

Research report

# More than a number:

The scale of youth homelessness in the UK





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# Introduction

**Data collected for the Youth Homelessness Databank provides a clearer picture of the true scale of youth homelessness in the UK.**

There is no accurate source of information on the scale of youth homelessness in the UK. In England, while the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>1</sup> publishes annual statistics on the number of young people accepted as statutorily homeless, this only represents a small proportion of the total number of homeless young people.

Centrepoin's Youth Homelessness Databank addresses this data shortfall by creating a central source of information on the number of young people presenting to their local authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as those who are assessed and subsequently accepted as being **statutorily homeless** or recorded as being successfully helped in some other way. Centrepoin has built a databank that can help to form a more accurate understanding of the state of youth homelessness in the UK.

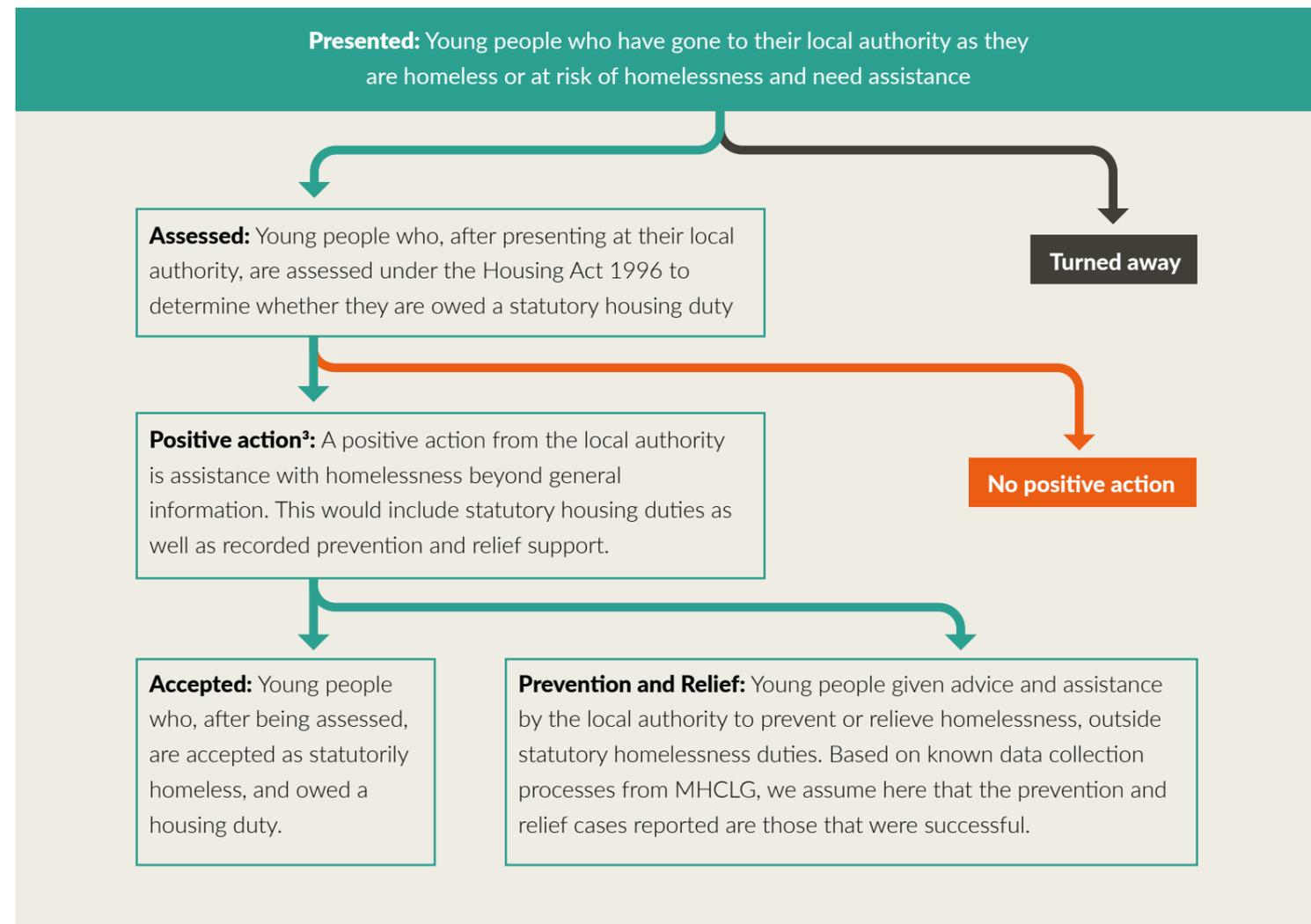
This report includes a number of findings from the Youth Homelessness Databank data. More data can be found on the Youth Homelessness Databank website<sup>2</sup>, the open access source of all data collected at a local, regional and national level. It was launched in 2015 and has since accumulated data on the majority of local authorities in England dating back to 2012/13.

**Statutorily homeless** describes anyone who is homeless and owed a housing duty by their local authority. To qualify, an individual must be eligible, unintentionally homeless (for example, not homeless due to rent arrears that are deemed affordable) and in priority need (which includes, but is not limited to, under 18s, pregnant women and those with severe mental or physical health needs).

Ultimately, the data collected will help local authorities, policy makers and policy influencers to frame discussions around youth homelessness in the UK more accurately. There is, however, continued scope for improvement in the quality and range of data collected on youth homelessness, a theme that runs through the report.

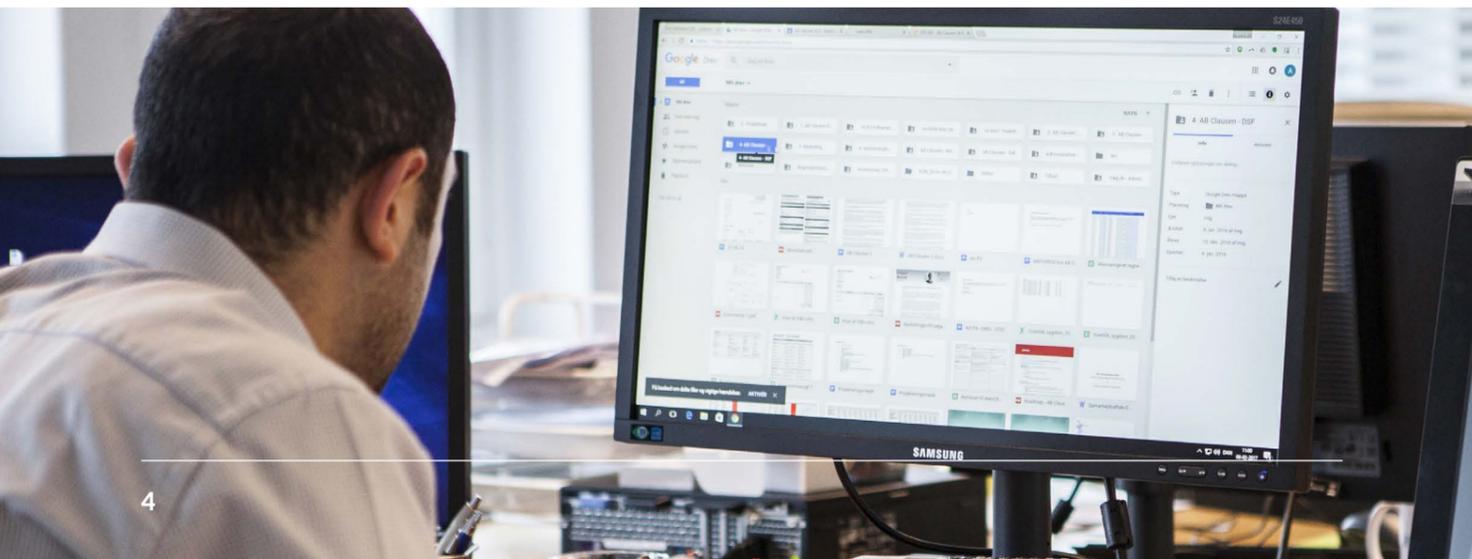
The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018 provides an opportunity to take stock of youth homelessness data collection processes. The streamlined approach to data collection set out in MHCLG guidelines has the potential for far greater understanding, analysis and accuracy when discussing youth homelessness, so long as difficulties with the current data collection processes are noted and overcome.

# Presenting for help - key points



# Key findings

- Centrepoin estimates suggest that around 86,000 young people approached their local authority for help as they were homeless or at risk of homelessness in the UK in 2016/17.
- The majority (58 per cent) of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness in England were not recorded as having received positive actions leading to their homelessness being successfully prevented or dealt with.
- In England, only around 1 in 10 (13 per cent) of these young people were accepted as statutorily homeless.
- Over half (54 per cent) of homeless young people left their last settled base because their parents, other relative or friends were no longer willing to accommodate them in England in 2016/17.



# Methodology

The Youth Homelessness Databank draws on data at a local and national level to understand the number of young people that approached their local authority for help, and what support they subsequently received.

## England

In England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's live statistical tables on homelessness show that 12,940 young people aged 16-24 years old were accepted as statutorily homeless in England in 2016/17<sup>4</sup>. This figure only includes those who are determined to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Therefore, statutory data alone does not represent the true scale of youth homelessness.

Instead, it is essential to consider all those who approached their local authority for help even if they did not qualify for statutory support. As there is no published information on this, Centrepoint sent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests on the subject to all local authorities in England. These requests included more detailed data on youth homelessness than is currently published by MHCLG.

Since the first of the annual FOI requests in 2014 the number of local authorities responding to the request has increased. In 2017, 77 per cent of local authorities responded to at least one element of the request for 2016/17 data. The high response rate attained has enabled Centrepoint to estimate the number of young people presenting as homeless in those local authorities that did not respond. This estimate is the result of a regression model, built using the known levels of presenting young people in the local authorities that responded alongside demographic information on these authorities. The model was then applied to the local authorities who had not provided data through the FOI. The quality of data returned in the FOI varied across local authorities and therefore the model used should be taken only as an estimate. More details on this estimation can be found in Appendix 1.

## Local authority response rates

Centrepoint requested data from English local authorities on the number of young people that presented as homeless, or at risk of homelessness, as well as the number who were subsequently assessed, accepted and owed a housing duty or given prevention and relief support. The request in full can be found on the Youth Homelessness Databank website. Below are the response rates to each element of the request.

### % of local authorities Data provided

<b>77%</b>	Any response to the FOI
<b>67%</b>	Young people presenting as homeless or at risk to their local authority
<b>70%</b>	Young people assessed by the local authority under the Housing Act 1996
<b>75%</b>	Young people accepted as statutorily homeless by the local authority
<b>63%</b>	Young people provided with prevention and relief support from the local authority <sup>5</sup>

Base: 326 Local Authorities in England

## Devolved Nations

The amount of data on youth homelessness in the public domain varies across each of the nations of the United Kingdom. Data available from devolved nations is, to various degrees, more complete than the English MHCLG publications.

### Scotland

The Scottish government publishes annual statistics on the number of young people who were the main applicants for housing support as they were homeless or potentially homeless<sup>6</sup>. The data is broken down with information on the local authority and age group, as well as details on the reason for homelessness, support needs, gender and outcomes of the applications. This detailed data on outcomes is directly used in our UK estimate of the number of young people presenting as homeless to their local authority.

Information included on the Youth Homelessness Databank website at a local authority level was obtained by request from the Scottish homelessness statistics team.

### Wales

The Welsh government publishes annual data on youth homelessness via the interactive data tool StatsWales<sup>7</sup>. Data on the outcomes of all assessments for 16-24 year olds are included (including outcomes that deem the presenting young person as not homeless or at risk), alongside gender and outcome of the assessment. This data is used in the calculation of the number of young people presenting to their local authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness<sup>8</sup>.

Information included on the Youth Homelessness Databank website at a local authority level for presentations, assessments and acceptances was obtained by request from the Welsh homelessness statistics team.

## Northern Ireland

The Northern Irish Department for Communities publishes the number of presentations of homelessness by household type on an annual basis, including the number of single 16-25 year olds who have presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2016/17<sup>9</sup>. Data for all 16-25 year olds (and not just singles) was obtained by request from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Due to the age bands used in Northern Ireland, it was not possible to obtain data on the smaller age group of 16-24 year olds used elsewhere in this report.

Though there is some variation between the data collected across the UK, the devolved nations do all publish official figures that are indicative of the scale and nature of youth homelessness. In some instances the definition of the statistics are not exactly aligned with each other, but as these cover different policy authorities, it is to be expected. More information on the methodology used can be found in the Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

## Centrepoint Helpline

In February 2017, Centrepoint launched a telephone and email helpline. Often used as a first port of call, the helpline offers advice to 16-24 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Staff help young people understand how to approach their local authority as well as directing them to other organisations that can offer housing on a long or short-term basis.

Centrepoint Helpline staff have a unique insight into a range of experiences from young people who approach their local authority for help. In order to support the statistical findings of this report, and to delve further into interactions with the local authority, individual interviews were held with three members of the Centrepoint Helpline staff.

# How many young people in the UK presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness?

Across the UK an estimated **86,000** young people approached their local authority in 2016/17 as they were homeless or at risk of homelessness



## Youth homelessness in England

Based on the English local authorities that responded to the annual Freedom of Information request<sup>10</sup>, Centrepont estimates that around 66,500 young people approached their local authority for support with homelessness across the whole of England in 2016/17<sup>11</sup>.

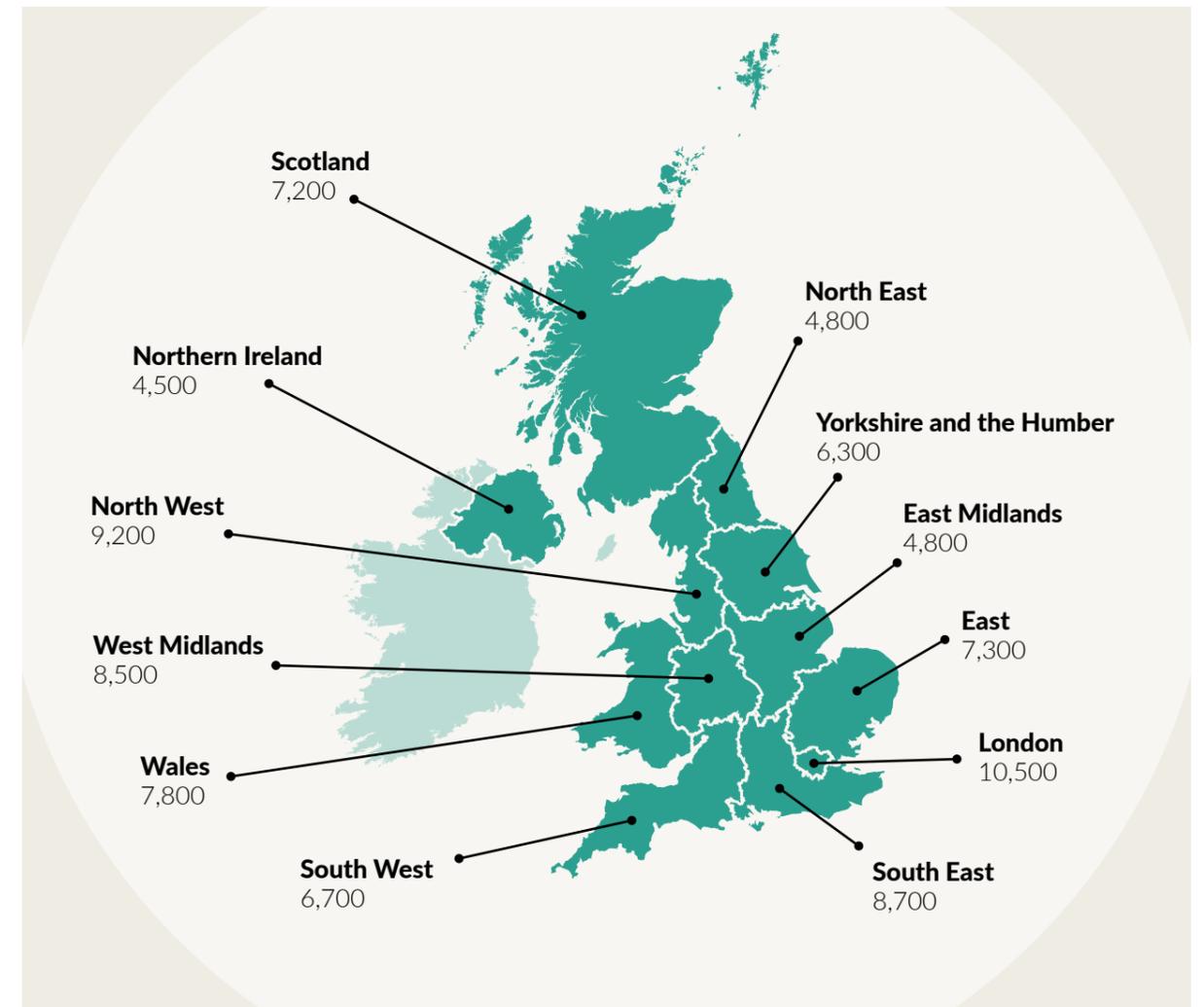
This estimate includes only those who presented to their local authority for support. It is therefore likely to be an underestimate of the true scale of youth homelessness as it is not possible to include those hidden homeless who have sought help via other networks, such as charities, families and friends.

Responses from some local authorities suggest that, in the absence of a presenting figure held by the local authority, the number of assessed young people has instead been used as a proxy.

While this may be true in some instances it is likely that some presenting young people will not be assessed as they are not eligible and this adds support to concerns that 86,000 is likely to be an underestimate.

Having carried out similar FOI requests of local authorities since 2014, Centrepont is able to track this estimate of youth homelessness in England over time<sup>12</sup>. Based on those local authorities that have responded to the FOI in 2014/15, 2015/16 and in 2016/17, the number of young people presenting as homeless in England each year is stable<sup>13</sup>.

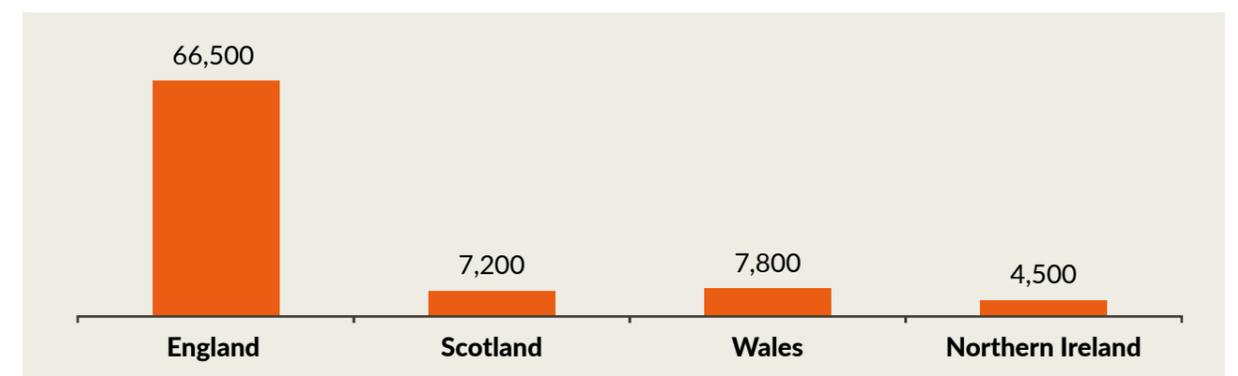
## Regional estimates<sup>14</sup>



## The UK picture

When including data from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is estimated that around 86,000 young people presented as homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to their local authority in 2016/17.

### Estimated number of young people presenting to their local authority as homeless in 2016/17



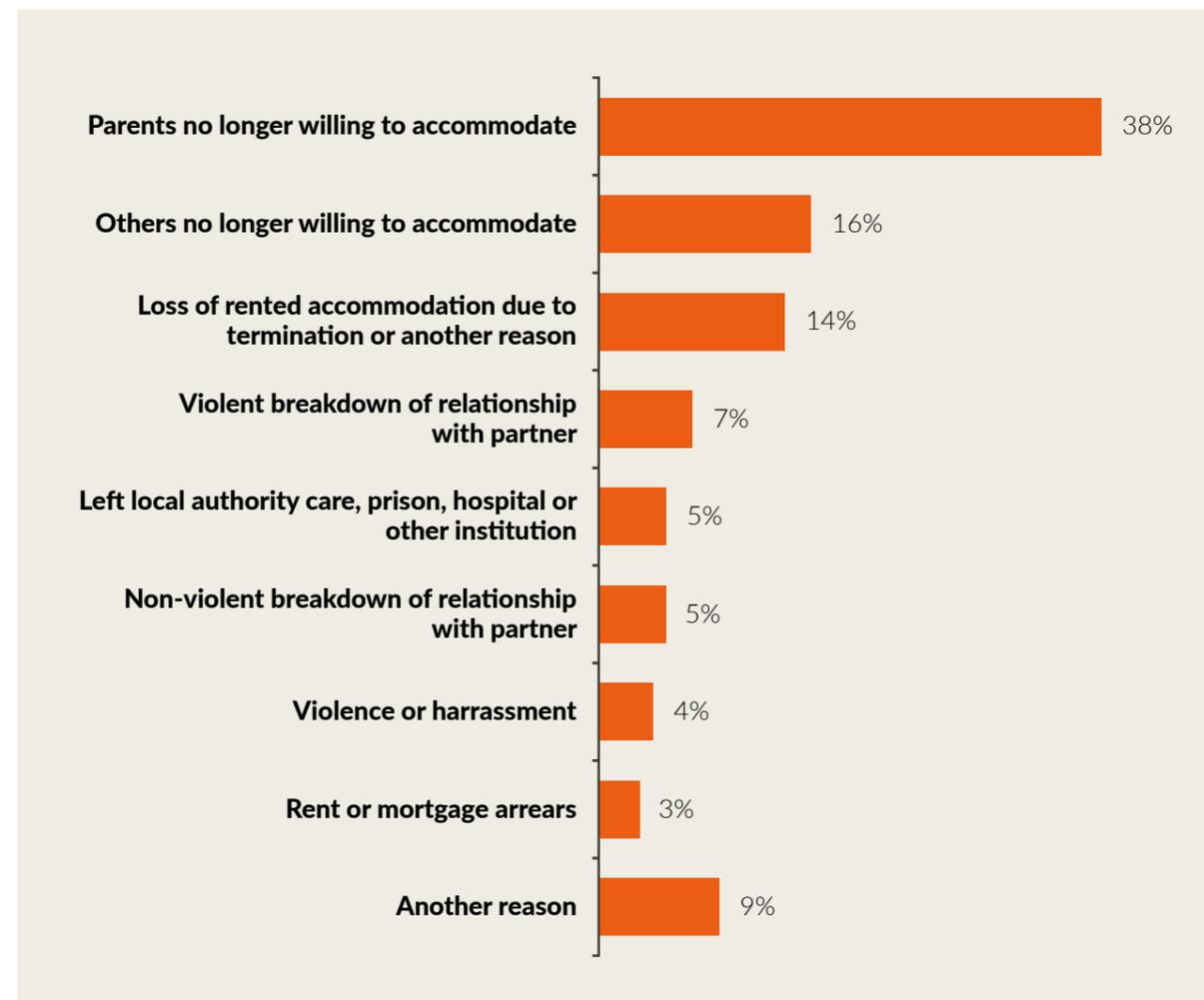
# What are the biggest reasons for youth homelessness?

At an individual level, parents no longer being willing to accommodate a young person is the most common reason for young people leaving their last settled base before presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness to their local authority.

The FOI request submitted by Centrepont also included a request for information on the main reason that led to each young person leaving their last settled base. In total 225 local authorities provided this information.

The most common reason for a young person leaving their last settled base was that their parents or others were no longer willing to accommodate them<sup>15</sup>. Parents not being willing to accommodate the young person accounted for 38 per cent of cases where the reason was reported, and others (such as other relatives or friends) not being willing to accommodate accounted for a further 16 per cent. These results are consistent with the data collected in 2015/16.

## Reasons given to local authority for presenting young people leaving last settled base.



# Local authority characteristics and youth homelessness

Socio-economic characteristics within local authority areas can help to indicate the number of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Across England there are substantially different reported levels of young people presenting to their local authority. These range from less than 5 to over 1000, highlighting how differences in the characteristics of local areas can affect the number of young people presenting as homeless or at risk.

As part of the estimation process, over 75 socio-economic characteristics were tested to determine whether they had a statistically significant relationship with the number of people in a local authority presenting as homeless or at risk.

Three of the characteristics tested were found to have a statistically significant relationship with the presenting figures. These significant predictors are:

- The percentage of children (under 20) in low income families<sup>16</sup>.
- The number of apprenticeship starts<sup>17</sup>.
- The affordability of home ownership<sup>18</sup>.

These are all significant at the 95 per cent significance level<sup>19</sup>.

By understanding these relationships it is possible to delve further into the wider systemic factors that affect the level of youth homelessness. It suggests that these factors relate to economic barriers preventing those who find themselves in need of accommodation, for example if they have been asked to leave by parents, from securing a tenancy.

This analysis adds weight to an argument that there is a relationship between affordable housing and incidence of homelessness as those local authorities with lower affordability are expected to have higher presenting levels. Here, government

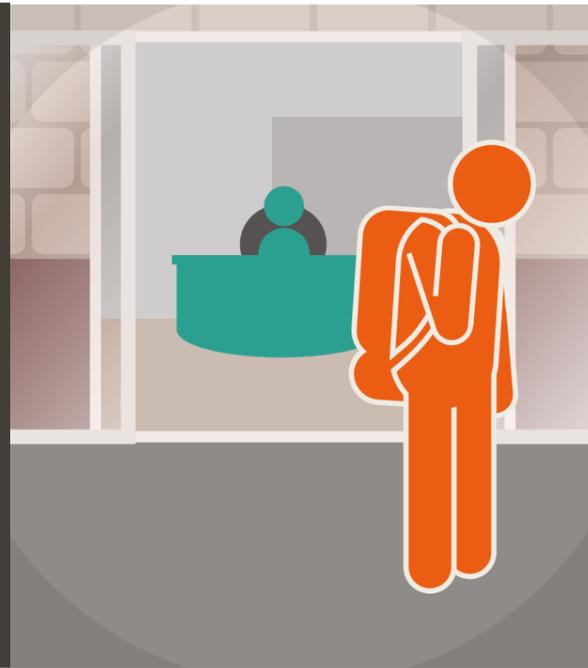
data on affordability of home ownership is used as a proxy to reflect accessibility into the market for both buyers and renters. With house prices up to 18 times more in parts of London than in other areas of the UK, it is unsurprising that the number of presenting young people in London is higher than in any other region<sup>20</sup>.

A relationship between proxies for low income and youth homelessness was also found in the creation of the estimation model. The proportion of children in low income families and apprenticeship levels are positively correlated with the number of young people presenting to their local authority. These act as indicators of income deprivation and suggest that there is demand for further research into the relationships between income and securing a tenancy.



# What happens after approaching the local authority?

**In 58 per cent of instances where a young person approached their local authority in England as they were homeless or at risk of homelessness, they were not recorded as receiving any successful positive action**



In England, local authorities have a duty to house a young person presenting to them as homeless only if the young person is assessed and accepted as statutorily homeless.

Data collected from the FOI request suggests that only 13 per cent of all those who presented to their local authority as homeless were subsequently accepted as statutorily homeless and owed a housing duty. This is consistent with proportions accepted as statutorily homeless in previous years (11 per cent of those who presented as homeless in 2015/16 were accepted as statutorily homeless)<sup>21</sup>. This low acceptance rate reflects a low level of assessment with just 33 per cent of those presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness receiving a documented assessment.

Young people who are not accepted as statutorily homeless may still receive help and advice to prevent homelessness from occurring or in relieving their current situation. In 29 per cent of cases where a young person asked their local authority

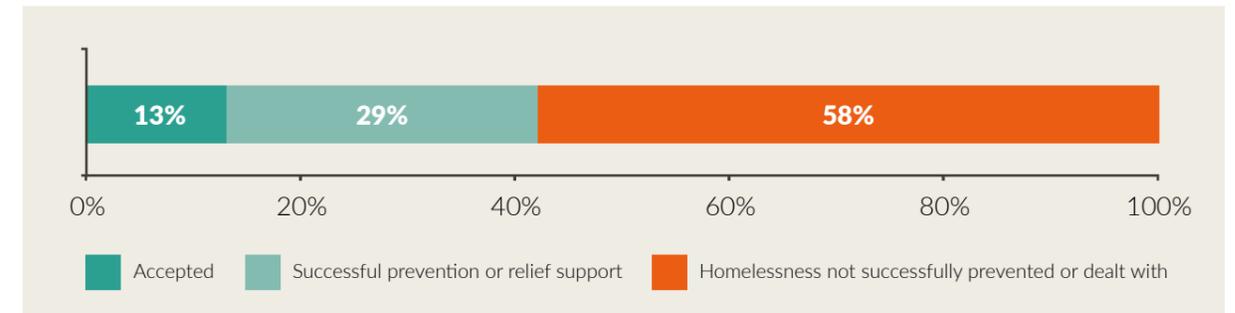
for help, prevention and relief support was carried out<sup>22</sup>. This figure is assumed to cover the successful prevention and relief cases only, as this is the information required to be collected by MHCLG. Therefore this may be an over-estimate as some included in this figure may have been in the process of successfully finding or maintaining a housing solution at the time of data collection.

Alarmingly, this means that, based on the available data, 58 per cent of instances of young people presenting to their local authority were not recorded as having an improved situation due to some positive action from the local authority. A positive action includes any statutory duty as well as reported prevention and relief support, above and beyond general advice. This 58 per cent may have received some general or informal support that was undocumented, however it is not possible to know how many homeless young people received this, what it entailed and, subsequently, how many homeless young people received no support.

The experience of Centrepointhelpline staff highlights that in instances where general advice was offered this often was not tailored at all to the age and needs of the young person. In some instances this resulted in young people approaching inappropriate services and spending valuable time looking in the wrong place for support.

**‘[Local authorities] will just give them a pack of a whole list to call... and some [are] really inappropriate’**  
- Centrepointhelpline staff

Such a high rate of young people not recorded as receiving positive action from their local authority highlights the difficulty in leaving the cycle of homelessness and the large number of young people the local authority will need to consider if it is to offer wider support beyond priority need.



Base: 34,650 instances of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness (from 143 Local Authorities providing data on presenting, assessed, accepted and prevention cases)

Across local authorities there appears to be little consistency in how the authority handles and records young people that present to them. In the North East, 64 per cent of those who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness were neither successfully housed nor helped to maintain housing through statutory duty or prevention and relief support<sup>23</sup>. The South West also has an extremely high rate of young people without successful positive action, at 68 per cent<sup>24</sup>.

In both these instances there was a low reported rate of assessment of those who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness at just 16 per cent, meaning that the vast majority of cases were not formally considered.

Even in areas that were more thorough with their assessment responsibilities, there is still room for improvement. In the West Midlands, for example, 62 per cent of presenting young people were assessed, but 59 per cent of all those presenting still had no recorded successful outcome (either statutory, prevention or relief support)<sup>25</sup>.

Further, in London and the South East, where there were the highest levels of acceptance as statutorily homeless (17 per cent and 19 per cent respectively), over half still did not get successful help, with 54 per cent and 53 per cent respectively leaving their interaction with the local authority without a successful positive action<sup>26</sup>.

**‘Some [local authorities] don’t even have a housing unit, some are in a library and some you can’t even speak to someone in person...there is a lot of confusion... every single place is different.’**  
- Centrepointhelpline staff

## The impact of priority need

Across the UK there are different duties bestowed upon local authorities. In Scotland, local authorities have the most wide ranging duty as they are required to house all those who are homeless and eligible, regardless of any priority need. By comparison, the remit of local authorities' duties in England is extremely low as there is a legal obligation to help only those who are deemed to be in priority need.

Data on homelessness across the UK reflects these policy differences. In England, of the local authorities that responded in full to the FOI request, only 13 per cent of young people that presented as homeless were accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, and therefore owed a housing duty. According to data published by the Scottish government, 92 per cent of young people who presented as homeless

in Scotland were owed a housing duty as they were assessed and deemed to be unintentionally homeless. The omission of a priority need criteria for a housing duty to be enacted in Scotland displays the potential scale of youth homelessness support that could be provided and the number of young people who are still eligible and unintentionally homeless being left without support.

This contrast highlights further the potential gulf between the number of young people in England who are in need of help and those who receive statutory support. It suggests that the current focus of assistance just on those who are in priority need leaves a large percentage of unintentionally homeless young people with little or no support.

**'When you get someone who is [in priority need], you think "phew"'**

**- Centrepoin Helpline staff**

## The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

**The strengthening of duties owed to those presenting as homeless promised in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) is welcome, but local authorities must be prepared for the scale of the new assistance they may have to give.**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) is due to come into force in April 2018. The HRA expands the responsibility of all local authorities in England by increasing the duty of assistance owed to those deemed to be eligible and unintentionally homeless, regardless of priority need, to ensure all young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness are assessed.

While the scope of those owed an explicit housing duty has not expanded, and still includes the limiting criteria of priority need, those who are not accepted should now have a greater support framework from their local authority. Young people who are eligible and unintentionally homeless, but not in priority need, will be offered more formal support to find housing, or to prevent homelessness from their current housing, which will be monitored for a period of 56 days from presenting as homeless or at risk.

Assuming that this new protocol is properly observed, this should mean that far more young people end an interaction with their local authority with successful prevention or relief support.

In 2016/17, the majority (58 per cent) of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness were not recorded as being supported to prevent or relieve their homelessness. It is these young people that the HRA will help through the widening of local authority responsibility. It is therefore essential that local authorities are given the necessary means to expand the service they give to support these people.

The FOI data suggests that three times as many assessments would need to be made if all young people presenting are now required to be assessed<sup>27</sup>. Centrepoin helpline staff have also reported that a large number of those not properly being assessed are in fact in priority need. It is concerning that this includes mental health issues that have not been deemed severe enough, pregnancies that were considered too early to warrant support and young people with diabetes and in need of suitable insulin storage.

**'Everyone who has called our helpline and is in priority need is a failure of the system'**

**- Centrepoin Helpline staff**

Councils will therefore need to be adequately prepared for a potential increase in the number of subsequent housing duties they may need to fulfil as a result of increased assessments. As such, a change in policy alone is not enough and must be matched with increased funding which is allocated fairly according to local demand. London Council's assessment that the increased burden due to the HRA should be matched with £77 million per year in London alone dwarfs the £24.2 million per year committed by the government for the increased burden across the whole of England<sup>28</sup>. This highlights how a fundamental barrier to the successful implementation of the HRA may be financial.

**'I think the biggest problem is there's so little funding. That has meant everything is squeezed so much that it's easy for us to be critical'**

**- Centrepoin Helpline staff**



# Data collection and the Homelessness Reduction Act

**The introduction of the HRA in April 2018 provides a unique opportunity to improve the quality of data on youth homelessness.**

In order to take an informed approach to tackling youth homelessness it is essential that data collection is uniform across England and includes detail on each young person's journey with their local authority.

Ahead of the introduction of the HRA, there is an opportunity to examine current data collection processes and how they might be improved. Guidance issued by MHCLG on the data collection process suggests that, by moving to a case level data collection system, there will be a greater level of detail captured to map the support given to each young person by their local authority<sup>29</sup>.

However, a number of learnings have arisen from the review of data for this report that must be considered when implementing any new data collection process at the local authority level in England.

- **A number of local authorities reported that they do not collect some of the FOI requested data on youth homelessness at all.** Of the 65 local authorities that responded to some but not all FOI questions, 16 per cent explicitly claimed that they did not collate any data by age except for the MHCLG official statutory homelessness request. Worryingly, this data gap means that there are some areas where no data currently exists on the scale of youth homelessness.
- **Some local authorities provided data that was inconsistent.** For example, in some cases the number of young people presenting was lower than the number of young people given prevention and relief support. To have received support a young person must, in some capacity, have presented to their local authority. It is hoped that the new data collection process, which collects case level data, will ensure that such discrepancies are no longer possible.
- **There is no single approach to data collection on youth homelessness in England.** Instead each local authority collects data in their own way, as the range of different data issues across local authorities suggests. A unified approach to data collection is essential to comparing data and understanding youth homelessness at a national level.
- **Data collected through this FOI process does not completely align with the data reported at a national level by MHCLG.** For example, in Birmingham, where there is the highest recorded number of acceptances of statutorily homeless young people, tables published by MHCLG report this to be 669 young people, while the acceptance level returned to Centrepoint in the FOI process instead places this figure at 711 young people. There should be no reason why these figure from the two sources differ, but this example is not unique.

The effectiveness of the Youth Homelessness Databank, and indeed any understanding of youth homelessness, is reliant on the quality of data collected and provided by local authorities. In implementing the HRA, it is essential that the above data issues are improved upon so that the scale of youth homelessness, and the effectiveness of the HRA, can be effectively monitored.

MHCLG have set out clear guidelines on how data should be collected after the introduction of the HRA, including information on using updated software (DELTA) to ensure a cohesive data submission across all local authorities<sup>30</sup>. However, as the above displays, variation in how the guidance is followed has the potential to fuel ongoing data inaccuracy or inconsistency. For data collected according to these new guidelines to be effective, it is essential that there is uniformity in how figures are collected and reported.

Local authorities will be able to use their own data collection methods if they have a small incidence of youth homelessness, and as such there is scope for the data collated at a national level to be inconsistent and incomparable. Further, the range of mandatory fields and those that are only expected to be completed threatens a continuation of issues around incomplete data within local authorities.

Clear data collection methods, training and funds for those collecting data within local authorities is essential to ensuring that good data is collected on youth homelessness, and homelessness more widely. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee Homeless Households publication included an acknowledgement of the new data collection systems to be enacted with the HRA<sup>31</sup>. Here, the Committee concludes that the case level proposals must ensure that the process allows the government to measure the full extent of hidden homelessness and identify the effectiveness of local authorities in helping those who are homeless.



# Recommendations

## **The government must provide tools and guidance to local authorities to ensure uniform data collection across all councils so that the data can be used effectively.**

This is essential in order to compare youth homelessness across areas and to determine the scale of the problem nationally. This means providing local authorities with the infrastructure to implement the data guidance accompanying the Homelessness Reduction Act, including staff training to accurately collect data.

## **The government must provide clear guidance on what constitutes prevention and relief support to ensure consistency in interpretation across England.**

Increased clarity about what prevention and relief encompasses, and the types of support offered within it, would improve consistency across local authorities. With increased prevention and relief responsibilities forming a large part of the Homelessness Reduction Act it is essential that all local authorities approach and monitor prevention and relief cases in a similar way.

## **Government at both a local and national level should use the more comprehensive data on local need, which should arise from the Homelessness Reduction Act, to improve wider housing and homelessness policies.**

With new data collection processes coming into force, there is scope to better understand the needs of young people experiencing homelessness or the threat of homelessness by local area. A clearer understanding of local need can inform wider policy development affecting homeless young people, such as the future funding of supported housing<sup>32</sup>.

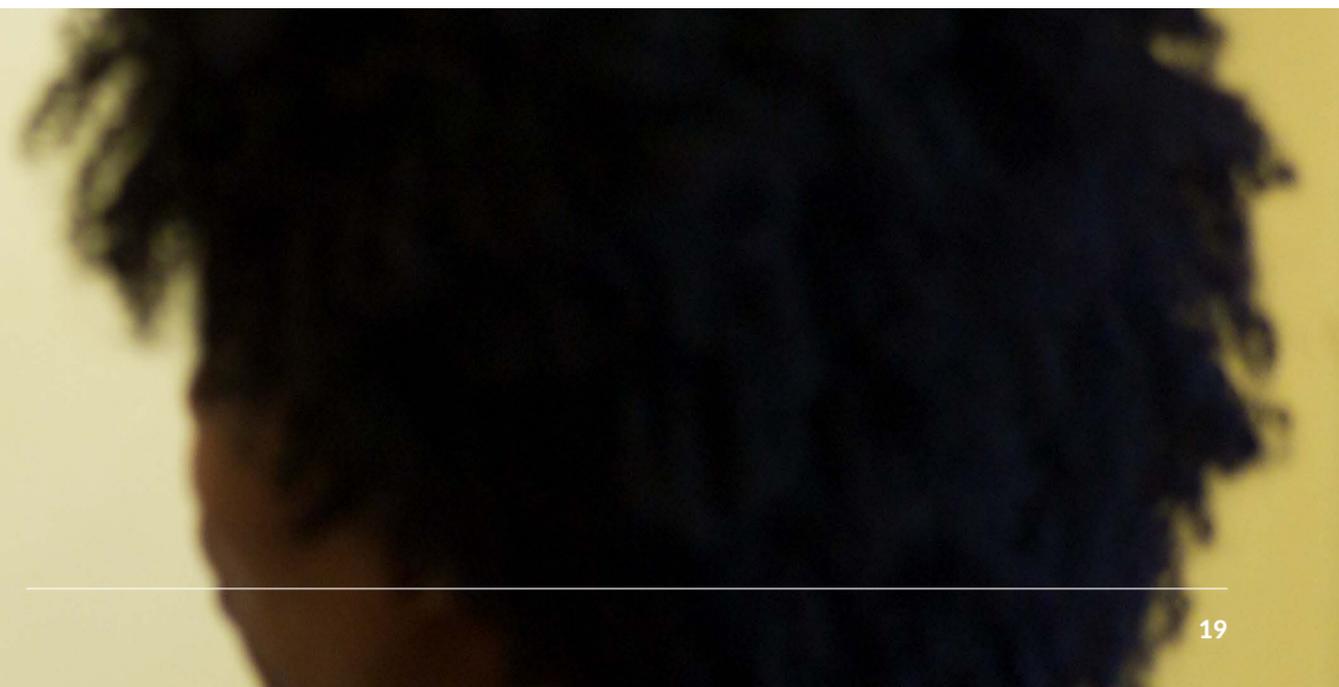
## **Local authorities should provide advice and information that is appropriate, tailored and accessible to young people.**

Evidence from the Centrepoint Helpline suggests that there must be improved access to local authority help and advice for young people. With an increase in the 'positive action duties' of local authorities with the Homelessness Reduction Act, it is important that young people understand what their rights are and that any subsequent support is tailored to their needs.

## **Central government and local authorities must work together to ensure Homelessness Reduction Act funding is allocated appropriately.**

The additional financial costs to local authorities inherent in the Homelessness Reduction Act must be matched by funding from central government. To understand where funding has been most effective, or where there are shortfalls in resources, it is essential that the data collected is done so accurately and shared between local and national government.

Local authority staff are responsible for data collection and recording and must be held accountable for quality. The new DELTA data systems should make it easier for data to be collected fully and accurately but it is essential that local authorities invest appropriate time into the collection process. Central government must then act on the local needs reflected in the data by ensuring that funding is distributed appropriately.



# Appendix 1: Methodology

## Estimating the total number of young people in England presenting as homeless or at risk

The FOI requests returned by local authorities provide an indicative measure of how many young people in England present to their local authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness. However, as not all local authorities responded to the request, further analysis was required to estimate the total figure for England in 2016/17. Using supplementary data sources to provide variables that are potential predictors of youth homelessness, a model of the presenting data from the local authorities that responded to the FOI request was created.

Within the subset of local authorities that did respond to the FOI, the model used information on these areas to estimate the number of young people who presented as homeless across the whole country. The initial characteristics tested in the model included, among others, information on local demographics, household breakdown, poverty indicators and house prices.

The model was refined to include only the statistically significant variables. The model was created from a randomly selected subset of 173 of the 218 (80 per cent) of the local authorities that responded and validated on the remaining 20 per cent<sup>33</sup>. The model is outlined in full below:

### 2016/17 estimation model

Intercept	-234.38 ***
Affordability of home ownership (2016)	10.05 *
% of dependent children in low income families (2014)	13.29 ***
Number of apprenticeship starters (2015/16)	0.08 ***
Adjusted R squared	0.48
Number of observations	173

The final model has an adjusted R squared of 0.48. This means that 48 per cent of the variation in the number of young people presenting to their local authorities as homeless or at risk of homelessness can be accounted for by the model. With this in mind, the model should be used as an estimator only, and the accuracy should be borne in mind when considering the total presenting calculation.

This model was then used to predict the presenting value for those local authorities that did not respond to the FOI. These estimates and the reported responses were added together to get a total for England. The summation of these returns the estimate of 66,500 homeless young people presenting to their local authority in England in 2016/17<sup>34</sup>.

## Estimating the total number of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness in the devolved nations

### Wales

Welsh data on homelessness is published on StatsWales records data according to the outcome of each young person presenting to their local authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness. In some cases, this may include some duplicate counts of young people if they experienced more than one outcome. Specifically, this would occur if a young person presents to their local authority and is offered prevention support, which is then unsuccessful and followed by relief support. Further duplication may occur if, once homeless, the young person is offered relief support, which is also unsuccessful leading to the young person being owed a housing duty, if they are in unintentionally homeless and in priority need<sup>35</sup>.

Outcomes reported include those who were deemed ineligible or not homeless or at risk of homelessness. As such, the total of outcomes is taken to be the total number of both presentations and assessments by the local authority. As previously discussed, in reality there may have been some presentations that were not given any outcome and are therefore not included in the total number of presenting young people. With both this and the threat of duplication considered, the Welsh figure for the number of young people presenting to their local authority should be taken as an estimate.

### Northern Ireland

Data on presentations, assessments and accepted young people in Northern Ireland has been collected by request from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Due to the arrangement of age bands, it was only possible for Centrepont to request data for 16-25 year olds, as opposed to the 16-24 age band used in all other regions of the UK. Therefore, as the 16-25 year old figures are used in the calculation of the number of young people presenting as homeless to their local authority, it should be noted that this may be an over-estimate of the figure for the correct age band. Further, as figures published on the Youth Homelessness Databank website also cover the 16-25 year old age band, it should be noted that these are not directly comparable with other regions.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive figures also assume that all young people presenting to their local authority are subsequently assessed, which assumes that all local authorities handle young people as such. As discussed previously, this may be an over-estimate of the proportion of presenting young people that are assessed.

## Calculating the proportion of presentations of homelessness not accepted as statutory homeless or given prevention support

The FOI request sent to local authorities collected enough information to understand how many young people were in receipt of any successful positive action. This was calculated by:

$$\frac{[\text{Number of young people presenting to local authority}] - [\text{Number of young people accepted as statutorily homeless}] - [\text{Number of prevention and relief cases}]}{[\text{Number of young people not in receipt of any successful positive action}]}$$

The base for this figure was taken to be those local authorities that responded to all four elements of the FOI request (that is the number of young people that presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness, those who were assessed and those who were subsequently accepted as statutorily homeless or were prevention or relief cases). Of the 252 local authorities (77 per cent) that responded to any part of the FOI, 187 (57 per cent) responded to all four queries. Any local authority that responded with data containing inconsistencies was removed from the calculation, bringing the total base size to 143. These removals included instances where the number of acceptances and prevention and relief cases outnumbered the number of presentations of young people as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It was assumed that the reported prevention and relief cases included only those that were successful as this is the figure required from MHCLG. The 58 per cent of young people presenting to their local authority that were not successfully housed, or able to maintain housing, through statutory acceptance or prevention and relief support is therefore a minimum estimate among these groups as there may have been instances of unsuccessful support in the prevention and relief figure.

## Appendix 2: Notes

1. Formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
2. [www.yhdatbank.com](http://www.yhdatbank.com)
3. More details on positive action can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/435078/P1E\\_guidance\\_Homeless\\_prevention\\_and\\_relief.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435078/P1E_guidance_Homeless_prevention_and_relief.pdf)
4. Tables for 2016/17 data by local authority and age can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>
5. Local authorities are required to report to DCLG on the number of prevention and relief cases each quarter for all ages. The published statistics on this covers only those prevention and relief cases that have been successful. Therefore, for this report it is assumed that the data on prevention and relief returned in the FOI also includes only those cases that are successful.
6. These tables can be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/adhoc-analysis/adhoc-analysis>
7. <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/householdsforwhichassistancehasbeenprovided-by-outcome-age-gender>
8. Note that this data is taken directly from the totals in published tables but may include duplicates. More details on this can be found in Appendix 1.
9. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-housing-statistics-2016-17>
10. In total 218 local authorities in England responded to the Freedom of Information request with details of the number of young people that presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness. The figure for the remaining local authorities has been estimated using a regression built from those that did respond. More information can be found in Appendix 1
11. Further details on the calculation of this figure can be found in Appendix 1.
12. FOI requests sent in 2014 also asked Local Authorities to present data on the same queries for the financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14 however the low response rates to this mean that it is not suitable to be used for further analysis to calculate the total number of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness to their local authority
13. In total, 90 local authorities responded to the FOI in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 with data (this excludes one local authority that responded to all three years but their data was removed due to inconsistencies). The total number of presenting young people amongst these 90 local authorities for each year is as follows: 2014/15 – 18583, 2015/16 – 18990, 2016/17 – 18589.
14. Note that these figures are rounded to the nearest 100 and therefore the summation of these figures may be different to the UK total.
15. Becoming homeless is often the result of a complex combination of life experiences. Due to limitations on the data collected by local authorities, the FOI data collected gives only the main reason for each young person becoming homeless.
16. Data on children in low income families is available from HM Revenue and Customs' child poverty statistics. The figure for each local authority is defined as the percentage of dependent children aged under 20 in households where the income is less than 60 per cent of the median household income. Data used in this report is from the 2014 published data, the most recent publication of its kind.
17. Data on the number of apprentices starting in 2015/16 is available from the Department for Education's apprenticeship statistics. The data is the most recent publication of data of its kind covering a whole year.
18. Data on the affordability of home ownership is available from the Office for National Statistics people, population and community publications. The figure for each local authority is defined as the ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings. Data used in this report is from the 2016 published data.
19. The full model is detailed in Appendix 1.
20. The average house price in Burnley is £72,964 to the nearest pound and in Kensington and Chelsea it is £1,342,561 according to HM Land Registry figures.
21. This is calculated from the 143 of the local authorities that responded to all four elements of the FOI request. In instances where local authority data showed that the number of presenting cases was less than those that were prevention or relief cases, or accepted as statutory homeless, the local authority was not included in this calculation.
22. Local authorities are required to report to DCLG on the number of prevention and relief cases each quarter for all ages. The published statistics on this covers only those prevention and relief cases that have been successful. Therefore, for this report it is assumed that the data on prevention and relief returned in the FOI also includes only those cases that are successful.
23. Based on the North East regions that responded in full with usable data (7 of 12 local authorities), in which 16 per cent of those who presented as homeless were assessed and just 3 per cent accepted.
24. Based on the South West regions that responded in full with usable data (12 of 37 local authorities), in which 16 per cent of those who presented as homeless were assessed and just 5 per cent accepted.
25. Based on West Midlands regions that responded in full with usable data (11 of 30 local authorities).
26. Based on the London regions that responded in full with usable data (14 of 33 local authorities), and the South East regions that responded in full with usable data (28 of 67 local authorities).
27. Data collected from the FOI shows that only 33 per cent of young people who present to their local authority are subsequently assessed. This is based on the 143 local authorities that responded to all parts of the FOI.
28. <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/33095>
29. <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/statistics/working-with-users/dclg-homelessness-statistics-user-forum/>
30. More information on the DELTA system, which is used by MHCLG for data collection, can be found at <https://delta.communities.gov.uk/introducing-delta>
31. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/462/46205.htm>
32. More information on the government policy on supported housing can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-for-supported-housing>
33. Note that one case was omitted as an outlier in terms of their reported presented cases of youth homelessness. In this instance there were obvious inconsistencies in the FOI data returned. While there are some wider data concerns around whether the presenting figure reported is correct or not, it was not possible to formally validate each response and therefore with the exception of this one outlier, reported presenting figures from the FOI have been taken as correct.
34. This figure is rounded to the nearest 500. The exact prediction is 66,556
35. More details on this process can be found in the Welsh Homelessness Report 2016/17: <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170727-homelessness-2016-17-en.pdf>

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