



## **HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: UNDERSTANDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN THE UK**



**ENDING YOUTH  
HOMELESSNESS**



## Glossary

**Young person** – the young people referred to in this report are aged 16-24, with the exception of Northern Ireland which could only provide data on 16-25 year olds.

**Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)** - a law in England that places a legal duty on local authorities to intervene earlier and provide support to prevent homelessness. The HRA was passed in 2017 and implemented in 2018.

**Presentations** - young people can present to their local authority under the HRA 2017 as homeless or at risk of homelessness. This may also be referred to as young people approaching or seeking help from their council.

**Initial assessment** - an initial assessment under the HRA 2017 to determine if the young person is owed a prevention or relief duty.

**Prevention duty** - owed to any young person assessed as being at risk of homelessness within at least 56 days. The council must take steps to help them maintain their current accommodation or secure alternative accommodation.

**Relief duty** - owed to any young person assessed as homeless. This duty lasts at least 56 days, in which time the council must help them to secure alternative accommodation for at least 6 months.

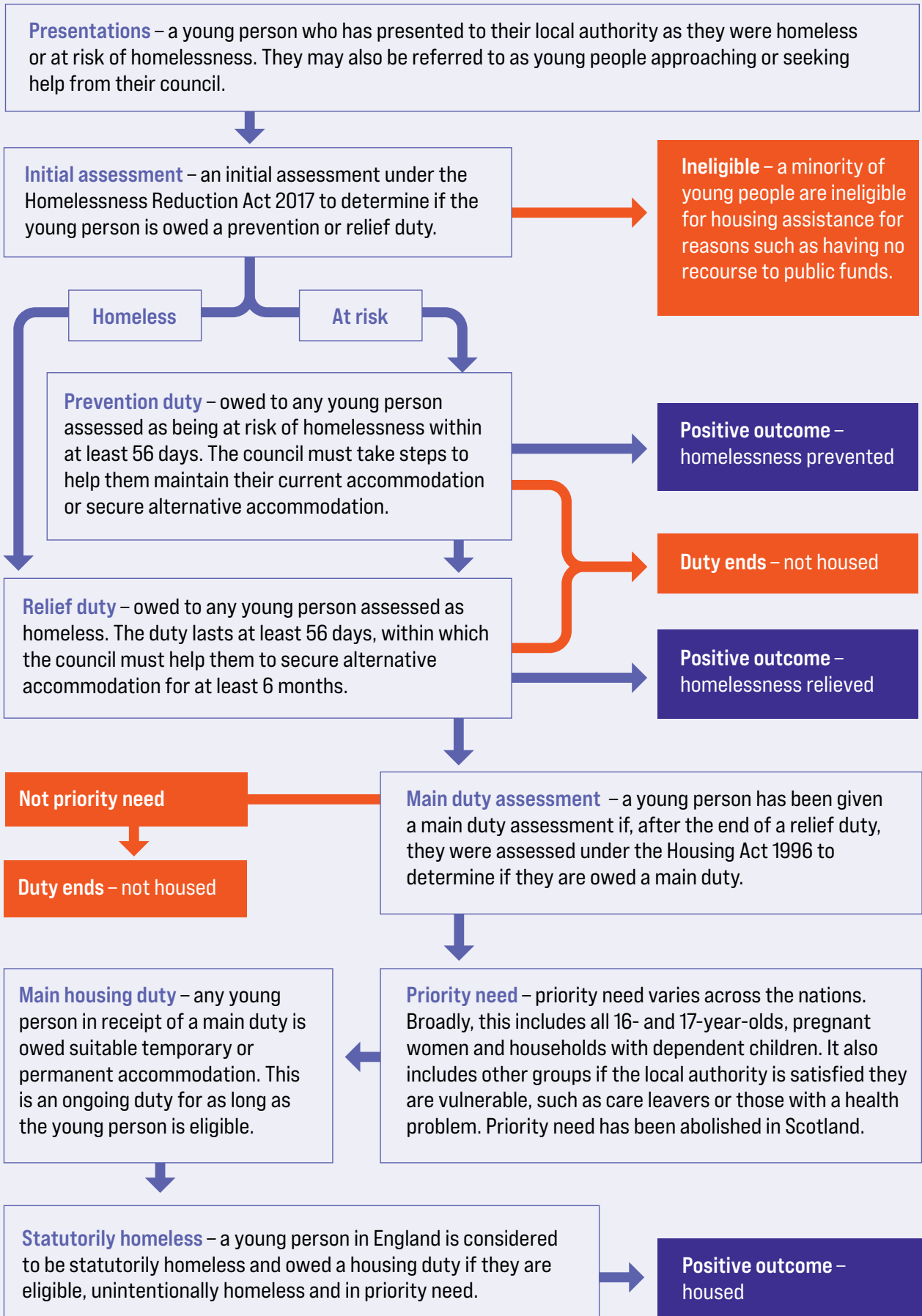
# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Legislative and policy context</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>National Picture: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Regional picture</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Reasons for homelessness in England</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Gender and youth homelessness</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Nationality and youth homelessness</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Local Authorities' role in tackling homelessness</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Gatekeeping practices and systemic challenges</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Technical appendix</b>	<b>26</b>

Centrepoint would like to express gratitude to all the local authorities in England who provided data in response to Freedom of Information requests on youth homelessness, to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Scottish Housing and Social Justice Directorate, the Housing Statistics team at the Welsh Government, the UK Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and to the participants of the interviews and focus groups which were conducted.

Author: Ella Nuttall  
Centrepoint, 2025

# The possible journeys of a young person presenting to their local authority because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness



# Executive Summary

Young people experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable members of society. At crucial moments in their lives, timely and effective support from local authorities can help young people to escape homelessness and secure stable housing. However, limited financial resources available to local authorities can mean that, when young people reach out for support, this does not always happen.

This report provides quantitative and qualitative data insights into youth homelessness in the UK in 2023-24. An intersectional lens is applied in this year's report, with chapters focusing on gender and nationality exploring how youth homelessness is experienced by different groups of young people.

Across the UK, rising living costs and rents, along with limited access to stable employment, have intensified financial insecurity among young people. This economic instability makes it harder for them to access housing, particularly when transitioning out of family homes or the care system. The scarcity of affordable housing options has created significant barriers for young people attempting to secure stable accommodation. High rents, competition for tenancies in the private rental market and the low availability of social housing have left many young people without viable, long-term accommodation options, forcing them into precarious or unsafe living conditions.

Centrepoint estimates that during the financial year 2023/24, approximately 101,460 young people in England sought assistance from their local council due to homelessness concerns – a 12% rise on last year. However, only 67% of these individuals received an assessment, a crucial step required to access support under the HRA 2017.

In other parts of the UK, 7,360 young people in Scotland, 6,420 in Wales, and 2,900 in Northern Ireland faced homelessness during the same period.

**This brings the total number of young people facing homelessness across the UK in 2023/24 to approximately 118,134 – a 10% rise on last year.**

**This means that 1 in 62 young people in the UK faced homelessness in 2023-2024.**

This figure only reflects those individuals who approached their local council or devolved national administrations. However, a significant number of young people experiencing homelessness either do not or cannot access this assistance. As a result, their situations often remain hidden and unreported. Given the varied forms that homelessness can take, accurately measuring youth homelessness is challenging. Consequently, the actual extent of youth homelessness is likely to be much higher than that estimated.

A significant discrepancy exists between the number of young people presenting as homeless and those who are formally assessed. This gap demands urgent action from both central and local governments across the UK. To address this, we strongly urge the Westminster and devolved governments, excluding Wales who already provide it, to collect and publish data on all presentations and initial interviews conducted by local authorities.

The Youth Homelessness Databank once again underscores the critical importance of having robust and comprehensive data to fully understand the scale and nature of youth homelessness.

In England, the current approach by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) falls short, as age-disaggregated data is not published for all stages of the HRA process. Instead, data is only provided for those officially accepted as being owed a prevention or relief duty. This limitation hinders the government's ability to accurately assess youth homelessness and analyse how trends vary across the country.

Such data collection is essential to uncover the true scale of support needed by vulnerable young people. Without it, thousands of young people approaching local authorities for assistance risk being overlooked, and the government risks lacking the information necessary to develop effective solutions to combat youth homelessness. Comprehensive data collection is a vital step toward meaningful action and support for those young people most in need.



## Introduction

As of 2024, there is still no comprehensive, official measurement of the scale of youth homelessness across the United Kingdom bar the annual Centrepont Youth Homelessness Databank. Without accurate and comparable national, regional, and local data on both the scale and nature of youth homelessness, it remains challenging to develop effective strategies to address the issue or allocate sufficient funding to provide young people with the support they need.

The Centrepont Youth Homelessness Databank continues to play a critical role in addressing this data gap by collecting council-level information for England and building a detailed national picture of youth homelessness. This is because it remains the only publicly accessible resource that tracks young people's journeys through the entire HRA pathway.

This report presents an analysis of data collected by local authorities during the financial year 2023/2024 and evaluates the implementation of the HRA 2017 in its sixth year. It draws on data provided by local authorities in England on the number of 16- to 24-year-olds who sought assistance because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness and examines their progression through council support systems.

The report also updates findings from the previous year, including Centrepont's latest estimates on the national scale of youth homelessness.

While the focus is primarily on data collected by councils in England, information from devolved nations is included to provide a full picture of youth homelessness across the United Kingdom.

Centrepont's estimates reflect only those young people who have approached their local authorities for assistance. Measuring the extent of hidden homelessness—those who have not sought council support—remains a significant challenge. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that youth homelessness is influenced by factors beyond council-provided services. Issues such as insufficient affordable housing, insecure job markets, inadequate welfare support, and broader social and personal challenges also contribute to the problem.

To effectively combat youth homelessness, the proactive and preventative approach established under the HRA must be expanded to include other services working with young people at risk of homelessness. Collaboration between housing, employment, education, and welfare services is essential to address the root causes of youth homelessness and provide sustainable solutions.

Visit our website to explore the data discussed in this report<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Centrepont Research Reports. Available at: [centrepont.org.uk/research-reports](https://centrepont.org.uk/research-reports)



## Methodology

Nations in the UK have different homelessness data collection and publication approaches. This means that data was collected differently for each of the nations – England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland.

Additionally, this year, we sought to gain a deeper understanding of how local authorities are meeting their responsibilities and the challenges they face. To gain a better understanding comprehensive of the issue, we conducted interviews with a range of local authority representatives from areas such as London, the West Midlands and the North West who are directly involved in youth homelessness services. These interviews provided valuable insights into their processes, strategies, and the difficulties they encounter in tackling youth homelessness at a local level.

Furthermore, we spoke with staff from Centrepoint's Helpline, who work on the frontline with young people experiencing homelessness. Our helpline team is often the first point of contact for vulnerable young individuals seeking support, and they have direct experience with services provided by local authorities. Their insights offer a unique perspective on how local authorities' responses align with the actual needs and expectations of young people, as well as the barriers that young people may encounter when attempting to access support.

### England

Data for England was obtained through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to relevant local authorities, with around 90 per cent of them providing data - an 89% response rate was achieved last year. The strong response rate from local authorities in England, alongside data from the other three nations allows us to provide an overall picture of the number of young people presenting to their local authority because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Furthermore, this year's FOI request asked for information on young people's nationality, requiring local authorities to provide information on whether young people reaching out for support were British nationals, EEA, non-EEA or from an unknown nationality. This allows for an intersectional analysis and provides insight into how different demographics experience youth homelessness.

### Change in how we calculate the number of homeless young people

In this year's Databank, the methodology for counting homeless young people who are reaching out to their local authorities for homelessness support has been refined. This year's report focuses solely on main applicants, rather than combining the numbers of homeless young people in households with main applicants. This change was made to ensure greater accuracy, consistency, and reliability.

## Low Response Rate for Households

In previous reports, we included data from homeless young people living in households. This year, however, the response rate for this question was very low – under half of local authorities provided data at a household level. Incomplete or inconsistent responses can significantly distort the overall picture, especially when the dataset is small or variable. Combining the numbers of homeless young people in households with main applicants could risk overcounting or undercounting, as the two groups often differed in reporting quality, frequency, and completeness. By narrowing our focus to main applicants, we ensure that the data we present is based on a robust and reliable dataset.

## Treatment of missing and partial data: Regional estimates

This year saw a high response rate from local authorities (around 90%), although a substantial number of these only submitted partial data. Regional averages were calculated for each question using the submitted data. The regional average was then used to populate any missing or partial data. A regional average provides a reliable way to estimate missing data, ensuring that the analysis remains complete and internally consistent. However, averages tend to reflect the typical range of responses, meaning that there may be some underreporting of variations in the data.

## Wales

Data collected by the Welsh Government provides detailed insights into homelessness outcomes, with information broken down by age group and local authority. This data is accessible through the StatsWales online tool<sup>2</sup> and captures every stage of the application process. It includes figures related to prevention and relief duties (Sections 66 and 73 of the Wales Housing Act 2014) and their outcomes—whether successful, unsuccessful, or transitioned to further support—as well as outcomes related to main housing duties.

## Scotland

Data on Scotland was taken from the Equalities tables for Homelessness in Scotland: 2023-24. Specifically, from Table 8a<sup>3</sup> covering data on age and gender for main applicant household assessments. The age categories in the table are broken down in 16-17 years old, and 18-24 years old. Therefore, these categories were combined to estimate the annual total for 16-24 year olds.

## Northern Ireland

A freedom of information request for the number of young people facing homelessness was submitted to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The data collected by the NIHE includes information on main duty presentations and main duty acceptances, categorized by age range, gender, and local authorities - however, the age range provided is 16-25 so this should be taken into consideration.

<sup>2</sup> <https://statswales.gov.wales>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-2023-24/documents/>





# Legislative and policy context

## England

In the United Kingdom, local authorities have been legally obligated to assist individuals experiencing homelessness since 1977. The Housing Act 1996 forms the foundation for local authority's statutory responsibilities, requiring them to prevent homelessness and support those already without housing. Since the advent of devolved governments, Wales and Scotland have implemented distinct approaches to homelessness legislation, adapting the existing legislation to fit their specific needs.

In England, the introduction of the HRA in April 2018 reformed the framework established under the 1996 Act. This legislation shifted the focus towards early intervention by adding statutory duties for prevention and relief, irrespective of whether applicants were intentionally homeless or met priority need criteria. If these initial measures proved unsuccessful, applicants could then be evaluated for eligibility under the full housing duty.

These reforms aimed to provide more consistent and equitable support, especially for single young people facing homelessness. Previously, this group often encountered limited assistance due to their lower likelihood of meeting priority need requirements. Under the HRA, individuals at risk of homelessness must now receive up to 56 days of support to secure housing, even before reaching crisis point.

A key feature of the HRA is its emphasis on empowering applicants through a collaborative approach. Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) were introduced to identify tailored steps to prevent or resolve homelessness and are developed in partnership with applicants following an initial assessment. Applicants also gained the right to request internal reviews of decisions made at any stage of the process and can seek support from any local authority, regardless of geographic boundaries.

It should be noted that asylum seekers are unable to gain much of this support from local authorities. However, if they receive refugee status, they are then able to present to local authorities and access homelessness support.

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) holds the primary responsibility for addressing homelessness, a role it has fulfilled since 1989. The legislative framework governing homelessness mandates the NIHE to assist individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness assistance in Northern Ireland is determined based on criteria such as eligibility, unintentional homelessness, and priority need. Additionally, prior behaviour is considered, making the criteria more complex compared to other UK regions. For individuals who are not owed a housing duty, the NIHE is obligated to provide advice and often engages in additional prevention and relief efforts.

The NIHE publishes biannual Homelessness Bulletins, offering detailed data on homelessness presentations and acceptances, categorized by age range, gender, and local authority area. The most recent bulletin, covering April to September 2024, indicates a continued rise in homelessness presentations, underscoring the persistent demand for housing support services.

## Scotland

Homelessness policy in Scotland is distinct compared to other UK nations. Since the abolition of the priority need criterion on 31 December 2012, all eligible individuals who are unintentionally homeless are entitled to a full housing duty provided by their local council. This approach ensures that every person presenting as homeless undergoes a comprehensive assessment.

Due to this approach, data provided by the Scottish Government focuses on the totals for each of the four potential decisions following presentation which are broken down by local authority. These are homeless and potentially homeless which are then broken down into intentional and unintentional.

## Wales

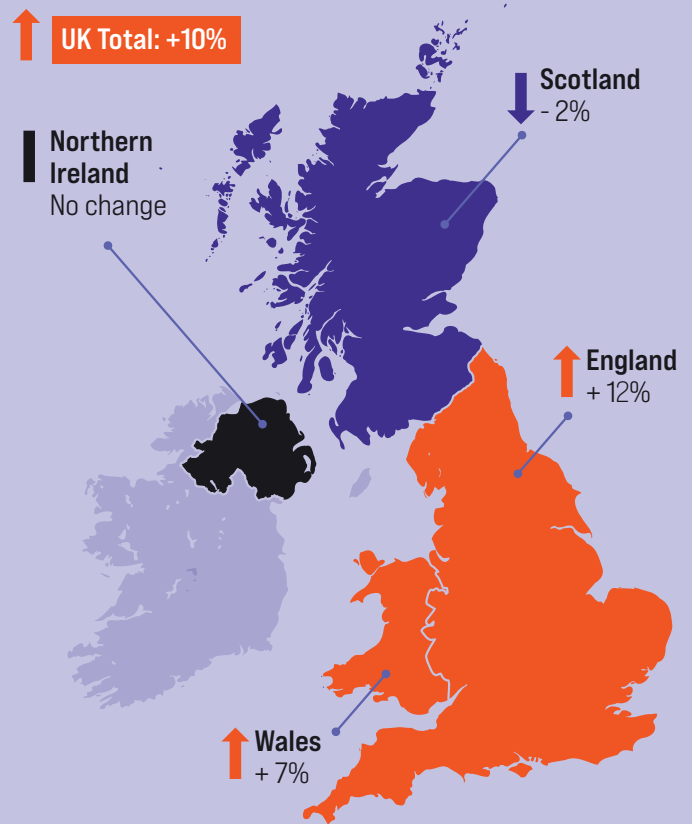
The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 marked a shift in Welsh homelessness legislation by prioritizing prevention and relief efforts before imposing a full housing duty. Under this Act, all individuals presenting as homeless to their local councils undergo an assessment to determine the appropriate prevention and/or relief support based on their specific circumstances. A full housing duty is subsequently owed only to those in priority need if initial support measures prove unsuccessful. This framework served as a model for the development of the HRA in England.

The Welsh Government collects comprehensive data on homelessness, focusing on outcomes at each stage of the application process. This data is categorized by age group and local authority and is accessible through the StatsWales online tool. The statistics encompass prevention and relief duties (Sections 66 and 73 of the Act) and their respective outcomes, whether successful, unsuccessful leading to the next stage of support, or duty ended—as well as various main duty outcomes.

# National Picture: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland

## Young people presenting as homeless nationwide

Nation	Number of young people presenting as homeless in 2022/23	Number of young people presenting as homeless in 2023/24	Percentage change from 2022/23 to 2023/24
England	90,620	101,460	12% increase
Scotland	7,500	7,358	2% decrease
Wales	6,000	6,420	7% increase
Northern Ireland	2,900	2,896	No change
UK	107,020	118,134	10% increase



## UK

1 in 62 young people in the UK were estimated to be facing homelessness in 2023-2024<sup>4</sup>.

One young person faces homelessness approximately every 4 minutes in the UK in 2023-2024.

## England

Youth homelessness in England has steadily worsened over recent years, reflecting broader systemic challenges in housing, social care, and national economic stability. The increase in the number of young people experiencing homelessness or being at risk is driven by several interrelated factors, exacerbating vulnerabilities, and straining the support systems that are meant to assist them.

In the financial year 2023-24, a total of 101,460 young people (16-24 years old) in England presented to their local authority because they were facing homelessness, with the following breakdown:

- **67,714** of these were assessed for prevention or relief duty. **This means 67% of young people who presented to their local authority for homelessness support were assessed.**
- **25,946** were issued a prevention duty.
- **34,393** were issued a relief duty.
- **12,516** had their prevention duty ended after securing accommodation.
- **11,844** had their relief duty ended after securing accommodation.
- **16,984** were assessed for a statutory main housing duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act.
- **12,233** were accepted as statutorily homeless and were owed a statutory housing duty under Part 6 of the Housing Act.

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics. [2024] 16-24 year old population: All persons. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/jn5r/lms>

## Outcomes in England

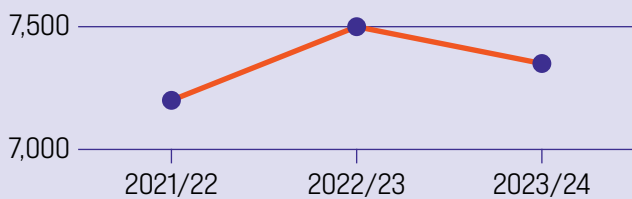
Around **67% of young people** who presented to their local authorities **were assessed**. This is a marginal improvement from last financial year where the assessment rate was 66%.

Out of the 101,460 young people who presented to their local authorities, only 60,339 of them were issued either a prevention or relief duty meaning that **approximately 60% of young people** who presented to their local authority were issued a duty.

## Scotland

In the financial year 23/24, there were a total of 7,358 main applicants who were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is a decrease from last year's total of 7,500 which had been the first increase in three years.

Young people presenting in Scotland



## Wales

In Wales, there were around 6,420 young people who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is a 7% increase from the 6,000 young people who presented in 2022/23.

Of this total, 2,283 were given a prevention or relief duty.

It should be noted that the Welsh Government round numbers to the nearest three to protect the identity of individuals.

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, 2,896 young people presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness, which is almost identical to the 2,900 reported in 2022-23.



# Regional picture

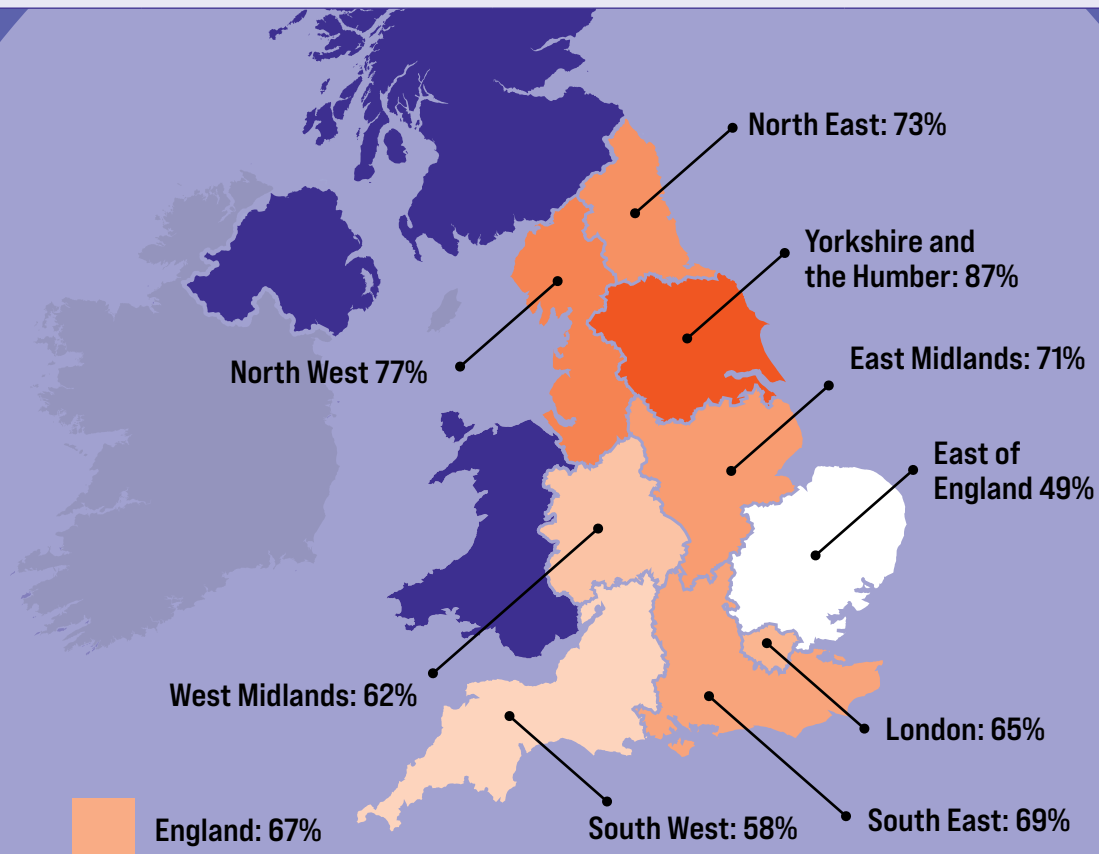
The analysis of youth homelessness across various regions in the UK for the financial year 2023/24 reveals significant variations in the rates at which young people presenting for homelessness support are assessed. These disparities reflect both regional differences in the demand for services and the effectiveness of local authorities in addressing youth homelessness.

The regional analysis indicates that some areas, particularly the Yorkshire and Humber and the North West, are managing

to assess a higher percentage of young people who present for homelessness support. In contrast, regions like the East of England and South West show lower assessment rates, suggesting potential issues in processing or providing support to those who need it most. These variations highlight the need for further investigation into the causes of under-assessment and more targeted interventions to improve the efficiency and accessibility of youth homelessness services across the UK.

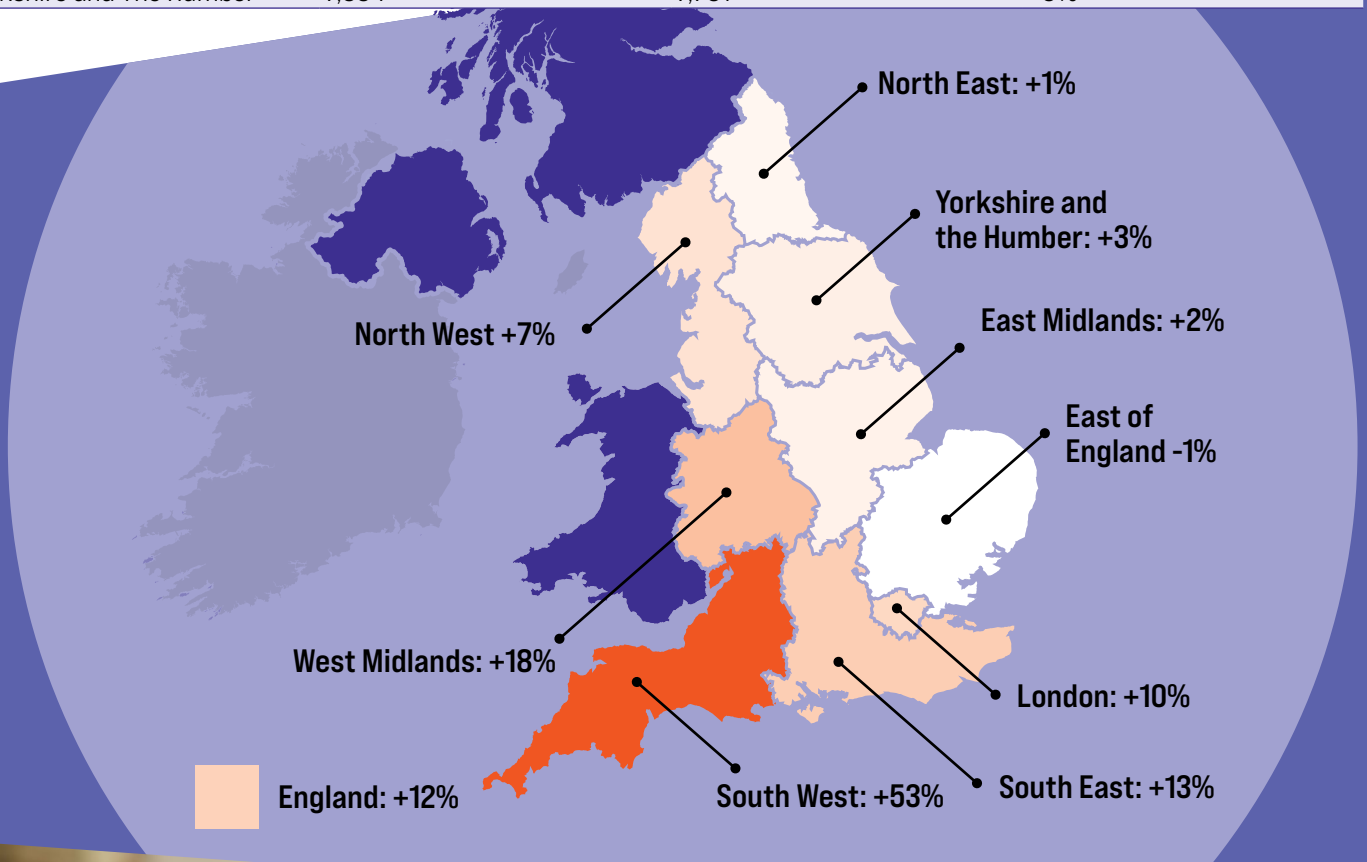
## Young people presenting for homelessness support and being assessed in England

Region	Total annual presentations 23/24 (England)	Total annual assessments 23/24 (England)	Percentage of young people who presented who were assessed
<b>England</b>	<b>101,458</b>	<b>67,714</b>	<b>67%</b>
North West	14,870	11,457	77%
London	14,885	9,738	65%
South East	14,487	10,002	69%
South West	13,845	8,097	58%
West Midlands	12,139	7,536	62%
East of England	11,834	5,811	49%
Yorkshire and Humber	7,751	6,746	87%
East Midlands	7,614	5,396	71%
North East	4,033	2,931	73%



## Year on year regional change for presentations in England

Region	2022/23 total number of young people presenting to local authorities (England)	2023/24 total number of young people presenting to local authorities (England)	Annual percentage change
<b>England</b>	<b>90,620</b>	<b>101,460</b>	<b>+12%</b>
East Midlands	7,473	7,614	+2%
East of England	11,958	11,834	-1%
London	13,530	14,885	+10%
North East	3,979	4,033	+1%
North West	13,915	14,870	+7%
South East	12,809	14,487	+13%
South West	9,075	13,845	+53%
West Midlands	10,322	12,139	+18%
Yorkshire and The Humber	7,554	7,751	+3%



# Reasons for homelessness in England

Between April 2023 and March 2024, the primary causes of youth homelessness were as follows<sup>5</sup>:

- 1. Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate 29,960 (50%)**
- 2. Domestic abuse 6,210 (10%)**
- 3. End of assured shorthold tenancy 4,710 (8%)**
- 4. Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support 3,360 (6%)**
- 5. Evicted from supported housing 2,960 (5%)**

As has been the case in previous years, the most prevalent reason for young people becoming homeless or at risk of homelessness remains family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate them.

Another growing issue is the rise in domestic abuse as a cause of youth homelessness. The pandemic and ongoing cost-of-living crisis have further exacerbated this trend. In the last year, 6,210 young people faced homelessness due to domestic abuse. This underscores the significant role domestic abuse plays in driving youth homelessness in recent years.



## Sarah's story

Sarah became homeless at 18<sup>6</sup>. She called the Centrepunkt Helpline who were able to arrange an assessment with the Homeless Prevention and Relief Service (HPRS) in the North of England. She is now living in a self-contained flat and supported by Centrepunkt's Floating Support Team.

Sarah had a serious falling out with her mum over finances. She was working as a cleaner and despite already contributing to the household budget, her mum asked her for more money or threatened to throw her out.

**"I became so upset and angry; probably the angriest I've ever felt. I told her that I would give her the money if I could see it was going on bills, but she wouldn't make that promise. I just couldn't deal with it anymore. I needed to get away from her because living with her was extremely damaging to my mental health. I was scared that I would cause harm to myself or my Mum, so I called the police and asked them to come and get me."**

Stories like Sarah's are often heard by Centrepunkt's Helpline team. The responses in the Helpline focus group echoed the trends identified in the national data and in our case studies, with family breakdown and domestic abuse emerging as the two most common causes of youth homelessness. As noted by one staff member:



**"I think it is pretty safe to say for us when speaking with young people that family breakdown and domestic abuse are probably the two biggest causes that we see. [...] Closely followed by eviction of some kind."**

**- Centrepunkt Helpline staff member**

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of the United Kingdom (via Freedom of Information request)

<sup>6</sup> Names and details have been changed to protect the young person's identity.



Family breakdown is a broad issue and, this year, Helpline staff have noted an emerging trend: increasing instances of family breakdown caused by financial strain:

**“So why a young person's asked to leave is because their parent or family member is saying, you know, I can't afford to have you in the house. That is something that we're seeing. But I just thought it was worth mentioning because it seems to be more prevalent in the last six months to a year.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

Financial strain as a driver of family breakdown and youth homelessness was corroborated by a local authority staff member from the West Midlands who said:

**“I think that maybe what we're seeing is an after effect of the cost-of-living crisis, we've got a lot of like young people being asked to leave by family who can't afford to keep them.”**

**- Local authority staff member from a West Midlands authority**

This insight reflects the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis, which continues to affect households' financial stability. With less economic resilience, families are more likely to experience breakdowns, resulting in young people being asked to leave due to financial pressures.

Helpline staff also pointed out the overlap between domestic abuse and family breakdown, noting that these issues often intersect, exacerbating the vulnerability of young people experiencing homelessness.

In addition to family breakdown and domestic abuse, Helpline staff raised concerns about the challenges faced by young people because of their immigration status:

**“We do speak to a lot of asylum seekers and refugees who have become homeless as a result of being evicted from Home Office accommodation.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

When a person is granted refugee status, they are given 28 days to find alternative accommodation and income before their Home Office accommodation and asylum support payments are terminated. This can leave many young people who are newly recognised refugees vulnerable to homelessness.

A lack of available housing was also found to be a recurrent issue and driver of youth homelessness, both in the private sector and within local authority and housing association stock. For example, one staff member from a West Midlands local authority said:

**“When our numbers (of homeless people) are going through the roof and we've got, you know, well over 1,000 people in temporary accommodation. We don't have the means to move them on effectively”.**

**- Local authority staff member from a West Midlands authority**

Centrepoint has called for more social homes to be built to increase housing stock and reduce youth homelessness<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Centrepoint. (2023) Housing aspirations. Available at: <https://centrepoint.org.uk/ending-youth-homelessness/take-action/housing-aspirations>

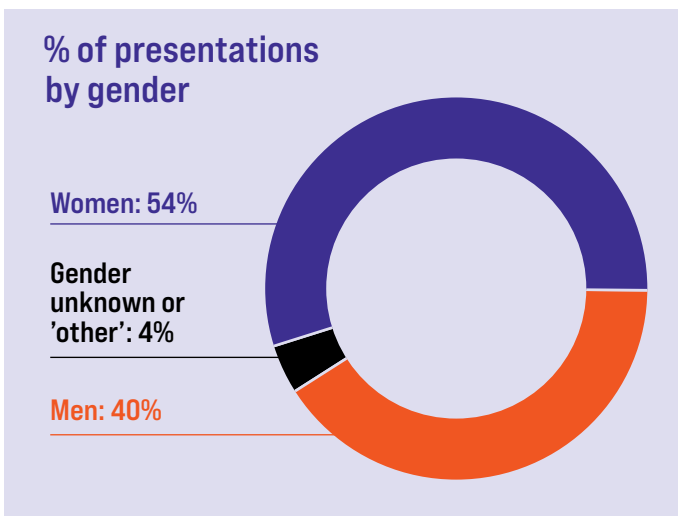
# Gender and youth homelessness

Gender plays a significant role in how young people experience homelessness and how they are supported by local authorities. Analysis of FOI data from this year's databank and insights from frontline workers reveal a complex dynamic: while more women appear in the official data as presenting for homelessness support, it is often men who are underrepresented in these figures.

## Data Overview

In 2023-2024, in England, women accounted for the majority of homelessness presentations:

- **54% of presentations were made by women (54,500 presentations).**
- **40% of presentations were made by men (40,500 presentations).**
- **4% of presentations were made by individuals whose gender was unknown or identified as "other" (3,500 presentations).**



Young women accounted for 54% of all homelessness presentations, totalling 54,500 cases, while young men made up 40% of presentations, amounting to 40,500 cases (the remaining 6% were of unknown or unreported gender). In the prevention stages of the HRA, the trend continues, with young women representing 60% of cases, compared to 36% for young men (the remaining 4% were of unknown or unreported gender). This disparity underscores that women are more likely to seek help in the early stages of homelessness compared to men – e.g. when facing eviction. However, it should be noted that, as interventions progress through the stages of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the proportional disparity between men and women diminishes.

In the relief stage, which is for those already experiencing homelessness, 18,463 young women (54%) and 15,595 young men (45%) were reported as having received a duty (with the remaining 1% being unknown or other). This shows a rising number of men being assessed as having been owed support because they were already homeless – something that was also found in last year's Databank report. Of the men reported as having received a homelessness assessment, 55% were provided with a relief duty and 33% a prevention duty – further emphasising the increased likelihood of men reaching out for help at crisis point. These findings point to potential differences in how young men and women experience and respond to homelessness, highlighting the need for tailored interventions targeting support at different stages in the HRA timeline.

## Youth Homelessness and Young Women

Interviews with staff from local authorities and combined authorities show that young women, especially those with children, encounter unique difficulties when experiencing homelessness.

One interview with a staff member from a combined authority in the North West highlighted how the absence of crucial support networks, such as childcare assistance, significantly exacerbates the already complex situation of homelessness.

**"Homelessness as a young person is particularly difficult if you don't have those support networks [...] for some of the women I spoke to, they had children and so if they were relying on child care support from the people in their support networks and that had fallen away and they were also trying to sustain a job and they were also trying to get into a private rented property".**

**- Combined authority staff member from a North West authority**

Similarly, a staff member from a London borough local authority shared that, while their services predominantly cater to men, a significant number of young women, often facing domestic abuse or being forced out of their homes, also require support.

**'Our pathway is primarily full of males at the moments [...] but we do have a lot of girls being thrown out of home, being subject to domestic violence potentially as well'.**

**- Local authority staff member from a London borough**

Youth homelessness, thus, poses unique challenges for young women and/or parents, as they often face additional barriers in securing safe and stable housing due to childcare responsibilities. These vulnerabilities are further compounded by limited access to support services, increasing their risk of continuing to face homelessness.





# Nationality and youth homelessness

This year marks a significant milestone in our data collection and analysis, as it is the first-time that nationality information has been included. This development provides critical insights into the diverse experiences of young people facing housing insecurity and allows policymakers and service providers to develop solutions that address the unique challenges encountered by different groups.

The data reveals that UK nationals form the majority of homelessness cases, but that there is a significant minority of non-EEA and EEA nationals experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the qualitative components of the research indicate that young people who are not UK nationals often constitute a notable proportion (if not the majority, as was reported in some cases) of young people reaching out for homelessness support. This may not have been reflected in the quantitative data because these groups often face distinct barriers to accessing support such as immigration status or discrimination.

## Presentations by Nationality

In the financial year 2023–2024, a total of 101,460 young people presented to local authorities in England due to homelessness concerns. Breaking this figure down by nationality:

- **73,464 (72%) were of UK nationality.**
- **7,996 (8%) were non-EEA nationals.**
- **3,869 (4%) were EEA nationals.**

The remaining number were unknown or not reported

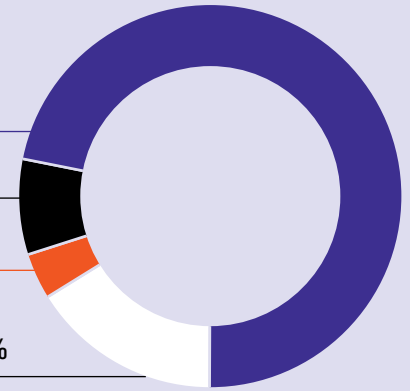
## % of presentations by nationality

UK: 72%

Non-EEA: 8%

EEA: 4%

Unknown/  
not reported: 16%



These figures highlight the predominance of UK nationals among youth homelessness presentations but also underscore the presence of young people from non-EEA and EEA countries, reflecting the complex and multicultural dimensions of homelessness in England.

## Homelessness amongst young people who are non-UK nationals

Participants emphasised that young people who are refugees often experience significant barriers when seeking homelessness support. Despite presenting to local authorities, many are not deemed a priority and receive little meaningful assistance, leading to situations where they are forced into rough sleeping.

**"I don't think I've ever had someone with refugee status be considered priority need, not once."**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**





MOUNTAIN  
REHOUSE

# Local Authorities' role in tackling homelessness

Local authorities play a pivotal role in addressing youth homelessness. As the primary duty bearers for providing support and ensuring the welfare of young people facing homelessness, local authorities are responsible for assessing needs, offering temporary accommodation, and working to prevent further homelessness through tailored interventions. The implementation of policies such as the HRA 2017 have further defined their obligations, requiring them to act proactively to prevent homelessness wherever possible. However, the success of these efforts often depends on the capacity of local councils to respond quickly and effectively to the complex needs of young people.

Qualitative data from local authority staff and our Helpline team reveals several significant issues related to how local authorities handle homelessness cases, particularly for young people. These challenges often result in a lack of support, further exacerbating the vulnerabilities faced by those already at risk of homelessness.



## Gatekeeping practices and systemic challenges

Gatekeeping, or the denial of a homelessness assessment and/or support by local authorities to people who have a right to them, is an ongoing issue that compounds the challenges faced by young people seeking homelessness assistance. According to Helpline staff, some local authorities are using gatekeeping practices to avoid providing support - often in cases of domestic abuse:

**“Effectively, the guidance is shaped so that you've got to think they're homeless, take a really minimal evidence-based approach to meet that threshold, and then do all your investigations while that person is safely housed. But instead, it's been used to gatekeep quite a lot.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

The reason for this gatekeeping, as noted by Helpline staff, often lies in systemic pressures within local authorities, particularly underfunding. Centrepoint Helpline staff said that local authorities often cite underfunding as the driver of gatekeeping practices. This financial pressure leads to staff having to make difficult decisions about who receives support, often resulting in vulnerable young people being turned away. These individuals may not fit the conventional criteria for domestic abuse or vulnerability, which can lead to their needs being overlooked:

**“You can have young men who have clearly been in domestic abuse situations with maybe female caregivers, where their mums might be hitting them or throwing things at them or screaming at them, and it's not taken seriously by the local authority at all. This has happened quite a few times, and you end up having a conversation with the young person because they haven't really used the language of domestic abuse before.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

This reflects how systemic biases and inadequate understanding of phenomena like domestic abuse can prevent young people from receiving the support they need, leaving them at risk of homelessness.



A 2024 briefing<sup>8</sup> released by Centrepont outlining instances of gatekeeping recorded by the Centrepont Helpline revealed that 564 young people in England experienced local authority gatekeeping between July 2023 and September 11th, 2024. Of the 317 local authorities in England, 125 councils (39%) were linked to at least one recorded case of gatekeeping<sup>9</sup>.

Helpline staff report seeing an increasing number of gatekeeping cases involving young people who are pregnant/have children in the last year.

An example of gatekeeping shared in Centrepont's recent briefing revealed that one Council told a pregnant 20-year-old who was rough sleeping that she will only be considered priority need once she reaches 20 weeks pregnant and can provide her MAT B1 form<sup>10</sup>. This goes against the Homeless Code of Guidance where it is stated that a letter from a medical professional, such as a midwife, should be adequate evidence of pregnancy.

In another instance, a pregnant young woman had been to her local council office and had been offered a homelessness assessment the next month – leaving her at risk of continued homelessness. This was despite her having slept rough prior to her presentation and having proof of pregnancy – which should move her up in the queue to receive an assessment<sup>11</sup>.

The gatekeeping briefing showed that the most common type of gatekeeping was 'wrongly considered not to be

priority need', followed by 'unable to contact the local authority'<sup>12</sup>. The challenges faced by young people in accessing support due to gatekeeping and systemic pressures within local authorities are significant barriers that need to be addressed. To effectively address youth homelessness, both the government and local authorities must take immediate action to reduce the underlying causes and improve access to support for vulnerable young people.

In addition to gatekeeping, one of the recurring themes identified by Helpline staff is the tendency of local authorities to "pass the buck" when it comes to taking responsibility for cases. Staff noted that young people, especially those who are not safe in their current borough, are often bounced between authorities with no one taking ownership of their case. As one staff member explained:

**“We're increasingly seeing... the volleying of young people between local authorities, like the refusal to take ownership... the young person is just the one that's like not supported within that kind of dynamic.”**

**- Centrepont Helpline staff member**

This shifting of responsibility leaves young people feeling unsupported, with some even doubting their worthiness for assistance or simply giving up on seeking help. This behaviour can be seen as a form of gatekeeping, where local authorities, rather than fulfilling their duty, create obstacles that deter young people from accessing support.

8 Centrepont. (2024) Local authority gatekeeping briefing. Available at: [https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local authority gatekeeping briefing - 2024.pdf](https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local%20authority%20gatekeeping%20briefing%20-%202024.pdf)

9 Centrepont. (2024) Local authority gatekeeping briefing. Available at: [https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local authority gatekeeping briefing - 2024.pdf](https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local%20authority%20gatekeeping%20briefing%20-%202024.pdf)

10 Centrepont. (2024) Youth homelessness and local authority gatekeeping. Available at: <https://centrepont.org.uk/research-reports/youth-homelessness-and-local-authority-gatekeeping> (Accessed 15/01/2025)

11 Centrepont. (2024) Local authority gatekeeping briefing. Available at: [https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local authority gatekeeping briefing - 2024.pdf](https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local%20authority%20gatekeeping%20briefing%20-%202024.pdf)

12 Centrepont. (2024) Local authority gatekeeping briefing. Available at: [https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local authority gatekeeping briefing - 2024.pdf](https://centrepont.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Local%20authority%20gatekeeping%20briefing%20-%202024.pdf)

## Implementation of the HRA

Despite the introduction of the HRA in 2018, evidence suggests that its implementation has been inconsistent, leaving many vulnerable young people without the assistance to which they are entitled.

Concerns were raised by the Centrepoint Helpline over the impact of resource limitations on local authority services. One staff member observed that the financial pressures faced by councils often led to a reluctance to provide temporary accommodation (TA) or emergency housing:

**“They [local authorities], obviously, because the huge funding pressures, [are] pressured not to give TA out, not to give emergency accommodation.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

This was corroborated by a local authority staff member from a London borough:

**“We’re also going through a re-tender at the moment, so we’re losing some provision which is not great. So, we’ve got less provision for them [young homeless people]. So that’s not helping. We’re trying to get more from the tender. We’re trying to get more properties.”**

**- Local authority staff member from a London borough**

Despite the implementation of the HRA, which was designed to improve housing access and support, interviewees highlighted concerns about the lack of understanding of the HRA and related guidance. Helpline staff discussed instances where local authority staff seemed uninformed or dismissive of young people's needs. One participant shared a troubling case study where a young person was immediately told they were likely to be considered "intentionally homeless", which only added to their anxiety about rough sleeping.

**“... this person within 5 minutes said well, to be honest, it sounds like it was kind of your fault and we're probably going to declare you intentionally homeless.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

Such instances indicate that local authorities may not be properly implementing the protections established under the HRA, leading to further harm for young people who may be facing homelessness.

This is further supported when examining local authority assessments of vulnerability. These assessments are frequently subjective, with housing officers often determining who qualifies for priority need based on their personal judgment rather than a clear, consistent standard.

**“That vulnerability line is whatever the housing officer decides it is, so we see a lot of people that are clearly vulnerable... getting refused under those.”**

**- Centrepoint Helpline staff member**

These issues underscore the significant challenges faced by young people attempting to navigate the homelessness support system. Issues such as gatekeeping contribute to a system that is often inaccessible and unresponsive to the needs of young people. Addressing these problems requires a concerted effort to improve coordination between local authorities, ensure adequate training for staff, and create a more compassionate and accessible system for vulnerable young people.





# Recommendations

## National level

- 1. Ministry of Housing Community and Local Government should** increase oversight and monitoring of local authority implementation and practices related to the implementation of the HRA when tackling youth homelessness. Improved Government scrutiny over how local authorities provide homelessness assessments and services would improve adherence to best practices, maintain consistent standards, and address any gaps in service provision to tackle youth homelessness.
- 2. Government should** create a youth chapter in their upcoming cross-government strategy to end homelessness. This outcomes-focused chapter should tackle root causes, provide youth-specific emergency housing, and foster collaboration across housing, employment, education, and welfare services. It should align with the Government's Mission Boards to ensure youth homelessness is integrated into broader strategic objectives.
- 3. Government should** provide ring-fenced funding for local authorities to tackle youth homelessness. This funding should be dedicated to supporting local authorities in implementing the HRA and assessing and supporting all young people who are facing homelessness. Ensuring this funding is ring-fenced will guarantee that it is used solely for youth homelessness initiatives.
- 4.** To ensure that all young people who are facing homelessness get the support they need from local authorities, the Homelessness Code of Guidance should be amended to clarify the obligations of local authorities at the presentation, initial interview, and assessment stage to ensure that all local authorities are aware of what is and is not acceptable practice. In doing this, they should delineate a) the factors a local authority must take into account and b) what constitutes a realistic burden of proof when the Homelessness Code of Guidance states that a local authority must only have "reason to believe" a person is homeless or at risk to get an assessment. This should cover what forms of evidence or burden of proof is acceptable to require at this early stage of the HRA.
- 5. The government must** commit to building 90,000 social rented homes annually, including 40,000 one-bedroom social rented homes. Increasing the supply of affordable, youth-appropriate housing is crucial in tackling homelessness and providing secure, long-term accommodation for vulnerable young people. The government must incentivise developers and local authorities to prioritise one-bedroom social rented homes to address the specific housing needs of young people, who very often approach their council for homelessness support as a single applicant, having lost any family support. This is evidenced by the fact that family breakdowns remain the leading cause of youth homelessness.

## In both England and the devolved nations:

- 1. The government should** require local authorities to report the number of homelessness presentations to give a fuller picture of levels of youth homelessness. In England, this should be added as a new required field on H-CLIC (the system used to record data related to the HRA). This would give a more accurate reflection of the number of people seeking help from local authorities, as our analysis has shown that a significant proportion of presentations do not reach the formal assessment stage.
- 2. The government should** launch a national awareness campaign on homelessness, reaching at-risk individuals, especially those in hidden homelessness situations, making them more aware of their rights under the HRA.
- 3.** It is essential that local authorities and service providers collect and report age-disaggregated data on youth homelessness. This would allow for a more accurate understanding of the patterns and causes of youth homelessness and help tailor interventions to the specific needs of different age groups within the youth category. By disaggregating data, policymakers can better track the effectiveness of their strategies and ensure that interventions are properly targeted at the most vulnerable young people.



## Recommendations for young people who are not UK nationals

1. **The Home Office should** permanently extend the move-on period for individuals leaving Home Office accommodation on a national scale. This extended time period before eviction and the termination of asylum support payments will provide more time for young people to secure housing and access financial support.
2. Bespoke training should be provided to local authority and government body staff in order to provide accurate and informative support and information to young people who are not UK nationals.

## Recommendations for the government on gender policy within youth homelessness

1. **The government must** take immediate action to support young women experiencing homelessness by ensuring all councils follow the Homeless Code of Guidance, particularly regarding pregnancy, and eliminate unnecessary delays in securing homelessness assessments. Frontline and support staff working in services with homeless young people should undertake training to ensure that services become trauma and gender informed spaces. Staff should be trained to understand and meet the specific needs of young women, particularly those with childcare responsibilities or experiencing domestic violence.
2. **Local authorities should** review and revise assessment procedures to ensure that young people are not excluded based on assumptions about their "priority need." Policies should be implemented to ensure that all young people, regardless of gender or health status, receive fair and consistent assessments.
3. **The government should** invest in improving data collection systems to better capture and analyse the gendered dynamics of youth homelessness. This includes disaggregating data by gender and, where possible, by other relevant factors such as age, ethnicity, and specific vulnerabilities. Accurate data is essential for identifying trends, understanding the full scope of homelessness, and ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately to ensure that underrepresented groups, such as young men, are not overlooked.



# Technical appendix

Homelessness policy in the United Kingdom varies across the four individual nations, each having independent policy that informs their different data collection policies. Currently, the MHCLG in England does not publish data broken down by age except for a combined figure for people owed a prevention or relief duty, which does not allow for an accurate picture of youth homelessness and the HRA processes. As a result, Centrepoint sends a Freedom of Information request to every local authority in England to collect a more complete dataset. This data is combined with data obtained from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive via an FOI and publicly available data from Scotland and Wales. It should be noted that the data pertaining to Northern Ireland refers to 16-25 year olds.

Centrepoint's annual estimate of the number of young homeless people in the UK is primarily derived from responses to a Freedom of Information request sent to local authorities in England.

The request sought information on the number of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness to each local authority in England, as well as similar data from the devolved nations. The estimate is based on data provided by 90 percent of councils in England.

The missing or partial data was populated using regional averages. Regional averages were calculated using the data that was reported by local authorities for each question asked in the Freedom of Information request. The regional averages were then applied to missing or partial responses to complete the dataset. Because different questions have varying response rates and use different recording processes, some categories, such as annual totals and gender breakdowns, may not match the sum of all the quarters or gender categories. This is due to the way data is estimated and recorded, which can vary depending on the response rate for each question.

This year's analysis focuses on main applicant data, as opposed to the previous year's analysis which also included and focused on household data, due to a very low response rate by local authorities to this question in the Freedom of Information request.

It should be noted that some local authorities responded to our Freedom of Information request outside of the twenty-day mandatory period and therefore have not been included in the analysis.

In addition to this, in 2023, local government jurisdictions in England underwent notable structural reorganisations. These changes are part of a broader trend of creating unitary authorities, which consolidate functions previously split between county and district councils. Subsequently, the list and quantities of local authorities varies across the years the databank analysis has taken place which can impact totals and comparisons.

It should also be noted that data provided from MHCLG via an FOI on the lead causes of homelessness does not always correlate with data submitted at local authority level for a separate FOI on the number of young people presenting and being assessed.

As previously discussed, the scale of youth homelessness is likely to be much greater than that reported in this analysis. Hidden homelessness, which is largely unreported, means accurately quantifying youth homelessness is very challenging but Centrepoint's databank is the most comprehensive analysis on youth homelessness in the UK.







Centrepoint Head Office, Central House,  
25 Camperdown Street, London E1 8DZ  
Tel 0800 23 23 20  
Fax 0845 466 3500

[www.centrepoint.org.uk](http://www.centrepoint.org.uk)

Charity Number 292411

© Centrepoint 2025