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NOTE FROM ELLIE & TRAVIS

Thank you for reading this edition of **Your Impact**. As Julie said in her letter, we wanted to begin the year by speaking honestly about what young people are facing right now – and about what your support makes possible when the odds are stacked against them.

When we were planning this edition, one thing became clear very quickly: the 'impossible choices' we spoke about at Christmas don't neatly resolve themselves once January arrives. If anything, this is the moment when many young people feel the strain most sharply. The cold weather, the pressure on council services, the gap between emergency accommodation and somewhere safe to stay – it all converges at this time of year.

So rather than share a general roundup with you, this time we've shaped the issue around a simple idea: **what it takes to turn impossible choices into better ones**.

In the first section, you'll read updates from our Helpline and frontline teams – the people who pick up the pieces when young people are told "no" at the very moment they most need help. Their work is demanding, emotional and, frankly, essential.

Then we move to Manchester, where a new service model is trying to do something different: stepping in before a young person reaches that crisis point. It's a reminder that change doesn't always have to be dramatic to be meaningful – sometimes it's about steady, joined-up support at exactly the right moment.

We also take a look at the bigger picture: how the benefits system continues to trap young people in poverty, and the work we're doing to push for fairer rules.

And finally, we celebrate you, our supporters – including those like Freda, whose generosity spans decades, and touch on a few things we think you might be interested in.

Wherever you go next in these pages, I hope you feel the thread running through it: compassion becoming action, and action becoming real change.

Thank you for reading, and for caring.

Ellie Moody,
Stewardship Manager

Travis Green,
Stewardship Officer



THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN. WE WON'T FAIL YOUNG PEOPLE.

Every week, young people arrive at Centrepoint after long, disorienting journeys through services that should have protected them. Some have crossed borders. Some have left violent homes. Many have been shuttled between agencies without anyone taking responsibility. And when you're young, alone, and new to a place, every door closed in your face feels like the end of the road.

That's where support workers like Nnamdi step in.

Nnamdi began working at Centrepoint two years ago, after training as a youth worker and completing a Master's in Youth and Community Work. His job now is to help young people settle in, find stability, and start rebuilding.

"My job is to help them settle in... support them generally. If there is anything they need, I give them support and let them understand how different it is here to where they have been."

A large part of his work is with young refugees and unaccompanied asylum seeking minors – young people whose first experience of the UK is too often a hotel room, uncertainty, and a countdown clock attached to their Home Office decision.

Many arrive carrying trauma they can barely put into words.

"The trauma that they've been through... people don't believe you but it's their story, so we should give them a chance."

Language barriers add another layer. Some young people arrive feeling embarrassed to use interpreting services; others feel overwhelmed by a culture they don't yet have the words for.

"The interpreting services really help... when a young person wants to share, it's frustrating for them when they can't really share what's inside their heart."

And for those waiting on immigration outcomes, the uncertainty affects everything – college, friendships, mental health, sleep.

"If it is something they're waiting for it affects every single thing... If you don't have your status here, whatever you're doing doesn't matter."

A YOUNG MAN AT BREAKING POINT – AND THE TEAM WHO STEPPED IN

One young man Nnamdi's colleagues supported recently, Mr B*, came to the UK from Sudan, alone, at 19.

After finally receiving his refugee status, he was told he could no longer stay in his temporary accommodation. With nowhere to go and no one to turn to, he ended up sleeping rough while trying to keep up with college and daily Job Centre appointments.

He described the strain clearly:

"If you're sleeping outside and you've got an appointment at 10 or 9... you have to find somewhere to wash your face, clean your teeth, then find some breakfast. That's very challenging. It needs a lot of organising to manage your time to be in the right place at the right time. So, it's not that easy".

A friend told him to try Centrepoint, and after an appointment and an interview, his life began to change.

Over the next two weeks, the team in Manchester made referral after referral on his behalf, eventually securing him safe accommodation. The first option wasn't suitable, because of particular aspects which reminded him of the trauma he'd experienced – so they went back out and found another.

"They did a lot of referrals on my behalf... After two days outside they called me again and said they'd found another accommodation. I signed the tenancy agreement and moved."

Stability changed everything:

"Accommodation is something essential in everyone's life... if you don't have proper accommodation it's difficult, you will be very messy... you won't be able to do anything."

Now he's not just rebuilding but thriving – finishing his English qualifications and training for a new job, thanks to the support from one of our Jobs and Education Advisors.



YOU'RE A REAL PART OF THIS SUPPORT

Behind every young person like Mr B is a frontline team navigating huge pressures: rising referrals, complex immigration needs, trauma support, language barriers, and the emotionally heavy work of advocating day after day.

And behind them is you.



Your generosity means young people aren't facing a confusing, indifferent system alone. It means there's someone to listen, to fight their corner, to give them the dignity of safety and a way forward.

Thanks to you, young people who've been pushed to the edge get the chance to start again – safely, securely, and with people in their corner.

*Names have been changed to protect identities

GATEKEEPING: THE HIDDEN BARRIER YOUNG PEOPLE FACE

When a young person becomes homeless, the first step should be simple: go to the council and ask for help.

But that's not always what happens.

Across England, many young people are being turned away, misdirected, or told they aren't eligible – even when the law says otherwise. This practice has a name: **gatekeeping**.

Gatekeeping is when a council blocks or delays someone from making a homelessness application or getting the support they're entitled to. It leaves young people stuck, scared, and unsure where to turn next.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING

Between August 2024 – July 2025, Centrepoint's Helpline recorded:



These aren't small mistakes. They are critical moments where a young person is denied the safety and support they urgently need.

The most common issues:



WHERE CENTREPOINT STEPS IN

Gatekeeping creates fear and paralysis. So our Helpline advisers and frontline teams step in – challenging incorrect decisions, pushing for proper assessments, and helping young people secure emergency accommodation.

It's painstaking, time-consuming and entirely essential work. And we couldn't do it without your support. Because of you, young people have someone who knows the system, understands their rights, and won't let them fall through the cracks. You help turn a closed door into a safer path forward.

HEAR DIRECTLY FROM THE PEOPLE YOU SUPPORT

In these pages, you've read how disorientating and exhausting the system can be for young people like Mr B. If you'd like to understand more about what that journey feels like – in young people's own words – our Point Made podcast series has an episode that goes right to the heart of it.

In it, Josh, a Deputy Service Manager in our Camden team, talks with Adam, a young refugee from Ivory Coast. Together they explore what it means to arrive in the UK with no safety net, no certainty and a huge amount to process.

It's a frank, thoughtful half an hour or so, full of the kind of detail you only hear when people feel safe enough to be honest.

If understanding the issues behind the stories is something you value, this one is well worth your time.

And if you enjoy it, there are other episodes that shed light on different parts of Centrepoint's work – including one featuring our Manchester outreach team. You can read about them over the next page, as they've got a new crisis prevention model which could be truly gamechanging...



You can find it on our website by scanning this QR code.



BEFORE A CRISIS: INSIDE MANCHESTER'S NEW EARLY & EXTRA HELP SERVICE

Over Christmas, we talked about impossible choices – the kind a young person faces when they've run out of safe options.

But the truth is: many of the crises that force them towards impossible choices start long before someone reaches a Helpline or turns up at a council office. That's why Centrepoint is launching something new in Manchester: a service designed to step in before a young person hits breaking point.

The aim is simple: spot risk early, step in early, and steady things early – so fewer young people fall into homelessness at all.

Sharon, who's part of the team shaping this new approach, says:

"This service aims to capture young people within a family setting, at the source before cracks appear and crisis develops. It's about educating young people about the support they can receive and expectations of the homelessness pathway in Manchester."



REACHING THE RIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE, IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Teams are already going out into schools, colleges and community organisations across some of the most deprived wards in the city. They're identifying situations where home life is breaking down, where a tenancy is wobbling, or where a young person is struggling to navigate services they've never used before.

Instead of waiting for a crisis, staff can mediate with families, work with landlords, or help a young person access benefits, legal support, education or therapy. It's practical prevention, backed by Centrepoint's specialist teams.



THE POWER OF ONE STEADY RELATIONSHIP

A big part of this new model is simply creating one safe, dependable connection – someone who doesn't disappear when things get complicated.

Sharon, who used to work with Taylor in the Rough Sleepers and Complex Case Team, explains:

"I learnt a lot from the young people I supported in my previous role, especially relationship building. Consistency is the key to building trust, also creating a space that is safe and non-judgemental. These communication skills will be so fundamental in developing strong relationships with the young people needing support from the Early and Extra Help Team."



WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE FACE RIGHT NOW

Taylor works in our Rough Sleepers and Complex Case Team based in Manchester, providing outreach for young people who are already experiencing homelessness, and he sees these pressures every week. Young people arriving alone after fleeing conflict. Young people whose family relationships have collapsed. Young people working – sometimes full-time – who still can't afford a room in the city where they study or work.

"There's been a huge increase in people whose family relationships have broken down, or refugees who've just got their immigration status and lost their Home Office accommodation, or young people who are actually in work but just can't afford to live in the city they work in."

Those are the moments where the right support from our team can make all the difference, helping young people back on the path to stability.



WHY THIS MATTERS

Prevention takes tough, persistent work, helping families stay together, stopping a tenancy collapsing, getting a young person the right assessments, finding safe respite, or bridging them into education or work before everything unravels.

And it's the kind of work we hope to share more about – because you're making it possible.

The Manchester team is already meeting young people who would otherwise be on the cusp of homelessness. With your support behind them, they've got the time, partnerships and persistence to help those young people move toward safer, steadier futures.



CHANGING THE BIGGER PICTURE: CENTREPOINT HAS WON THE FIGHT TO MAKE WORK PAY



A major flaw in the welfare system has been pushing too many young people in supported housing to make impossible choices – whether they work more hours and face being worse off or stay on benefits indefinitely.

Many arrive at Centrepoint doing everything they can to stay afloat. They're working hard to build financial stability and leave homelessness behind, but a cruel quirk in the benefits system – which means if they work over a certain number of hours, they lose their housing benefit too rapidly and don't earn enough to make ends meet – can make true independence feel out of reach.

None of this is new. It's the same financial pressure young people talk about in our services every day: the stress of juggling working hours to ensure they make ends meet at the end of the month; the impossibility of saving; the fear of sliding backwards after a single unexpected bill.

That's why Centrepoint have been campaigning to [Make Work Pay](#) for the last year.

The campaign influenced MPs and the Treasury to make them aware of this injustice affecting thousands of young people. Its message was simple: a benefit system that disincentivises work and hinders ambition is a broken system.

We've been determined to see this fixed – and in November 2025, we won.

Thanks to our incredible campaigners and partners, the Treasury committed in the Autumn Statement to fix the system. Now young people have the chance to work more hours, take on new types of work, pursue their career ambitions and work towards living independently – without the fear of being left financially worse off. It removes a barrier that young people

in supported housing have been fighting against for years.

This sits alongside everything else in this issue: frontline work that steps in when the system fails, and the new Manchester service designed to prevent crisis earlier. Together, they show the full picture – supporting young people now, and changing the system issues that push them to the edge in the first place.

Your support makes all of this possible: the practical, the preventative and the long-term. Because if young people are going to move from impossible choices to better ones, the world around them has to change too.

Over 17,000 campaigners called on the government to [Make Work Pay](#)

FREDA'S STORY:

A LIFETIME OF CHOOSING TO HELP OTHERS FIND SAFETY



Freda speaking at a Centrepoint event 2025
P. © David Monteith Hodge

If you've read Julie's letter, you'll know this issue is all about choices – the impossible ones young people are forced into, and the better ones supporters like you help make possible.

So we wanted to introduce you to Freda: someone who has spent more than four decades choosing to help people who had nowhere safe to go.

Her work began in London, working in emergency Christmas shelters and cold-weather provision in Whitechapel – places where, as she puts it, deprivation was stark and need was everywhere.

"I worked in the homeless shelters around the Whitechapel area for years when it was very deprived. I knew Centrepoint was a place I could refer young people who were in crisis and needed a place to stay."

Alongside this, she also helped run a safe house for women – people who were often older, often carrying deep trauma, and often hidden from view. It wasn't glamorous. It wasn't easy. But it mattered. And it shaped the way she has advocated for people ever since.

Over the years, Freda has campaigned to the government, spoken in schools, churches and community groups to raise awareness about homelessness. Later, during her 20 years as a vicar in the Midlands, she continued to support people facing

housing crisis, always looking for ways to get young people the right help at the right moment.

What's stayed with her is Centrepoint's focus on dignity, safety and a future worth reaching for:

"I support Centrepoint because it offers not only shelter but also the support, guidance, and tools necessary for young individuals to build a brighter future for themselves."

And even now, she notices the small and powerful ways of how a young person can be supported – like a quiet study space created for young people preparing for exams. To her, those details say as much as any statistic.

On top of her monthly donation, Freda made one more thoughtful choice. She decided to leave a gift to Centrepoint in her Will, so she can go on protecting young people long after she's no longer here to do it herself. And if you've been thinking about doing something similar, her story is a reminder that a single choice can echo for years.

THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE? OUR FREE WILL WRITING GUIDE IS HERE IF YOU NEED IT.



You've just read about Freda – someone who chose to make a difference that will last far beyond her lifetime. It's a powerful act of kindness, and we're deeply grateful for it. This kind of generosity is the reason so many young people end up moving from fear to stability, from crisis to opportunity.

If leaving a gift in your Will is something you've been considering – or even just curious about – our Will Writing Guide can help you explore your options.

There's no pressure and no obligation. It simply explains how the process works, and the different ways people choose to support.

Every gift, whatever the size, helps Centrepoint be here for the young people who need us most – now and in the years ahead.

Two ways to get
your free gifts in Wills guide:
Scan the QR code or visit
[centrepoint.org.uk/support-us/
other-ways-give/leave-gift-your-will](https://centrepoint.org.uk/support-us/other-ways-give/leave-gift-your-will)



HOW YOU CAN MAKE BETTER CHOICES POSSIBLE: WAYS TO GET INVOLVED THIS YEAR

HOST YOUR OWN SLEEP OUT – THIS FEBRUARY

All across the country, people are swapping their beds for sleeping bags to raise money and awareness for young people facing homelessness.

This year something particularly special is happening: Nationwide Building Society is match-funding our Sleep Outs across February – which means every pound you raise will be doubled.*

Sleep Out isn't about replicating rough sleeping. It's about getting a small insight into what homelessness can feel like, and a show of solidarity that says no young person should be left without a safe place to stay.

CENTRE POINT
SLEEP OUT



It's so easy to do:

1 CHOOSE YOUR SLEEP OUT TEAM.

Friends, family, colleagues, your book group, park run friends, your five a side team – anyone you want by your side!

2 PICK A DATE AND PLACE.

Your back garden, the office car park or school playground, the local tennis courts – wherever's safe and suitable!

3 SIGN UP AND START FUNDRAISING.

You can find the next steps on our website and our dedicated Sleep Out team will be on hand to support.

And if you're keen to join the February Sleep Out movement but can't host your own, why not come along to:

London Sleep Out: 6 February, Somerset House

Manchester Sleep Out: 27 February, Projekts Skatepark.

Supported by

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Find out more at centrepoint.org.uk/sleep-out, or scan the QR code.

* Matched funding campaign will last from 1 February to 28 February 2026, and will be limited to £50,000, full Ts & Cs found at centrepoint.org.uk/sleepoutmatched

Across this issue we've been exploring the causes and consequences of impossible choices, and we've touched on how important your support is to drive our work in these areas.

We have a growing community that love supporting Centrepoint with something a little more hands on. Here are a couple of ways to get involved over the coming months.

LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT BIG CHALLENGE?

Join Team Centrepoint and take part in a cause that matters to you. There's something for everyone from half marathons to cycling challenges.

LONDON LANDMARKS HALF MARATHON

12 April 2026
Registration fee: £28



HACKNEY HALF MARATHON

17 May 2026
Registration fee: £28



LONDON TO BRIGHTON BIKE RIDE

21 June 2026
Registration fee: £40



Don't miss out – sign up today by scanning the QR code, or visiting our website at centrepoint.org.uk/challenge-events



All we ask is you raise £350 for Centrepoint!



THE CHOICES YOU MAKE MATTER.

Because whether you gave a while ago, last month or today, your choice to support us means the world – to us, and to every young person finding safety and stability with Centrepoint's help.

Thank you for reading, for caring, and for believing in change.

This newsletter costs just 23p to print and enables us to tell you about how you are making a difference to homeless young people. Please pass on to friends and family so even more people can find out about our work. If you have any questions about Centrepoint, specific feedback on this communication or if you wish to receive this newsletter via email only, please call us on 0800 23 23 20, email supportercare@centrepoint.org or write to us at the address below. We sometimes use models and change the names of young people to protect their identity; however, all stories are true and as told by the young person.

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WinterNews2026



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ENDING YOUTH
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