

Support

Holistic support

Young people need support in many different areas of their lives, from education, employment, to managing relationships and help with practical living skills. They also appreciate when other organisations provide support within their accommodation, as this helped them to feel safe and comfortable. In particular, young people really want mental health providers to offer confidential, drop-in support to them in their accommodation.

A strong team ethic

Young people need to be supported by staff with a strong team-ethic. As members of staff work on rotation, sharing information amongst the team (both verbally and through written notes) is crucial in order to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the lives of the young people they support. This also means that young people get the most out of their key working sessions with staff.

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- Organising regular opportunities for staff members to talk to one another – to share advice about how to best support young people and keep up-to-date.
- Encouraging your local mental health team to offer drop-in support to young people.
- How you can encourage young people to come to you for advice in the different areas of their lives they would like support in.



What does a good professional relationship look like for homeless young people?



Young people living in Centrepoint supported accommodation tell us about the essential ingredients for a positive professional relationship.

Staff qualities

Caring and respectful attitudes

Young people appreciate that members of staff have a joke with them, make them feel at home, and take the time to meet them 'where they are at', with respect and with an open mind.

This means that young people feel comfortable talking through difficult topics with members of staff, which they might not otherwise have done if members of staff didn't take the time to get to know them.

Not to feel judged

Young people are very aware of negative attitudes and stigma from others. Young people find it difficult to build positive professional relationships with those who they feel might judge them. They need staff to have an open mind and to understand why they might behave the way they do. Young people also want to work with professionals to break the stereotypes and negative images about homeless young people.

Meeting young people 'where they are at'

Building rapport with a young person can take time but young people respect persistence and staff being there for them for as long as it takes. Young people need to feel welcome and at home, and this starts with 'the look' that you give a young person when they first enter the service.

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- Body language.
- Demonstrating a genuine interest.
- Being down-to-earth and communicating appropriately.
- Working together with young people to challenge the stereotypes that others (including visitors and neighbours) have of homeless young people.

Participation

✓ Open and honest communication

Conflict often arises because young people do not understand why certain rules are in place. Open and honest communication ensures that young people understand why certain rules are in place and that it is often beyond the control of front line staff.

✓ Opportunities to give constructive feedback about their service

Young people really value having regular opportunities to speak openly and give constructive feedback about how services can work best for them, e.g. through residents meetings or regularly chatting to young people over a tea or coffee. As engaging young people can be a long and slow process, it is really important young people have a chance to raise their concerns and have these listened and responded to through multiple channels, such as residents meetings and key work sessions.

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- Offering different ways for young people to communicate with staff.
- Putting up a noticeboard where young people can find more information about the rules of the service and the reasons why these are in place.



Personal skills and confidence

✓ The chance to try and do something new and different

Young people and staff say that organised activities inside and outside the service helps young people to feel less isolated and release the stress and boredom they face. These activities also help young people to build positive relationships with each other and members of staff – encouraging them to talk more openly about their lives.

Young people suggested going on walks, cycling, cooking together, games nights and movie nights.

✓ A safe space for young people to make mistakes

It is really important that young people have a safe space from which they can take positive lessons from their mistakes. This enables them to build resilience and self-esteem. Young people need to feel comfortable and at home, and be supported by staff members who have caring personalities and who don't judge them.

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- Enable young people to take ownership of issues and solutions – being there for them and supporting them to learn from their mistakes.
- Create opportunities for young people to interact positively with other groups in the community.
- Encourage young people to lead and develop social events and occasions within the service.

