that was purely because of my mother. To this day, I cannot hear someone whistle near my ear without falling to the floor and not be able to do anything about it. I will go into a full-on panic attack. My mother was a whistler. She’d whistle after beating. She would go and sit down and smoke a fag. I have to deal with that to this day because you can be walking down the street and someone is whistling.”

One participant noted that a bed and breakfast placement had a directly negative impact on their mental health, which only improved on moving out and into their own accommodation:

“When I was in the Bed and Breakfast I was having a break down, it was a pure crisis. I was self-harming and feeling suicidal then but I didn’t seek anything out for it. I tried to access support for depression and anxiety and I was going through those kinds of feelings. I just left it and when I was offered a place I felt more of a sense of security in my head and those feelings decreased over the months after living here. When you are there, it’s just small room in a hotel there is no stability and no way of knowing how long you are going to be there.”

One participant stated that they had used drugs as a direct result of their homelessness, which had a significant impact on their mental health.

“It increased my drug use because why else would I want to be sober on the streets? It just takes too long for the day to pass. So, obviously that caused me to have paranoia... it led me to have tablets every day, you know, so if I was in a nice home doing normal things, I wouldn’t have a bad mental health record because I wouldn’t be doing things that would affect me in that way.”

Support Mechanisms

All participants were asked about the support they had received, both in advance of their homelessness and since becoming homeless. A few key areas of provision were highlighted: statutory support (both homelessness services and social services); schools and colleges; mental health services (both statutory and third sector); and third sector support providers.

Since these interviews were undertaken, Welsh Government has funded statutory youth services to specifically develop youth homelessness prevention as a part of their service; this nascent development is intended to improve early intervention and collaboration across different departments and, given time and sufficient resource, may go some way to addressing some of the issues mentioned by participants.

Statutory Support

Experiences of statutory support varied. One participant noted:

“The council accommodated me. At the Info station they helped to put me into an adult hostel and things like that. But not really... Social services were never informed. I was on my own for the first six weeks. (third-sector homelessness provider) have been the only ones that helped me and it wasn’t until six weeks after. I was sixteen.”

Although it was not specifically asked, some participants noted that gaining access to statutory support was difficult. One, for example stated:

“At 16 I was sofa surfing for nine months before I got accommodation and the only reason I got accommodation was because they offered me the Foyer but I stayed on a park bench instead for two weeks in the end so they had to get me flat then otherwise I was on the bench for the rest of it. A social worker who does conference meetings flipped her lid with my social worker and then contacted (third-sector homelessness provider).”

One noted:

“Well, I didn’t get much support from the council, they only offered me a sleeping bag and a tent. But I got a lot of support from mental health teams pushing for me to get a place in (third-sector homelessness provider).”

One was pleased with the fact that a range of services came together to support them:

“I had (third-sector homelessness provider), I had my social worker, a YOS worker, I had counselling and CAMHS and stuff, so it was really good. I found them helpful.”

Another also mentioned a positive experience of joint working between the local authority and the third sector:

“I think I found out I was being kicked out from the rehab on the Wednesday and rung them on the Thursday and had an interview on the Friday and then six weeks later I had a flat on my own and that’s when I heard about (third-sector homelessness provider) then.... and they have been extra supportive every day.”

Many trans participants had very different experiences. A minority were successfully placed in hostels. In these cases, what typically made the difference to the success of their placement was the presence of other young people who accepted them.

“In the hostel, I live with 5 boys and 1 girl. The girl is the oldest in the hostel. All the boys class me as one of their boys and the girls class me as a boy.”

However, some trans participants noted very poor experiences of third sector services. One young person described an experience of mediation in which he felt he was expected to see his gender as negotiable and subject to discussion.

“So we were sent to mediation- that’s where the homeless people sent me. Me and my mum and dad in a room eyeballing each other...the trouble is, they don’t want to accept I’m trans. I tried to explain to them [the mediators], they [parents] don’t want to talk to me. Whatever you say, they won’t accept me. It’s their daughter they want. And I’m not their daughter. The mediators were like, oh, you just need to talk to each other. You need to understand where your parents are coming from. Uh no. Waste of time.”

Schools/ Colleges

Some participants were predominantly positive about the support they received at school and college, both academically and, in some cases, with referral to and recommendations of support services:

“Yes, they were really helpful and supportive because I moved schools halfway through GCSE’s and I ended up going to private school and they were really supportive about everything. They gave me extra time.”

“I have found that my college have helped me to get where I am today. I wouldn’t have known where to go if it wasn’t for them.”

“I spoke to my head of year and he offered support with anything if I needed it and the college I’m at have said if I have any financial difficulties I could speak to their funding organisation and they might be able to get financial support for certain things.”

“College were the ones that advised me to go to the Info station. Lucky enough...I became homeless at the end of my first year at college so I had time to get back onto my feet (in the holidays) and concentrate on my studies.”

By contrast, others had extremely negative experiences of school and college. One noted an experience that brings to mind the controversial practice of ‘off-rolling’ pupils whose grades are likely to bring down an institution’s average⁶⁸:

“The head of A Levels was not supportive. I didn’t continue with A Levels because she didn’t help me and she was detrimental to me really. She said “now that you are in this situation are you going to be able to continue with A Levels. I might have to just drop you from A Levels because obviously you are not going to be able to continue”. When she said that to me I thought ‘is there any point in me even revising then?’ and I was in a Bed and Breakfast for three months of my A Levels. There was no room to put things anywhere or room to revise or get anything sorted. I was like why bother?”

Another participant noted that their school failed to protect them from homophobic bullying:

“(The teachers) were the worst of them all. They were worse than the kids. I didn’t even go to college because of (bullying)... I didn’t leave with any GCSE’s like because by year 9 I was on a three-hour timetable because of the bullies. I couldn’t go into school for 6 hours a day without being abused. If I was to wear a wig, it would get snatched straight off my head and probably get burnt up the field. (My school) were terrible when it came to accommodating those needs. You had the odd one or two teachers who would be “like oh my God! I think you’re fabulous!” and then you wouldn’t see them for the rest of your life in school.”

One of the participants noted a lack of general education on LGBTQ+ issues which contributed to their feeling of isolation. This is a theme which arose again in questions about what the participants felt needed to change, later in the interviews.

“(At the time that) I was forced to try and convert, we weren’t taught anything about being gay in any way, shape or form, trans, bi, lesbian, there was nothing to say its ok to be with the same sex and this should have changed when I was still in school.”

“School did not educate officially on gender and sexuality. They spoke to me about it because it was an issue with bullying and that but there wasn’t any formal education on it in college or school.”

The plans to deliver broader Relationship and Sexuality Education in Wales, including LGBT issues, will hopefully address some of these issues.

Mental Health Services

Responses to questions about support for participants’ mental health were mostly negative. Most participants who had accessed support (or tried to) were downbeat about their experience, as shown in the examples below:

“I went to CAMHS from the age of 5 until last year but they didn’t help. They were like, “it’s only a phase, you’ll be fine” but at that point in time they let me down a lot. I was self-harming by the age of 7 and did my first overdose at the age of 8 but they kind of just let me go still... At first, it all started out as a cry for help. I needed help to get away from my Dad and they saw that but I just got locked in this world where I hated myself. I’ve got body dysmorphia, so I hate myself, I hate everything about myself and I was just going more and more downhill and no-one could see that I was. I went to a point where I was overdosing once a week and I couldn’t deal with anything but they still just let me go. I was going to appointments and I was getting people coming to see me but they just put it down to what was going on at home, they didn’t dig any deeper.”

“I think they should listen to us and actually take into account that not all of us just want attention, be that having someone to talk to us or getting the medication to get through a day.”

“I didn’t get any help until I went into rehab really and I came off drugs because my mum thought I had like ADHD since I was a kid and she thought there was something wrong with me. She knew there was something wrong with me but they kept on pushing us away because I was on drugs and they said it was because of the drugs... and it wasn’t until I came off the drugs that I got a diagnosis of ADHD and Asperger’s and other things as well. I didn’t have a choice really; the doctors wouldn’t do anything.”

⁶⁸ Allen-Kinross, P. (2019). Ofsted: Quarter of teachers have witnessed off-rolling. Retrieved from: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-quarter-of-teachers-have-witnessed-off-rolling/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

“Well my experiences have been pretty rubbish. I’ve been pushed around from pillar to post and they finally gave me a diagnosis about two weeks ago, after fighting for nine years.”

Based on these interviews, it seems that an active offer of mental health support would have made a big difference. Prevention and early intervention are the ideal, but the following quote suggests that a more proactive offer of support at point of housing crisis would make a difference. This participant is describing how they felt that they dare not ask for more support after being offered accommodation, even though earlier in the interview they had described self-harming and feeling suicidal before that offer:

“It was weird... I thought that because I was in that situation I’d be getting too much support, I’d be a bit greedy. ‘Well he’s already getting money off us every week, he’s in this place and now he wants more support.’ I felt like a burden.”

Others noted that they had tried to address their mental health themselves, without relying on medical intervention.

“I was trying to self-medicate and trying to do something about it. My mind was going so fast, my body wasn’t keeping up with it so I’d have some uppers and I’d be up for like 3 or 4 weeks and then if I couldn’t sleep I’d take downers so I could sleep then. So, I was trying to control my body with the drugs really but it doesn’t work.”

It is important that it is understood that young people resort to strategies like this to handle their mental ill health and that a lack of mental health support is often at the heart of the issue; withholding mental health

support until someone is clean is an inappropriate response. Recent NICE guidance recommends that secondary care mental health services should not exclude people with severe mental illness because of their substance misuse.⁶⁹

Only one participant described a positive experience of mental health support:

“(3rd Sector Mental Health Service Provider) were really good with things, especially the LGBT stuff. They were really accepting there. There are loads of people there who are LGBT and they are good at talking about stuff, addressing issues and challenging homophobia when it comes up. It’s a nice place there.”

It is noteworthy that this participant highlighted that support from other LGBTQ+ people was of particular benefit. Other research points to the benefits of a shared vocabulary and experience that employing LGBTQ+ staff to support LGBTQ+ service users can yield.⁷⁰

Third Sector Homelessness Support

Participants spoke in a mostly positive fashion about the support that they had received from the third sector organisations working with them. As noted, recruitment of the young people in Participant Group 1, who form the majority of respondents whose responses are presented below, came via third sector homelessness services. Most were receiving ongoing support, which was clearly a positive influence in their lives.

“Before I became homeless and before I approached (third-sector homelessness provider) I was not a confident person at all, I always felt negative. That is what helped me, so exactly what I have been through and what (third-sector

homelessness provider) gave me is exactly what needs to happen with the LGBT community, just more of it. For people who couldn’t go back home, but there is a struggle, just more mediation, more support and more help to try and keep them with their families if necessary.”

“I received shelter from (third-sector homelessness provider). I was also offered counselling, I didn’t take it up but I was offered it. I also received numerous grants to help me get on my feet to live independently.”

“I think that (third-sector homelessness provider) have supported me in the best way that they can because I’ve got the best result. I have achieved the goal that they have set for me. I’m just going to try and work hard in college and better myself and see what the future holds.”

For all the positive comments though, based on the experiences of the participants there are some significant areas for improvement for third sector providers, particularly with regard to the sensitivity displayed when asking young people about their sexual orientation, suggesting that investment in staff training might improve young LGBTQ+ people’s experiences of support.

“The support workers are just being nosy, they want to know for themselves. It never leads to anything when they end up finding out (about my sexuality). I’ve had four workers in the past who have asked me, I’ve ended up telling them and nothing has been done about it. They could have been like “there’s an LGBT group going on, let’s go and do this” but they weren’t. They were just being nosy. There is a way of asking. They don’t say why they are asking they just seem curious.”

“When a worker meets a young person and that person is likely in the LGBT community, do not try and rush that young person into saying what they are. It’s nothing to do with you and as a worker you need to respect the fact that someone wants to keep it a secret. I’ve met lots of workers and they say “I don’t mean to be rude but are you gay?” and it’s like “I don’t mean to be rude but its none of your fucking business”. There is no need for it.”

One participant spoke about how being asked about their identity inappropriately by a staff member made them feel and how it affected their experience of living in shared supported housing:

“Do you not understand how someone else on the project, especially in (hometown), may be raised to have negative feelings towards the LGBT community? That made me feel unsafe where I’m living. At the time, I didn’t know these people. (The support worker) didn’t take into consideration how that would make me feel or why that would make me feel bad and the implications that could have on people... I felt so anxious for like a month with him knowing (my sexuality). I don’t know if the other boys living here know or would actually do anything because of it, or challenge me or say anything and that is an anxiety that I still carry round. I will carry it around until they leave. They might try to think I’m hitting on them or something, which is not the case. I fear communicating with them just in case they think something is misdirected. Staff could definitely take that into consideration but I don’t think it’s on their mind.”

Some participants acknowledged that asking someone’s gender identity and sexual orientation was important to understand what support they might benefit from, but the issue of how this is asked for (and when) was a recurrent theme, with one participant stating:

⁶⁹ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2019). *Health and social care directorate Quality standards and indicators Briefing paper. Coexisting severe mental illness and substance misuse*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-qs10078/documents/briefing-paper>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

⁷⁰ England, E. (2019). *Homelessness among trans people in Wales*. Retrieved from: https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Homelessness-among-trans-people-in-Wales_Website.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

“I think I did disclose my sexuality straight away but I can see why someone should be phased by that. Especially if you’ve been kicked out for being LGBT and then you are asked and then could think is this going to be a barrier in terms of me getting help or a place. Is this person going to judge me from my response? Do they want to know so they don’t have to have me in their service? I have since found out that is not the case.”

Other comments reflected how the perception of the being the lone LGBTQ+ person in a supported housing project can make young people feel singled out and unnerved, supporting the argument for the development of LGBTQ+-specific supported accommodation:

“When you go for support in homeless places there are lots of dodgy characters around the house... it can be very intimidating being amongst loads of homeless people. The majority, when I was being supported, all of them were straight so it was very daunting because they were naturally intimidating people and being gay can feel like you are a target almost. I had just turned 16 and was the youngest there.”

Some service providers demonstrate their support for LGBTQ+ rights, with posters and flags visibly displayed, which can have a positive impact on young people’s experiences. Findings from the interviews suggest that displays like this alone are not enough to make people feel safe, though, and must be supported with appropriate training and policies. An anecdote from one of the study’s trans participants shows how these displays undermine confidence among the LGBTQ+ community if not supported with appropriate action:

“I was in the hostel, in reception, you know, waiting... a fight breaks out between these two lads. “You fag, you cocksucker, you tranny”. They are there screaming at each other and then there’s me... Staff were behind the counter, behind their screen, you know. Did nothing. Irony was- it was pride month or something, I don’t know. Anyway, all this right in front of a huge rainbow Stonewall poster”

Recommendations for Change from Young LGBTQ+ People with Experience of Homelessness

The final set of questions sought to understand what the participants would change to prevent young LGBTQ+ people from becoming homeless, what would help for those already homeless and what they saw as necessary for their own progression from supported housing. They included a question about what the young people would ask the First Minister of Wales to change if they had the opportunity.

A repeated theme through these conversations was a call for increased provision of LGBTQ+ – specific services, such as supported housing (in a response to the homophobia experienced by participants in shared housing and hostels) or mental health services which specifically cater for LGBTQ+ people:

“Sometimes I thought I don’t want to go into a hostel, cos I’m different and people will pick on me and that, so putting more protective housing in for (young LGBTQ+ people) maybe that would work. I don’t know, just to stop people from picking on what you are”

“You’ve got the mental health for all the different disorders but then they should have one for the LGBTQ people so that they could all get together and understand that they are not on their own at the end of the day. They have got the Amber Project, which is a self-harm project and is with a load of other people who self-harm but I think there should be one of them for people who are different sexualities or gender, so then we could all talk to each other.”

“I would just say, just more accommodation to help people within that community to give them the opportunity to go and live on their own and give themselves confidence.”

On a similar note, one young trans person called specifically for domestic violence shelters that are gender neutral, stating:

“I feel that DV services could benefit from shelters that are for all genders. It is useful to have women’s refuges and man’s refuges but we need another option for trans people who may not feel safe or comfortable in these gendered spaces. It would also benefit, say, mothers with teenage sons who are fleeing DV. The more options we can give people, the better.”

Education was another recurrent theme in the participants’ proposed areas for change.

“I would ask the First Minister to change the way that people go about things, instead of treading on eggshells when you are talking about it. I would ask him to educate parents especially or carers about what experiences the young person or adults go through when they are LGBT. I would ask him to educate carers, parents and even the community a bit more. Training in schools and colleges because they are quite hopeless in that situation.”

“Something I would ask the First Minister to change or implement would be the education about sexual minorities in schools. I think the education about LGBT is important because it sets the idea of it into people’s heads to normalise it rather than learning from word of mouth or the internet. It is something that would be accurate and does represent the community well and is informative and when those students become parents their children won’t need to come out as LGBT it will just be normal. There wouldn’t be a reason why they would become homeless.”

One participant wanted to see a Human Rights approach applied to the issue of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness:

“The things I would ask the First Minister to change, you couldn’t change. Diminishing the ideas that social institutions put into place. The family, for example, if someone’s family is religious and against LGBT people, if they have a child that child will be brought up like that. It’s the same with the education system, the same with any social system really, I don’t really think you can eradicate these things. Could he bring anything in on the UNCR? I know that if you are a Muslim, for example, and your child wants to be a Christian, one of those rights is that you should allow your child to follow whatever religion in the same household. Is there a specific right for children being from a sexual minority?”

Other comments followed a similar theme – the participants did not feel protected from discrimination and were unclear on what their rights were when this happened:

“Calling people ‘faggot’ or ‘tranny’ should be a hate crime. There should at least be a fine for it.”

“I do think there should be valid punishments for people committing hate crimes against the LGBT community. It’s a hate crime...If we get hated we have to go on rallies and walk around the streets in drag. We should all be accepting of each other.”

Participants called specifically for an improvement in the availability of community groups offering activities and the opportunity to develop relationships with peers. The research team visited and met with staff from 2 LGBTQ+ youth groups during the course of this work and both clearly had an extremely positive impact on those attending, giving the opportunity to socialise, learn and develop a sense of community (though funding was noted as being extremely tight for one of these groups).

“There should be more groups and youth clubs for people to be able to get together and understand each other and make sure that they know they are not on their own. I have had a lot of people come into my hostel and think they are on their own. I have been there for a year now and they think they are on their own but at the end of the day, we are not. No matter what sexuality you are, we are all the same and we are all in the same situation. We just need to find a way to get on and communicate with each other. Even just in the living room, on one night have a movie night or a games night or just something like that so that we all get together maybe once a week and just make sure that everyone knows they are not on their own.”

“Have groups more often instead of one day in a week or something and make it a thing where you can actually go and hang out with people who’ve been through the same stuff and that way you can learn to go through some stuff you are going through that they have been through. Maybe that would help probably. Learning from other people in group situations and going to places, not just going to a centre and hanging out in one room like, be more like we’ll all meet and then go to the cinema or we’ll all meet and go bowling. Be able to do normal things instead of feeling that you can’t go out.”

Faster routes to suitable accommodation were a clear priority area for change:

“There should be more services because when I was moving to (third-sector homelessness provider), before I was put on emergency priority, I was looking at waiting almost a year to move in.... If someone is becoming homeless, or they are homeless they definitely have a good reason and no-one does it out of the blue. If they need to move in, they need to get somewhere quickly. Make more accommodation available.”

“I would probably make a bit of a change to the council to tell them to have closer links with local homeless charities instead of just saying they will give you a tent and a sleeping bag. That’s no help it’s just hopeless.”

Financial support was another area that young people told us needed to be improved, to enable them to make the necessary changes in their lives to move on from homelessness and live independently:

“I’m on income support, the payments from income support just about suffice and by just about, I mean I have about a quid left by the time I’ve come to pay day. I can’t make humongous investments. Until I get a full-time job I more than likely wouldn’t be able to do a driving test or even get a provisional.”

Part 4: Survey of Local Authority and Third Sector Practitioners

“I think it should be something that as a service we are much more comfortable talking about with clients, understanding how their sexuality or gender could affect their life experiences and how in turn that affects their housing needs.”

Key Findings from Survey of Practitioners:

- A clear finding from our survey is that there is a strong desire for training for those working with young people, so that they feel better informed as to how to appropriately support LGBTQ+ young people. There was, broadly, a very positive attitude to wanting to help as much as possible, but a lack of in-depth knowledge was holding some practitioners back.
- Similarly, more information on which specialist providers to refer young people to would be welcomed by many.
- Although most felt that their working environment was a welcoming space for LGBTQ+ youth, many stated that there were no particular provisions made.

Respondents

A survey was designed based on a similar approach taken in Scotland, by LGBT Youth Scotland, which has seen them make significant progress on the issue of LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness. This was shared with members of third sector and local authority bodies who work with young homeless people via three routes: third sector participants were accessed via

Cymorth Cymru; LA homelessness practitioners via the LA Homelessness Network; and social workers (whose role in youth homelessness has been clarified since the Southwark Judgement in 2009) via ADSS Cymru. All of these organisations have wide reach across professionals in their specific areas and we are grateful for their involvement. A methodological note: the researchers did not question the extent of the distribution of the survey so it is hard to know the proportion of respondents, but a response rate of 61 people in total offered some useful data, nevertheless.

Roughly, one quarter of respondents were LA homelessness professionals; another quarter social services; 10% from homelessness charities and the rest from various sources, such as housing associations, mental health charities and domestic abuse support organisations. 50% were managerial and the rest were predominantly frontline workers (with one person noting that they were a commissioner of services).

Beyond these, demographic details, including the LA in which respondents were based, were not requested.

Monitoring

94% of respondents monitor the gender of people who present to their services, but only 56% record whether those people are trans or not. 73% record the sexual orientation of those presenting to their services. Most of the 19 respondents who provided further details of this noted a list of options provided (e.g. ‘heterosexual/ straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, other, prefer not to say’), but one respondent noted that their organisation’s position is that ‘clients are asked what their orientation is without providing any labels’.

As noted elsewhere in this report, monitoring sexual orientation and gender identity is a particularly sensitive issue; for young people who may have recently been kicked out of home after revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity, there is a need for utmost sensitivity in asking for this information.

Not providing labels can lead to a sense of feeling ‘othered’. Ultimately, services should develop their approaches to monitoring in conjunction with LGBTQ+ groups and people, explaining clearly why the data is being requested and working together to identify how it can be most effectively collected.

Of interest to this issue are the responses to the question ‘On your initial introduction to someone who will use your service, do they have opportunity to talk through their experiences in a private environment where there is no possibility of their conversation being overheard?’. While the vast majority (all but 4 respondents) answered ‘Yes’, the comments below revealed that this is not necessarily the case in every situation; that a presenting service user might need to request privacy or, it could be presumed, be asked to provide detail on gender identity or sexual orientation in a space that is not private.

“We take initial information down on reception and then if they wish to discuss something in private we take them to a room. If they absolutely don’t want to discuss any aspect of their housing on reception we can take them into a quiet room.”

“Should client be unwilling to disclose information on desk, can be interviewed by officer in private room.”

It is not hard to imagine that a young person, in a new environment, recently made homeless and self-conscious about their sexual orientation, might lack the confidence necessary to ask for privacy, or might find it easier not to disclose their sexual orientation at this point. Services can work to gain the trust of the LGBTQ+ community with training undertaken by staff and visible demonstrations of support for LGBTQ+ rights. For more on this point, see the example of the Rock Trust, provided in Part 4.

Confidence, Training and Training Needs

Taking inspiration from the Scottish approach to their survey, we included two questions about levels of understanding and confidence amongst staff working with young homeless people. Both highlighted that most staff were confident in their abilities to support appropriately and in their knowledge of the specific issues young LGBTQ+ people at risk of homelessness might face, but there was clearly scope for improvement in both areas. Less than 20% felt fully confident and just 28% said they had a firm grasp on young LGBTQ+ people’s needs.

Q8. Do you feel that you understand the specific needs of LGBTQ+ young people (i.e. 16-25) who present to your service? E.g. an understanding of the provision of gender-appropriate services for trans people.

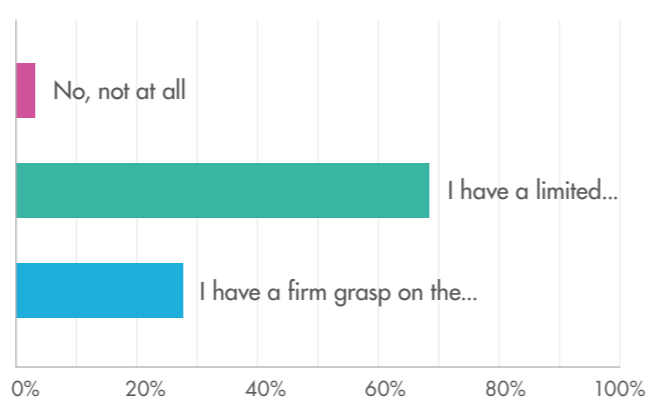


Figure 1. Stakeholder Understanding of LGBTQ+ Young People’s Needs

Q9. How would you rate your own confidence in dealing with the specific issues of young LGBTQ+ people who present to your service?

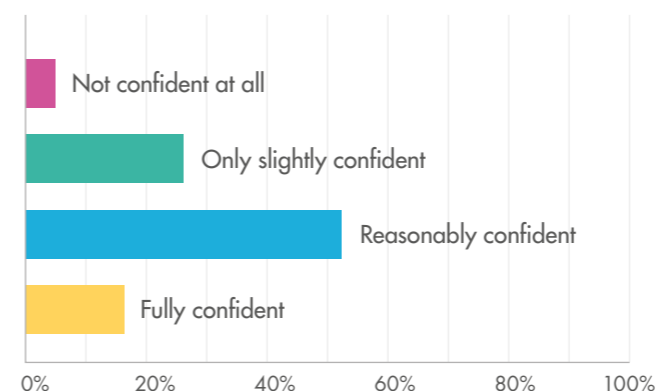


Figure 2. Stakeholders’ Confidence in Dealing with LGBTQ+ Young People’s Specific Needs

With regard to training, which would help those whose do not feel fully confident in their understanding of the issues faced by LGBTQ+ young people, a slim majority (51%) of respondents told us that their organisation does not offer training which focusses specifically on sexual orientation and gender identity. This, combined with the results of the open question at the end of the survey (see below) is indicative of a clear need and demand for training in this area.

Services and Referral

Most answered ‘no’ (93%) to whether they provided specific services for LGBTQ+ young people, with one LA Homelessness Team member stating: **‘No, there isn’t a need for it’**. Others noted **‘We don’t provide any services but would seek and support anyone who may need this. And support them to get this info’** and **‘No but we are able to access information and support citizens in accessing groups and information’**, suggesting that, in some cases, there is an awareness of where to turn for specific support.

On this point, 51% of respondents stated that they do refer people to specialist services, with a number of different agencies highlighted in the comments as sources of support to whom agencies refer. These included: Unique; VIVA; Broken Rainbow; Rainbow Bridge; Unity; Stonewall Cymru; Umbrella; and GLAD. Stonewall Cymru provides a useful resource on their website via which users can access information on groups and specialist providers in their areas.⁷¹

One respondent noted: **“We have had a number of tenants who, whilst accessing our services, have been undergoing surgery to support their decision to identify as transgender. For this reason, we have good links with support groups local to (our area) for Transgender service users. We also have a good awareness of what agencies are out there to help Young People accessing our services.”**

⁷¹ Stonewall (2017). *What’s in My Area: Find LGBT services and community groups that are local to you*. Retrieved from: <https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/help-advice/whats-my-area>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

A Welcoming Environment

Question 10 asked respondents about how they felt about the environment they provided for LGBTQ+ young people (see fig. 3).

Q10. Do you feel that your service offers a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ young people? E.g. do you visibly demonstrate support for LGBTQ+ rights?

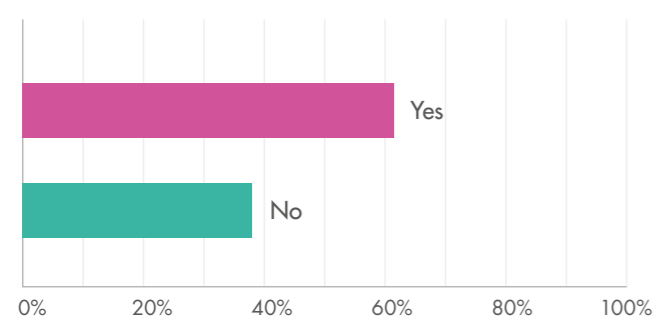


Figure 3. Stakeholders' Perceptions of Whether their Service Offers a Welcoming Environment for LGBTQ+ Young People

While the majority suggested that they did, indeed, feel that theirs was a welcoming space for LGBTQ+ young people, the comments suggest that in many places no specific effort is made.

Comments included:

“Housing options is very neutral and is open for everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc. and all the staff treat everyone equally. It does not visibly demonstrate support like posters and banners.”

“We are welcoming to LGBTQ+ but we don't visibly demonstrate the support for their rights. There are a number of things we would need to visibly demonstrate publicly if we started with one group of young people. Perhaps it is something we could consider in the meeting rooms to make them feel more at ease.”

One respondent, from a LA Homelessness Team questioned *‘Why should we demonstrate our support for LGBTQ+ rights when we approach all citizens in a non-judgemental supporting way? Would it not be going against equality to make additional provisions?’*

Another respondent, also from a LA homelessness team, highlighted a systems-issue which is preventing them from providing specific support to some LGBTQ+ people:

“Our systems are not set up to record any gender except female / male. If young people are transitioning we do not have the capacity to log this or to change their gender preference / name preference until it's a legal change.”

This quote is indicative of a patchwork of different approaches – some trans participants noted that they had had a very positive experience when asking to have their gender changed on LAs' systems. When done quickly and without fuss it was very much appreciated.

One respondent noted that they were concerned about service users' views undermining staff efforts to create a welcoming environment:

“We operate a shared supported housing service for people with complex and enduring mental health needs so although we would look to do all we can to provide a welcoming environment I would have concerns that the views and prejudices of some of the people we house would cause problems.”

Adoption of a zero-tolerance to homophobia approach would be a positive step forward in those practitioner organisations who do not already have a clear policy in this regard. “Adopting a zero-tolerance position is not the same as a guarantee that harassment will not occur. It is a statement of intent, with clear expectations, sanctions and remedies for responding to harassment.”⁷²

Positively, there were some examples of organisations proactively working to make LGBTQ+ young people feel welcome, citing examples of how they make their environments more visibly welcoming, such as *“Positive promotion using images and case studies”* and *“We include LGBT posters e.g. end youth homelessness Cymru”*. Another talked about visibility of LGBTQ+ support as part of a wider strategy:

“We are signed up to Stonewall as a local authority and display posters and raise awareness through set days. Refer them to Peter Tatchel for further advice and guidance”

Ideas for Change

The final question of the survey was “Do you have any ideas for changes that could be made to improve your service for LGBTQ+ young people?” which elicited some constructive ideas, summarised below:

Exploration of LGBTQ+-specific services was recommended, with one respondent noting:

“We have supported a number of young homeless YP's who have identified as LGBTQ. I feel a service should be developed for LGBTQ young people that allows them to express and explore their sexuality and identity.”

There was a particularly high demand for training and information sharing:

“more in depth training for staff to enable them to provide a stronger support network for an LGBTQ+ service user”

“Some training for the staff since a lot of staff members that make up the whole of the support staff in the company are a part of the LGBTQ+ community”

“Diversity officer to make contact to attend team meetings and share information about their role and any events which would be relevant for us to share with young people who may want to attend”

⁷² Scottish Housing Regulator (2009). *Understanding the Housing Needs and Homeless Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People in Scotland A Guide for Social Housing Providers and Homelessness Services*. Retrieved from: <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/documents/stone%20wall%20lgbt%20guidance.pdf>. Last accessed 30th June 2019.

“training to staff about the potential vulnerability of LGBGT applicants when they are facing discrimination within travelling communities or from local communities and the potential risks they would be exposed to if they became homeless (attacks, targeting, etc)”

“more resources to be made available, handouts and visually”

“We should receive LGBTQ+ training so people understand the different definitions, people are more sensitive to clients who present who don’t confirm to binary gender definitions or heterosexual / gay / bisexual. I think it should be something that as a service we are much more comfortable talking about with clients, understanding how their sexuality or gender could affect their life experiences and how in turn that affects their housing needs.”

Two comments, in particular, both from local authority staff, reinforced the need for more training and awareness of the specific needs of LGBTQ+ young people and why they might require additional or distinct support to a non-LGBTQ+ young person:

“not treat them as different or special. they are all young people sexuality race or religion aside”

“No, on the grounds of equality I do not see any additional provisions which can be made without going above and beyond. There should be an equal grounding where everyone feels welcome. I don’t care about peoples sexuality, religion, culture. we are all people.”

Improving environments for young people, in partnership with specialists, was an issue raised by some respondents:

“closer working with Stonewall to ensure reception areas are clear that we are supportive.”

Two people noted a need for more information to be made available to the wider community:

“We could do more awareness raising in the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that they are aware of what healthy relationships look and feel like and ensure that they know how inclusionary our service is should they ever need to access support for domestic abuse”

Finally, and perhaps most positively, a suggestion was made that changes to services should be coproduced with both service users and LGBTQ+:

“Service user involvement and LGBTQ+ staff involvement to plan and drive change. Outreach to groups / services to support us with that.”

Part 5: Insight from Experts via the End Youth Homelessness Cymru Task Group on LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness

“Creating a culture of diversity... raising awareness on equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in education settings and investigating all incidents of violence and discrimination against LGBT youth, holding perpetrators accountable will be necessary measures to effectively address the underlying causes of homelessness.”⁷³

Key Findings of the EYHC LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness Task Group

- Prevention of Homelessness was a major point of discussion. A cultural shift in how LGBTQ+ issues are understood is ultimately necessary. Alongside this, the group discussed a number of ways to better engage with young people at an earlier age, acknowledging that youth involvement is a necessity in the design of services, if we are to ultimately end LGBTQ+ youth homelessness.
- Youth-serving agencies could help to prevent homelessness amongst young LGBTQ+ people by co-producing locally relevant guidance to support young people who want to come out, as well as their families, such as that provided by AKT.
- School-based support is crucial to helping LGBTQ+ young people avoid homelessness and appropriate resources (e.g. Stonewall Cymru’s ‘Creating a Trans Inclusive School’ report) should be accessed by all schools and colleges.
- Some excellent ideas as to how homelessness organisations might better work with LGBTQ+ organisations, with subsequent benefits for both parties, such as improved referral routes, shared skills and improved levels of trust from local LGBTQ+ people with consequent benefits for uptake of services.
- The group focussed on the question of how to make LGBTQ+ youth homelessness everybody’s business, suggesting that local authority homelessness strategies should be revisited, in consultation with local LGBTQ+ groups, to ensure that the issue is addressed effectively.
- In order to ensure a comprehensive overview of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness and its prevention can be developed, the group identified a number of areas for further investigation, both in terms of academic exploration, but also for consideration from service providers. These include links between LGBTQ+ youth homelessness and sex work, gender, race, disability and economic disadvantage.

⁷³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (2019). *The right to housing of LGBT youth: an urgent task in the SDG agenda setting*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24877&LangID=E> Last accessed 13th August 2019

Introduction

This section of the report sets out the findings of a working group made up of experts in the areas of homelessness and LGBTQ+ issues, which met 6 times across 2018 and 2019.

Andrew White, Director of Stonewall Cymru and a member of the End Youth Homelessness Cymru steering group, chaired the group responsible for this report.

Contributions came from a varied membership whose expertise was crucial in compiling the following report. The group consisted of the following people:

- Andrew White, Director of Stonewall Cymru (Chair)
- Edith England, Researcher at Cardiff University and Shelter Cymru
- Alicja Zalesinska, Director of Tai Pawb
- Lindsay Cordery-Bruce, Chief Executive of The Wallich
- Joy Kent, Consultant at Joy Unlimited
- Claire Owens, Deputy Team Manager (Homeless Prevention Team) at Denbighshire County Council
- Charlotte Davies, Youth and Community Manager, YMCA Swansea (plus representatives from her team)
- Lisa Cordery-Bruce, Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (Child Health) at Switched On Substance Misuse Service
- Adam Jones, Public Health Practitioner – Policy at Public Health Wales
- Jen Daffin, Chair of Psychologists for Social Change
- Emily Jenkins, Project Coordinator for End Youth Homelessness Cymru
- Hugh Russell, Project Manager of End Youth Homelessness Cymru

In addition to the membership of the group, experts from across Wales and beyond were called upon for their views on what it would take to prevent young LGBTQ+ people from experiencing homelessness. The key informants who provided their insight were:

- Annie Emery, Operations Director at Albert Kennedy Trust
- Rachel Benson, Equality, Inclusion and Programmes Manager at Youth Cymru
- Gary McMillan, Housing Support Project Worker and chair of LGBTIQ Focus Group at the Rock Trust
- Diane Jones, Systems Therapist at CAMHS Denbighshire
- Hannah Rowan, Project Manager VIVA LGBT, West Rhyl Young People's Project
- Faye Willett, Young Persons Homeless Officer, Conwy Council
- Phillip Mullen, Postgraduate Research Student, Newcastle University
- Janice Stevenson, Development Officer, LGBT Youth Scotland

Aim

The aim of the group was established as providing End Youth Homelessness Cymru with a clear position on what needs to change in Wales for homelessness to be prevented for young LGBTQ+ people, where possible, and what needs to change for young LGBTQ+ people who still do become homeless to be guaranteed the support they need to move on quickly and effectively from homelessness services.

Prevention of Homelessness

Much of the group's discussion focussed on the specific steps that could be taken to prevent LGBTQ+ youth homelessness. Conversations with representatives of homelessness-focussed organisations, such as the Albert Kennedy Trust in England and the Rock Trust in Scotland, were instructive, providing an insight into what effective and sensitive service delivery looks like for young LGBTQ+ people at risk of homelessness. The group also discussed the issue of prevention at a wider level, before the intervention of homelessness-focussed organisations was necessary.

The group spoke with Annie Emery, Director of Operations for the Albert Kennedy Trust (AKT), an English organisation which provides support and accommodation to young LGBTQ+ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Annie's input was particularly instructive on the subjects of prevention and youth engagement. With 14-18 year olds comprising 40% of their service user group, AKT are developing an expertise in engaging early to prevent youth homelessness in the LGBTQ+ community.⁷⁴

In order to achieve this early engagement, AKT have found that it is crucial to have a digital presence with which young people can interact. To this end, they have created a [digital mentoring project](#), which offers an effective mechanism for getting to young people with whom they might otherwise struggle to engage (e.g. those living far from where they offer traditional services). AKT also use social media live sessions, e.g. live chats on Facebook with experts talking on trans issues, benefits etc. for young people to engage with. The live chat service on their website has proven very effective, with pop ups asking people if they want to

chat. They work to an online safeguarding policy co-developed with NSPCC.

Young people who have worked with AKT have told them that they have found it helpful to have conversations with experts before they broach the topic of their sexual orientation or gender identity at home. Building on this, AKT have developed an online service called Your Toolkit, offering resources written by young people for others in need of information or support, which includes advice on coming out to family, as well as practical steps on how to approach the council for help with homelessness, if necessary.⁷⁵

The issue of school-based preventative work was one which came up frequently within the group's discussion. The group were firmly supportive of schools teaching their pupils about LGBTQ+ issues and examples of good practice in this regard were noted. These included the resources Stonewall Cymru have developed for schools to use, including [Creating a Trans Inclusive School](#), a bilingual publication partly funded by Welsh Government.⁷⁶ Support for young people, or a lack thereof, at school, through referral to LGBTQ+ or homelessness services, for instance, was noted as a significant factor in young people's experiences in the research undertaken by EYHC. The plans to ensure that relationship and sex education lessons are LGBTQ+ inclusive in Wales was welcomed by the group.

AKT work in schools with services targeted at 12-13 year olds aiming to make connections with young people, as well as ensuring that the school staff know that they are there if their expertise is required and providing training to those staff.

Rachel Benson stated that there is a need for increased support for parents and families of young LGBTQ+

⁷⁴ Albert Kennedy Trust (2019). *Business Plan Update*. Retrieved from: <https://www.akt.org.uk/News/business-plan-update>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

⁷⁵ Albert Kennedy Trust. (no date). *your toolkit*. Retrieved from: <https://www.akt.org.uk/Blogs/toolkit>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

⁷⁶ Stonewall Cymru. (no date). *Creating a Trans Inclusive School Cymru*. Retrieved from: <https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/creating-trans-inclusive-school-cymru> Last accessed 30th July 2019.

people. She said that TransForm Cymru signpost people to Mermaids, who don't have a physical presence in Wales, and FFLAG (Friends and Family for LGBT) who provide support for families and meet monthly in Cardiff. Given the high prevalence of family breakdowns reported in the LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales study, there is clearly more to be done to help parents to adjust to a young person coming out, with the potential for improved understanding leading to a reduction in the rejection of young people and subsequent homelessness.

Improving Services for Homeless Young People

LGBTQ+ young people for whom homelessness has not been prevented have reported mixed experiences of the services they have received, subsequently. Philip Mullen noted that his research has found that LGBT youth in the UK often reported experiencing rejection, homophobia and transphobia from support staff in non-specialist organisations that were supposed to be helping them, as well as from other young people. The group discussed a number of areas in which homelessness services could be improved in Wales.

Introducing LGBTQ+ specific accommodation

There is a distinction between LGBTQ+ inclusive homelessness services and services specifically designed for LGBTQ+ people, such as supported accommodation reserved solely for use by LGBTQ+ people. Successful examples of this type of accommodation can be found in cities including Toronto and London.^{77 78}

The issue of LGBTQ+-specific supported accommodation was discussed within the group and welcomed, as it was felt that for young people who may have faced intolerance from peers when accessing existing, non-specific accommodation, the possibility of living in a shared-LGBTQ+ space could offer a more positive experience. Phillip Mullen stated that within his research the young LGBTQ+ people who experience homelessness had, in almost every case, faced rejection, isolation and stigma for being LGBTQ+. He also found that many of these youth valued interacting with a diverse group of LGBTQ+ young people with a range of identities, as this supported them to explore identities that in some cases better reflected the way they felt about their identity. For this reason he recommended that LGBTQ+ specific supported accommodation should be provided to reflect the importance of accepting peer support networks to these youth, alongside how these specific services would shield LGBTQ+ young people from homophobia and transphobia.

Proactive Offers of Privacy

A key issue which the group focussed on was that of homelessness services using open environments to discuss sensitive issues. Philip Mullen stated that his fieldwork repeatedly found that a lack of privacy within homelessness and governmental services (e.g. Housing Options Services) made young people uncomfortable with disclosing their needs that resulted from their identities. This reflected a wider need for cultural change to make homelessness services more inclusive and aware of LGBTQ+ young people. In response to this issue, Andrew White noted that when he worked on the Welsh Language Board working with the Health sector, he looked at the health needs of first language Welsh speakers and worked to ensure that a proactive offer of a service in Welsh would be made up front.

Andrew explained that public bodies are under legal duty to collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales, but it was crucial that this was done sensitively.⁷⁹ As such, a clear recommendation from the group is that private space should be proactively offered to all young people presenting to homelessness services.

Improvements to Mental Health Support

Youth homelessness and mental ill health are closely related issues: the findings of the joint Llamau/ Cardiff University SEYHoPe research revealed that an alarming 87.8% of young people with experience of homelessness had a psychiatric disorder compared to 32.3% of young people in the general population.⁸⁰ Experiencing mental ill health can be both a cause and a consequence of homelessness and makes moving on challenging. As a group who, in most cases, have experienced discrimination and often familial rejection, LGBTQ+ young people who experience homelessness are at particularly high risk of experiencing mental ill health. Mental health services need to be cognisant of these additional experiences, as well as the practical hurdles faced by young homeless people. The group found that this was not always the case though. The group discussed a number of barriers faced by homeless young people when accessing mental health services, particularly the leap between CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) and adult services.

Involving partner organisations

The Rock Trust informed the group about the LGBT Charter Mark developed by LGBT Youth Scotland, which is a programme of training accompanied by a review of policies, practice and resources to

ensure that organisations such as schools, public and third sector bodies are not only meeting legislative requirements but are as inclusive as they can be.⁸¹ Gary McMillan from the Rock Trust told the group that the awards were challenging and require change, with Rock Trust having recently completed its silver award with changes to policies and social media. Practical steps they have taken include nominations of LGBT champions in every department of the organisation and training of all staff, whether frontline or otherwise. Confirmation of progression through the process is only granted upon receipt of satisfactory responses in a survey of young service users, which asks questions like 'Do you mask or downplay who you are when you come to the Rock Trust?' and 'Do you feel that the Rock Trust is an inclusive organisation?'. The Rock Trust's link-up with LGBT Youth Scotland is an excellent example of partnership working between a youth homelessness organisation and an LGBT youth organisation. Beyond their work on the charter, the two organisations are influencing changes to policy in Scotland, with LGBT Youth Scotland represented on the steering group of the Scottish youth homelessness coalition, A Way Home Scotland, which Rock Trust lead.

Hannah Rowan outlined the work undertaken by VIVA LGBT, which is the longest running LGBT youth group in Wales and part of the West Rhyl Young People's Project, with services across the north east of Wales. She said that the project provides group and 1:1 support, raises awareness of LGBT issues in schools and provides support to families. VIVA LGBT are increasingly facing calls for support from younger people and currently offer support for 11 -25 year-olds. They are also increasingly called upon to support other agencies, including requests from primary schools to support teaching staff & families.

77 Miller, K. (2017). 5.3 YMCA Sprott House: Creating a Better Space for LGBTQ2S Youth in Toronto: Sprott House our First Year. Retrieved from: https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/5.3_YMCA_Sprott_House.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

78 Cowan, M. (2019). 'LGBT shelter means I can be myself'. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48122185>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

79 Stonewall. (2017). *Service Delivery Toolkit: Step 1: Beginning the journey*. Retrieved from: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/service-delivery-toolkit-step-1-beginning-journey>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

80 Llamau (2015) *Experiences of Homeless Young People*. Retrieved from: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/seyhope>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

81 LGBT Youth Scotland (2018). *LGBT Charter*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/lgbt-charter/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

Although not a specifically homelessness-focussed organisation, Viva LGBT are finding that homelessness is a recurrent feature in the lives of the young people they support. Similarly, mental ill-health is a concern for many of their clients, with high levels of anxiety common alongside other, often undiagnosed, conditions. Viva LGBT's family work seeks pre-empt and address stresses within families to avoid homelessness. Beyond this, they are working to improve understanding about LGBTQ+ people among staff doing frontline work.

VIVA LGBT's work with young people goes beyond that of a typical youth group; Hannah described it as about offering LGBTQ+ young people the opportunity of being in a majority when in a group, not a minority – a powerful, affirming experience in the lives of the young people they work with. The sense of security offered by the provision of a space in which young people can express themselves is very important.

Other organisations noted as being useful contacts for homelessness organisations and local authorities were Gendered Intelligence and Unique, a transgender network operating in north Wales.

Visibility and Practical Steps

The group discussed a number of examples of good practice where organisations have installed gender-neutral facilities.⁸² By making physical spaces more inclusive, the environment becomes more inclusive and safe for all who wish to use them.

The result of their partnership with LGBT Youth Scotland and their visual demonstration of support for LGBTQ+ rights has been an increase in the numbers of LGBTQ+ young people accessing their service, with 18% of people in their supported accommodation

and 21% of all of their emergency presentations being young people from LGBTQ+ community.

The group was clear that there were dangers of visibly demonstrating inclusivity, if a clear understanding of the needs of LGBTQ+ young people was not properly embedded within organisations. Policies such as a zero-tolerance approach to harassment or abuse must be firmly adhered to, to garner the confidence of the LGBTQ+ community. However, if done correctly, as seen in Scotland, the result can be a service in which LGBTQ+ young people can place their trust and move on swiftly and effectively from homelessness.

Andrew White noted that the default response of many LGBTQ+ individuals is to stay in the closet until they feel safe. By taking steps to visibly demonstrate support for LGBTQ+ rights (Adam Jones suggested that rainbow lanyards as an example) people can be put at ease, but tokenism must be avoided.

Involving Young People

Involving young people in the decisions that affect their lives is key to the approach taken to ending LGBTQ+ youth homelessness. The group made a number of suggestions of existing practice to improve future engagement with young people.

A strategy that has been effectively trialled with addiction groups and could have some useful application amongst LGBTQ+ young people who have been made homeless is the development of role model schemes (see for example Recovery Cymru).⁸³ By developing peer support networks, providers of services to LGBTQ+ youth (both within the homelessness sector and elsewhere) can ensure that

new service users have someone they can look up to who they know has been through similar experiences to them.

Stonewall Cymru offer a number of opportunities which could enable young people to develop skills, networks and confidence, which might be invaluable in preventing or moving on from homelessness. These include a young campaigners programme and a youth placement scheme, which matches young people with LGBT-inclusive employers.⁸⁴

Albert Kennedy Trust hold two key youth engagement events annually. A Youth Strategy Day involves working with a tight cohort of about 12 people that work on strategy, honing in on areas of work that they want to see AKT focus on. They then hold a Youth Conference for LGBTQ+ young people and their allies. Engagement is otherwise often undertaken with young people online, via emails about new campaigns and Facebook polls. They have recruited a Youth Engagement Officer, who will develop further opportunities for young people to influence the organisation's direction, exploring a youth trustee board, for example.

As a researcher, Philip Mullen, described engagement with LGBTQ+ young people who have experienced homelessness as a challenge. He suggested that it was important that something positive comes out of the experience for the young person and that it is crucial to communicate that they will be helping other young people. Future researchers of this group need to understand that these young people have experienced rejection, in many cases, so any participation in research must be treated sensitively and results fed back to participants.

In the experience of Rachel Benson, of Transform Cymru, young people need support to understand their rights, so they feel empowered to demand the services they need. Youth workers, support workers, advocates and teachers need to have solid knowledge of children's rights to enable them to challenge and support to ensure access to services. Similarly, a strong understanding of LGBTQ+ issues can make a huge difference to the abilities of youth-facing workers to help those they are supporting to access support from elsewhere. As a practical example, support staff can help young trans people to change their name via deed poll or statutory declaration and update relevant documents, such as passports.

How to make LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness Everybody's Business

A key goal for the group was to consider how to make LGBTQ+ youth homelessness everybody's business, i.e. what steps to take in order to raise public awareness and ensure that public bodies and beyond take responsibility for addressing the issue.

Local Authority Strategies

Local authority homelessness strategies and related strategic documents were mentioned a number of times by the group. In some cases these make no reference to the LGBTQ+ community, nor their increased likelihood of becoming homeless (although this is not the case everywhere: the Gwent homelessness review 2018, for example, sets out some detail on gaps in knowledge and where these authorities can improve on the issue).⁸⁵ Reference

82 Rhyl, Prestatyn and Abergele Journal (2018). *City loo first as gender-neutral toilets are installed as part of St Asaph cathedral revamp*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rhyljournal.co.uk/news/15847158.city-loo-first-as-gender-neutral-toilets-are-installed-as-part-of-st-asaph-cathedral-revamp/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

83 Recovery Cymru (no date). *Recovery Cymru*. Retrieved from: <http://www.recoverycymru.org.uk>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

84 Stonewall Cymru (no date). *Work Placements: A space for young people to be mentored by LGBT role models from a Diversity Champion employer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/get-involved/get-involved-education/work-placements>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

85 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (CBC), Caerphilly CBC, Monmouthshire CBC, Newport City Council & Torfaen CBC (2018). *Gwent Homelessness Reviews* Retrieved from: [https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Housing/Homelessness_Reviews_Final-\(1\).aspx](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Housing/Homelessness_Reviews_Final-(1).aspx). Last accessed 30th July 2019.

to the specific needs of LGBTQ+ young people at a strategic level should lead to improvements in the level of service offered to this group.

Using Data

The group discussed how best to use data to raise awareness of the issue of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness. All were clear that the quantitative data in Wales is an area for improvement but that qualitative data – young people’s stories – presented hugely powerful drivers for change and should not be disregarded. Where statistics are available, such as those provided by AKT’s work, they can be presented in such a way as to bring home the scale of the situation (e.g. 1 in 4 young people who experience homelessness are LGBTQ+).

Action Plans

The group heard from local authority representatives that action plans for homelessness teams would be a great help, laying out what they needed to change to become more inclusive and better support LGBTQ+ young people. The homelessness network was discussed as providing a good opportunity to share LAs’ progress on the development of these.

Gaps in Understanding

As a relatively poorly researched area, there are a number of gaps in our understanding and areas for further inquiry. These include:

Sex workers

The research which accompanies this report has highlighted some of the issues around sexual exploitation, in particular ‘survival sex’, experienced by young LGBTQ+ people who have been made homeless, but has not touched in particular on non-exploitative sex work. The group highlighted this as a particular knowledge-gap, though useful information can be inferred from related studies. In particular, a 2015 study by Sagar et al interviewed 40 sex workers in south Wales, finding that the majority of their sample had experienced multiple periods of homelessness (with eviction following accumulation of rent arrears cited as the most common causal factor). 11 of the 40 respondents stated that they were LGBT.⁸⁶ A separate 2014 study by Sagar et al for Sex Work Research Wales also interviewed sex workers in the South Wales area and found that out of their sample of 44 participants 31 had been homeless.⁸⁷ It is clear from these studies that there is a strong link between homelessness and sex work and that, in these cases LGBT people are disproportionately likely to engage in sex work. Further research would help to improve understanding of these links.

Gender and health outcomes

The group raised the issue that, although work has been undertaken on the gaps in health outcomes between homeless men and women, LGBTQ+ people are an understudied group in this regard, with most work in this field offering a binary gender representation and no consideration of sexual identity.

Prevalence

A theme of discussion for the group was the lack of data on the prevalence of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness. Useful studies from the Albert Kennedy Trust and others have gone some way to illuminating the overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ people in youth homelessness data but further work on understanding the extent of the issue in Wales is a necessity if the right level of service response is to be made available. Data collection is covered in greater detail in the EYHC research paper.

Intersectionality

Beyond gender there are a number of other areas of intersection with LGBTQ+ youth homelessness that the group flagged as being in need of further study, specifically:

- **Economic disadvantage and LGBTQ+ youth homelessness:** Poverty and youth homelessness are closely linked. Senior Research Fellow at Heriot-Watt University, Beth Watts, is quoted in the Wales Centre for Public Policy’s 2018 Preventing Youth Homelessness report as saying: “Any prevention

strategy or plan must recognise that the roots of youth homelessness are child poverty”.⁸⁸ Linked to this, Uhrig’s 2014 paper ‘An Examination of Poverty and Sexual Orientation in the UK’ noted an increased risk of poverty among LGBT people.⁸⁹ Further work is needed on the issue in a Welsh context, with a particular emphasis on understanding how we can address poverty among LGBTQ+ people and their families, as an approach to reducing the stresses on households which may lead to a young person being kicked out.

- **Race and LGBTQ+ youth homelessness:** Shelter Cymru research in Wales has found that “some people from BME communities are likely to suffer (homelessness) disproportionately compared to the rest of the population as they face additional barriers to those faced by the White Welsh majority”.⁹⁰ Elsewhere in the UK, a report by Galop identifies a range of potential harms which LGBT people from BAME communities are at risk of experiencing, including homelessness: “Conflict at home or anti-LGBT abuse from family members is still a major cause of homelessness for young LGBT BME people. While faith is a source of strength for many young people, it can also play a part in shaping negative views of family leading up to a LGBT young person leaving or being thrown out of home. That can involve visits from religious figures, restriction on their dress/movement to prevent them socialising with other LGBT people, or prayers by the local community to ‘cure’ them.”⁹¹

86 Sagar, T., Jones, D. & Symons, K. (2018). *Sex Work, Drug and Alcohol Use: Bringing the Voices of Sex Workers into the Policy and Service Development Framework in Wales*. Swansea University. Retrieved from: https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_44205-2_0.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

87 Sagar, T., Jones, E., Jones, D & Clark, C. (2014). *Sex Work Research Wales: Summary of Findings*. Swansea University Research Repository. Retrieved from: <https://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa26759>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

88 Schwan, K., French, D., Gaetz, S. Ward, A., Akerman, J. & Redman, M. (2018). *Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Retrieved from: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/preventing-youth-homelessness/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

89 *Poverty and Social Exclusion* (2014). *Poverty and Sexual Orientation*. Retrieved from: <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/editorial/poverty-and-sexual-orientation>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

90 Campbell, J. A., (2013). *Homelessness amongst people from Black and Minority Ethnic Populations in Wales*. Retrieved from: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BME-REPORT-20141.pdf>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

91 Galop. (2014). *LGBT Intersections: A Charity Perspective*. Retrieved from: <http://www.galop.org.uk/lgbt-intersections-a-charity-perspective/>. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

- Disability and LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness:** 17% of the UK's LGBT population consider themselves to have a disability, rising to 33% of trans people.⁹² Stonewall's 'LGBT Britain: Home and Communities' report from 2018 notes an increased risk of disabled LGBT people experiencing homelessness "Almost one in five LGBT people (18 per cent) have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. This number increases to almost three in ten LGBT disabled people (28 per cent) compared to more than one in ten LGBT people who aren't disabled (11 per cent)"⁹³ The learning disability charity Mencap states that there are 1.4 million people with a learning disability in the UK, approximately 2% of the population, of whom 1.2 million live in England.⁹⁴ By contrast, Homeless Link's Young and Homeless report, which considers youth homelessness in England, suggests that 9% of the youth homelessness population have a learning disability – a significant overrepresentation.⁹⁵ Based on these figures there appears to be a high likelihood that young LGBTQ+ people with

disabilities are at much greater risk of experiencing homelessness and further exploration of this phenomenon in the Welsh context is needed. Collins et al have conducted a study of this particular issue in Canada, which found that there are systemic disjunctures between homelessness and disability services, which ultimately disadvantage disabled homeless youth: "The homelessness sector was not designed to anticipate disability, nor was the disability sector designed to anticipate homelessness. Key informants make plain that neither system has sufficient knowledge of the other. Operating as siloes, it is this lack of knowledge and engagement between these sectors – more so than disability – that works to disable youth and to make them vulnerable".⁹⁶ Similar work here would be worthwhile to determine if the same is true in Wales and, indeed, if LGBTQ+ young people with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged in our current systems.

Part 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

*"Under international human rights law and in keeping with (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, States have an immediate obligation to effectively address homelessness, and must take immediate steps to address as a matter of priority its underlying structural causes towards its elimination by 2030. Within that context, the measures adopted by national and local governments must prevent LGBT youth from becoming homeless, ensure that housing policies and programmes be inclusive of LGBT persons and address the needs of LGBT youth."*⁹⁷

Conclusion

Overall, the situation is a bleak one for many LGBTQ+ young people who become homeless in Wales in 2019. They face stigma, abuse, misgendering and a range of harms and threats beyond even those that non-LGBTQ+ people face when made homeless. However, there is a great desire from service providers to learn more and to offer support which can address some of the particular needs of young LGBTQ+ people, with a demand for training and better understanding of specific services with whom local authorities and others can work in partnership with. There is a range of good practice available to learn from elsewhere in the world, as shown in our study by the likes of the Albert Kennedy Trust in England and the partnership between the Rock Trust and LGBT Youth Scotland in Edinburgh. Welsh Government have demonstrated support for initiatives to help young LGBTQ+ people facing homelessness by providing funding for a partnership project between Llamau, Denbighshire Council, Viva LGBT and a mental health specialist in Rhyl, which will offer accommodation and support. Strategic direction on the issue is needed however, at both national and local scale. In particular, more investment in preventative services, such as an Upstream provision, would help to improve our abilities as a society to intervene earlier and prevent young people becoming homeless.

92 Government Equalities Office (2018). *National LGBT Survey*. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

93 Bachmann, C. L. & Gooch, B. (2018). *LGBT in Britain: Home and Communities*. Retrieved from: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt_in_britain_home_and_communities.pdf. Last accessed 30th July 2019.

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Recommendations:

1. Welsh Government's 10 year strategy to tackle homelessness comes to an end this year. **Any future Welsh Government strategy should address LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness specifically, drawing upon the findings of this report, plus consultation with young people, LGBTQ+ groups and service providers to make LGBTQ+ youth homelessness rare, brief and non-recurrent.**

2. **We recommend that Welsh Government support the trial of an Upstream-style service, whereby schools work with youth homelessness specialists to identify young people at risk of homelessness.** Schools offer an excellent opportunity to prevent youth homelessness or intervene early to help young people access appropriate support and this approach would directly address the concerns of many young people who feel earlier intervention would have helped them. This would not need to directly address the gender identity or sexual orientation of those completing the survey, but would enable schools to pick up on tensions at home and introduce appropriate support to prevent homelessness.

3. **Welsh Government should request data from Local Authorities on the numbers of LGBTQ+ people accessing homelessness services.** This data should be presented in a fashion which allows for cross referencing by age, so that the scale of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness can begin to be understood and the effectiveness of efforts to reduce it demonstrated. It is crucial that this is done in a sensitive fashion, so monitoring questions should be co-designed with the LGBTQ+ community and data should only be used for specific, stated purposes.

4. **Local Authorities should revisit their Statutory Homelessness Reviews and 5 Year Homelessness Strategies in light of these findings.** They should consult with local LGBTQ+ groups, and ensure that there is a strategic commitment and agreed approach to reducing LGBTQ+ youth homelessness in their areas.

5. **LGBTQ+-specific supported housing services, where young LGBTQ+ people who have been made homeless can feel comfortable and safe should be developed.** It is recommended that Local Authority commissioners learn from and replicate the progress of the LGBTQ+-specific supported accommodation project in Rhyl, funded by Welsh Government's Innovation Fund and delivered in partnership by Viva, Llamau and Denbighshire Council.

6. **Local authorities should ensure that they are aware of and linked in with the youth groups in their areas and that financial support is available to them, as necessary.** Existing youth services, which cater for LGBTQ+ young peoples' needs to socialise, learn and form communities within safe spaces are precious and should be protected, funded appropriately and encouraged to develop, ensuring that, should they experience homelessness, young LGBTQ+ people have a trusted agency to turn to.

7. **Local authorities, third sector providers and health practitioners working with young people should commission training from LGBTQ+ organisations to ensure that their staff feel fully confident when working with young LGBTQ+ people and know where to refer for specialist interventions.** Improved understanding across Wales would reduce intolerance and ensure problems were picked up earlier, reducing the numbers of young people entering crisis.

8. **Local authorities and third-sector agencies should consider ways to make homelessness services more welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.** Visible commitments to equality (including trans equality), employing staff with lived experience and early intervention, for instance with homelessness services having a presence at Pride events or visiting LGBTQ+ youth groups, would all promote engagement. It is important to remember that trans youth are a distinct group from LGBTQ+ youth as a whole, and do not necessarily "read" LGBTQ+ materials as inclusive of them, so this should be taken into account (by displaying the trans flag alongside LGBTQ+ flags, for example).

9. **Organisations working with young people should provide gender-neutral toilets.** This is a simple way to ensure that no LGBTQ+ young person feels uncomfortable accessing any element of the service provided.

10. **Young people presenting to homelessness services should be proactively offered a private space in which to talk to staff members about their reasons for presenting.** This is a straightforward way to help young people to feel more comfortable discussing their experiences.

11. **More research on this subject is required to help us to better understand young LGBTQ+ people's needs in Wales.** In particular, this could focus on improving understanding of survival sex (among LGBTQ+ young people and others), as well as intersectionality with other issues, e.g. economic disadvantage, race, disability.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questions to Young People

Below is the list of co-designed questions asked by peer researchers.

Questions for End Youth Homelessness LGBTQ+ Research

Research Aim

We want this research to give us evidence which we can use to recommend changes which will:

- Make it easier to prevent young people from the LGBTQ+ Community becoming homeless
- Make it easier for those who do become homeless receive help which is suitable for their needs

1. Where are you from originally?
2. Where are you living at the moment?
3. Could you tell us about your experience of being made homeless?
4. Could you tell us about anything that you think might have stopped you from becoming homeless?
5. Do you think that being from the LGBTQ+ community has anything to do with you becoming homeless?
6. What sort of support did you receive as a homeless person (for example, from the council or from homelessness charities)?
7. Did you discuss gender and sexuality with any of the organisations that have supported you? Can you tell us about how this went?
8. Did any service try and help you to stay at home?
a) If so, did you feel like they understood LGBTQ+ issues?
9. Did you find your school or college helpful when you were made homeless?
10. Have you ever used social media, such as Facebook, or apps, like Grindr, to get a place to stay for the night?
11. Have you ever stayed with anyone who made you feel uncomfortable or at risk of harm, in order to keep a roof over your head?

We think there are a lot of links between mental health and homelessness and we'd like to know more about these links for people from the LGBTQ+ community, in particular;

12. Could you tell us about how becoming homeless affected your mental health?
13. Could you tell us about your experiences of getting help for your mental health?
14. Did your school or college help you to better understand or deal with issues around your sexuality or gender identity?
15. If you had the chance to sit down with the First Minister of Wales and ask him to change things to prevent young people from the LGBTQ+ community becoming homeless, what would you ask him to change?
16. If you could make any changes to the services available to young people who have already been made homeless, what would they be?
17. Tell me what you would change for yourself, personally, right now. What changes would make your life better at the moment?
18. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Appendix B: Survey to Practitioners

A list of the questions asked of practitioners who come into contact with young people at risk of homelessness.

1. Do you record the gender identity of people who present to your service?
 - a) If yes, what options do you offer?
2. Do you record whether the gender identity of people who present to your service is the same as that which was assigned to them at birth?
3. Do you record the sexuality of people who present to your service?
 - a) If yes, what options do you offer?
4. Does your organisation offer training which focusses specifically on sexuality and gender?
5. Do you feel that you understand the specific needs of LGBTQ+ young people (i.e. 16-25) who present to your service?
6. Do you feel that your service offers a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ young people?
 - a) If so, please give details
7. Does your service offer any tailored, LGBTQ+-specific options?
 - a) If so, please give details
8. Do you ever refer people who present to you to LGBTQ+ services?
 - a) If so, please give details
9. Finally, do you have any ideas for changes that could be made to improve your service for LGBTQ+ young people?

