

Summary Report

WAITING FOR THE NEXT BLOW-UP: FAMILY BREAKDOWN AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



Author: Dr Cornelis Rijneveld

Centrepoint Registered Charity No. 292411

**CENTRE
POINT**

**ENDING YOUTH
HOMELESSNESS**

Summary

Family breakdown is the main cause of youth homelessness. Our research shows that while conflict happens in all families and is triggered by similar topics, it is far more likely to escalate in households that are already facing multiple challenges. This can in turn lead to a young person being made to leave or choosing to leave home before they are ready to.

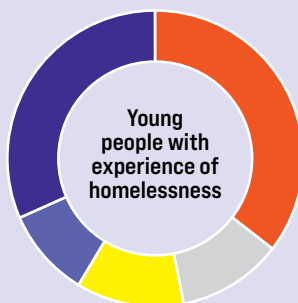
The research is based on a survey with young people [aged 16-25] with experience of homelessness in England (n107), a representative UK-wide poll of the general young population [aged 16-25] delivered by Opinium (n2000), and in-depth interviews with 21 young people with experience of homelessness [aged 16-30] and over 30 homelessness and mediation professionals in England.

Background factors

- Young people with experience of homelessness were far more likely to report parental mental health problems and substance use difficulties, financial pressure, and overcrowding risk¹ than general population young people.
- Each of these factors was associated with the reported frequency of arguments, witnessing or being subjected to domestic abuse, and having been at risk of not having somewhere to spend the night due to circumstances at home.

“Mental health [problems], substances, and domestic abuse are like a toxic triangle [that] just escalates everything.”

– Centrepoint psychologist



- Family conflict was the main reason I became homeless
- Family conflict was one of several reasons I became homeless
- My experience of homelessness was not related to family conflict at all
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

While growing up...

My parent/carer or their partner was emotionally, physically or sexually abusive towards me

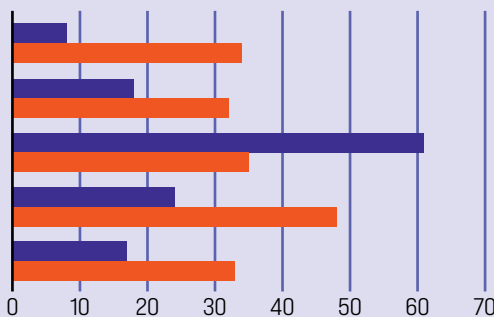
I saw my parent(s)/carer(s) and/or their partner drunk and/or high often or all the time

Everyone who lived in the house had their own bedroom often or all the time

My parent(s)/carer(s) struggled with their mental health

My parent(s)/carer(s) struggled to pay bills or basic items often or all the time

■ General young population ■ Young people with experience of homelessness



Conflict triggers

- Young people with experience of homelessness were more likely to report conflict triggers than the general young population
- Several young people interviewed for the research had to leave home because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Nearly two-thirds (72 per cent) of young people with experience of homelessness indicated arguing with their parent(s) or carer(s) often or all the time compared to just over a quarter (27 per cent) of the general population.

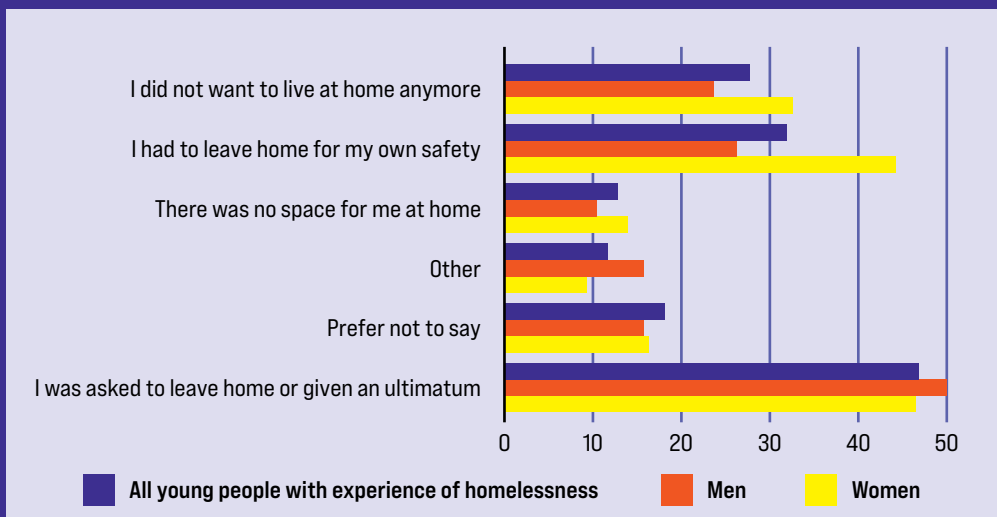
“What tends to come up time and time again, to be honest, is young people who are trans or non-binary and they have a preferred name and a preferred pronoun, and parents just aren't following that.”

– Mediation professional

Leaving home

- Nearly one in five (19 per cent) of the general young population indicate they have been at risk of not having somewhere to spend the night due to a problem in their household.
- Only just over one in ten (12 per cent) young people with experience of homelessness say their experience of homelessness was unrelated to family breakdown.
- Just under a third (32 per cent) of young people with experience of homelessness got accommodation through the council or a charity after leaving home, and many young people and professionals shared experiences of local authority gatekeeping.

How were you put at risk of becoming homeless?



Preventing family breakdown

- Welfare reform and cuts to public services have put families at greater risk of breakdown.
- Early intervention programs such as Upstream offer tailored 1:1 support to children who are identified as being at risk of family breakdown and homelessness.
- Intergenerational or family mediation, a voluntary process during which young people and a parent or carer work with a trained professional to resolve conflict, is an effective way of reducing youth homelessness and associated costs in the local authorities where the service is available.

“It is a great way to introduce mediation, family support and homelessness prevention within schools, and i think it should be the norm [across the uk] because we are really capturing young people when there are emerging issues.”

– Mediation professional



Key recommendations

- **The Department for Education** should encourage schools across England to screen pupils for homelessness risk and embed upstream prevention initiatives.
- **The Government** should set up a cross-departmental budget, coordinated by Department for Education and the Department of Social Care and Health, for improving children's outcomes, including through upstream homelessness prevention.
- **The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** should mandate all local authorities to commission independent family mediation services.

Centrepont Head Office, Central House,
25 Camperdown Street, London E18DZ
Tel 0800 23 23 20
Fax 0845 466 3500

www.centrepont.org.uk
Charity Number 292411
© Centrepont 2025



**ENDING YOUTH
HOMELESSNESS**