

Research Report



# **DATABANK 2025:** **THE STATE OF YOUTH** **HOMELESSNESS IN THE UK**



**ENDING YOUTH  
HOMELESSNESS**

Registered Charity No. 292411



## 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 2017:** 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 six months.

**Main duty:** owed to eligible young people in priority need and who are unintentionally homeless, who have exhausted prevention and relief duties. This duty lasts until the young person has been offered permanent accommodation.

**Section 20 duty:** duty to accommodate young people between the ages of 16 to 17 who are unable to live with their families or guardians. This young person is provided care as a “looked-after child” under section 20 of Children Act 1989, ensuring they receive support until the age of 25.

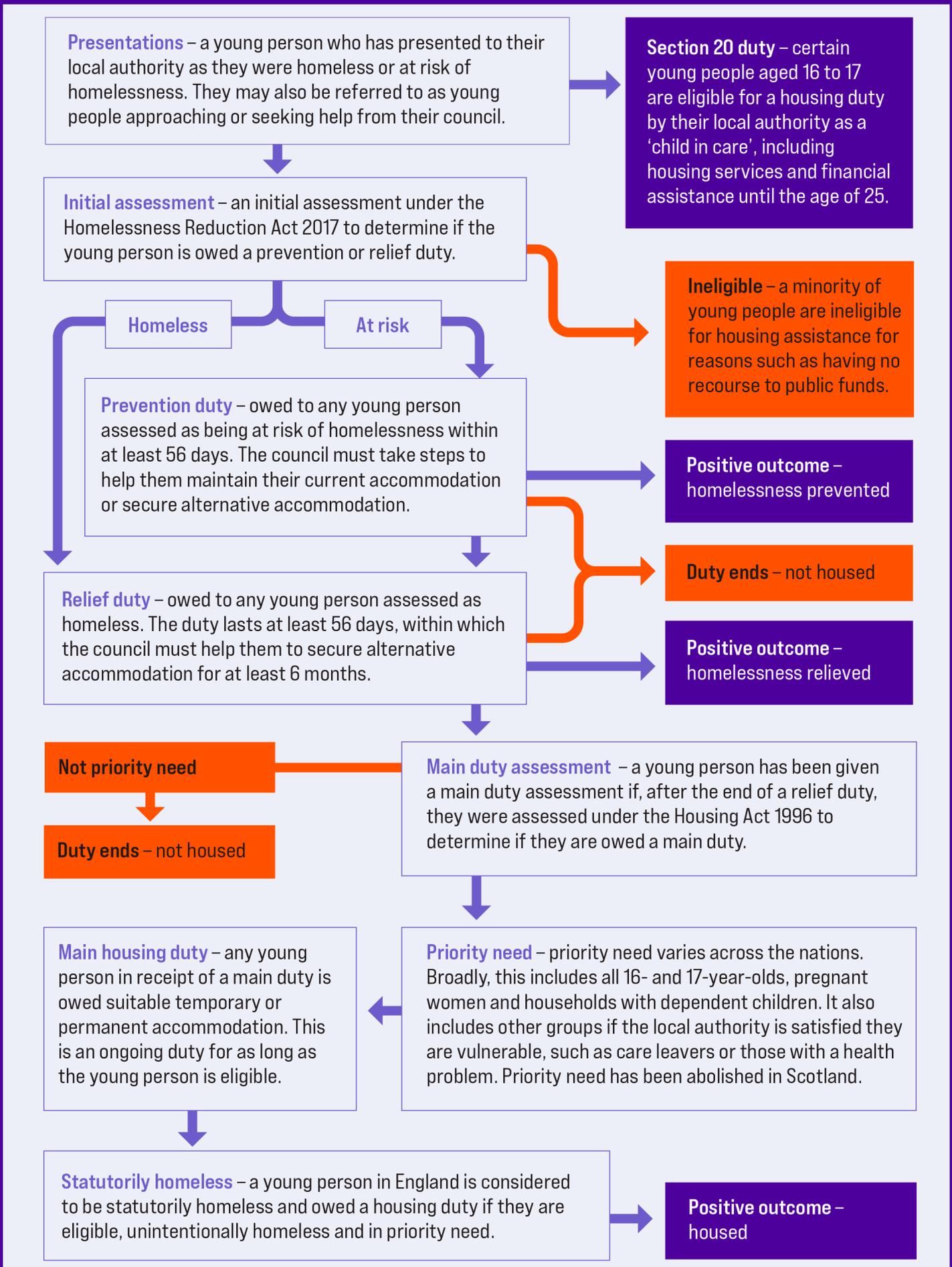
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# The possible journeys of a young person presenting to their local authority because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness



# Executive summary

No young person should experience homelessness, yet this research shows an increasing number in the UK do—often without the support necessary to help them out of vulnerable situations. Young people face distinct challenges, including limited independent resources and often strained relationships with family limiting emotional and financial support. Local authorities, which are responsible for the delivery of homelessness services, often face resource constraints which can result in limitations in support available to young people facing homelessness.

The Databank report maps the extent of youth homelessness in the UK, drawing on a mixed methods approach. This includes publicly available data and information obtained through Freedom of Information requests to national governments and local authorities, alongside data released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Qualitative evidence, including focus groups with housing and homelessness services providers, is used to contextualise and interpret the findings. Dedicated chapters on domestic abuse, LGBTQ+ young people and refugees highlight the diverse and intersecting experiences of youth homelessness to create the most comprehensive overview of youth homelessness available in the UK.

This year's research found that in the UK, between April 2024 and March 2025 123,934 young people faced homelessness, a 6 percent increase from last year's figures. In England, there were 107,585 young people who faced homelessness, which also reflects a 6 percent increase. However, it is important to note that not all of these young people who reached out for support received it. Only 65 percent of the young people in England who approached local authorities in this period received an assessment for homelessness support, which is the first step to accessing support through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA).

**The total number of young people facing homelessness across the UK in 2024-25 is 123,934 – a 6 percent rise on last year.**

**This means that 1 in every 60 young people in the UK were estimated to be facing homelessness in 2024-25.**

Other nations of the UK experienced increases or stagnation in youth homelessness numbers. 7,604 young people in Scotland (2% increase), 5,856 in Wales (8% increase), and 2,889 in Northern Ireland (no change) faced homelessness in the last financial year.

It is important to note that this figure only includes young people who contacted their local council or devolved administrations for support. Consequently, it may underrepresent the true scale of youth homelessness. Many young people experience hidden homelessness, such as sofa surfing, which is often not captured in these statistics. In addition to this, stagnation or decreases may be a reflection of local authority resource restraints, which can result in gatekeeping practices.

The annually published Youth Homelessness Databank, yet again, highlights the urgent need for Westminster and the devolved administrations to publish disaggregated data on youth homelessness, including presentation and assessment outcomes, in order to understand the true scale of the issue across the UK. At present, the MHCLG does not publish data on the initial stages of homelessness applications by young people, including presentations and assessments, instead releasing information only for those accepted for prevention or relief duties. While Wales publish youth homelessness data, they do not publicly provide statistics on the presentations stage. In Northern Ireland, while presentations statistics are publicly available, access to youth presentations data requires a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

This research, largely collected via FOI requests, indicates that more than one third of young people who present to English local authorities as homeless or at risk of homelessness do not receive an assessment. As a result, 37,401 young people in England did not receive an assessment, or any further support possible through duties required by the HRA, despite reaching out to their local authorities for concerns of homelessness. These stark figures underscore the urgent need for this data to be routinely and transparently published, rather than accessed only via FOI requests.



## Introduction

Centrepoin't's Youth Homelessness Databank is and remains the most comprehensive dataset on the scale of youth homelessness, as there is no publicly available homelessness data for this age cohort in England. As the number of young people seeking housing assistance continues to climb every year, it is even more vital that statistics be published so that the sector and government allocate resources where youth homelessness hits the hardest.

At Centrepoin't, we collect data on young people aged 16 to 24 throughout the entirety of the HRA pathway, from presentations to main housing duty. It is a unique dataset collected across local authorities in England and devolved administrations. From this dataset, we are able to track the number of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness presenting for housing assistance to their local councils, and their progression to receiving (if applicable) prevention, relief, and/or main housing duty.

The Databank monitors the responsiveness of the HRA statutory homelessness system in meeting the needs of young people, and this year's figures show that statutory provisions are failing to protect many young people from

falling into homelessness. Between 2024 and 2025, assessment rates have decreased, with more than a third of young people not even assessed by their local councils for prevention or relief duty despite this being a statutory requirement under the HRA. In addition, this year marks the third consecutive year that youth homelessness has increased in the UK.

More must still be done to provide accessible housing services to young people amidst ever increasing cost-of-living, rising rates of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), and the ongoing housing affordability crisis. Addressing youth homelessness is a cost-effective way of preventing pathways into chronic adult homelessness, and with Databank figures, we aim to not only show the scale of youth homelessness but also aide policymakers and elected officials in addressing this problem in a targeted and systematic way.

Visit our website for further details on the data used in this report.

# Legislative and policy context

## England

In England the Housing Act 1996 sets out a main housing duty to provide permanent housing to those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Priority need broadly includes households with dependent child(ren), those who are pregnant, victim of domestic abuse, or other specific vulnerabilities (old age, mental illness, disability). Those approaching their local councils must also meet local connection requirements to benefit from housing support. This can be on the grounds of residence, employment or family association; young people leaving care (under the age of 25), victims of domestic abuse and members or veterans of the Armed Forces are exempt from this particular requirement.

Certain categories of young people—particularly those who are single and not formerly in care—may not be eligible for main duty but can be covered by prevention/relief duty. When a young person presents to their local authority as being homeless or risk of homelessness, local authorities have a statutory duty to provide up to 56 days of relief/prevention assistance to all who are determined to be homeless or at risk of homelessness. Prevention and relief duties were introduced by the HRA and were created to offer a broader range of housing support for all who seek assistance from their local authorities, as opposed to only those who meet the criteria for main housing duty.

The duties added under HRA make it especially vital that housing assessments are carried out for all young people who present as homeless or risk of homeless to their local councils, in order to access timely support. This is outlined in the Homelessness Code of Guidance, which states that “if there is reason to believe that [an individual] may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, the local authority must carry out an assessment to assess eligibility”. It is also worth noting that only those being assessed for housing duty and given a housing duty are counted in England’s statutory homelessness figures. However, as we will demonstrate, there are many young people who present as homeless to their local authorities but fail to get housing assessments, essentially slipping through the cracks of the statutory homelessness system.

Section 20 of the Children’s Act (1989) applies to young people aged 16 and 17 who present to their local authorities. This age group is eligible for a duty to be housed by their local authorities as a looked-after child and supported until they turn the age of 25. Young people may also be housed under section 17 of the Children’s Act, which entitles them to the adult housing pathway and therefore a lesser duty of care. For the purposes of the Databank, data for 16 and 17-year-olds pertains to young people who are owed duty under Section 17.

Data on statutory homelessness in England is published on an annual basis based on the financial year (April to March) by the MHCLG,<sup>1</sup> and covers the application, assessment and outcome stages of the HRA process. Presently, figures are only provided on the number of households given a prevention/relief for each local authority, excluding the number of households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness who approach their local councils (presentations data) for housing or prevention support. This is a significant data gap that Databank aims to fill.

## Scotland

Unlike the rest of the UK nations, Scotland abolished its priority need criterion in 2012 through the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, meaning that all individuals who are unintentionally homeless are entitled to permanent accommodation (main housing duty) from their local authority. Tests for local connection have been eased as well, meaning that households with residence in Scotland seeking homelessness support have the right to apply to any local authority in Scotland regardless of the local authority they have local connection with. Additionally, this past September, Scotland passed the Housing Act 2025, which established an “ask and act duty” that requires public bodies (e.g. health services, police, councils) to act to prevent a person’s homelessness up to six months before it occurs. As this year’s Databank only covers up to March 2025, the effect of this recent legislation is not reflected in this year’s report.

Data on youth homelessness is publicly available and published annually by the Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice within the Scottish government.<sup>2</sup> Data includes detailed information on the application, assessment and outcome stages of the statutory homeless system, including information on whether young people were intentionally/unintentionally homeless and whether they were priority need.

1 Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK

2 Homelessness in Scotland: youth homelessness

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, local authorities do not provide homelessness services; instead the responsible body is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The NIHE conducts assessments on people reaching out for homelessness support who, if eligible are then counted as ‘acceptances’ and issued duties, similar to that of the HRA. The NIHE has a legal duty to provide permanent and temporary accommodation to persons who are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homeless and in priority need. However, the body still retains a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to those not eligible for NIHE accommodation and often engages in additional prevention efforts. Young people in care or formerly in care between 16 and 21 have special housing provisions provided by social services.

The NIHE Department for Communities publishes biannual Homelessness Bulletins<sup>3</sup> (covering April to September, and October to March), offering detailed data on homelessness presentations, acceptances/outcomes, categorised by age range, gender, and local authority area.

## Wales

Welsh homelessness policies focus on a prevention-first approach governed by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and guided by its Ending Homelessness Outcomes Framework. When it was passed, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 marked a shift in Welsh homelessness legislation by prioritising prevention and relief efforts before imposing a full housing duty. Under this Act, all individuals presenting as homeless or risk of homelessness in 56 days to their local councils undergo an assessment to determine the appropriate prevention (duty to prevent homelessness) and/or relief support (duty to help secure accommodation) based on their specific circumstances. A full housing duty is subsequently owed 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 publishes annual (April to March) data on applications, assessments and outcomes categorized by age group and local authority.<sup>4</sup> The statistics encompass prevention and relief duties (sections 66 and 73 of the Housing Act 2014) and their respective outcomes, whether successful, unsuccessful leading to the next stage of support, or duty ended—as well as main duty outcomes.

3 Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin | Department for Communities

4 Statutory homelessness: Prevention and relief



# Methodology

Statutory homelessness systems and data vary nationally, as each nation has their own legislation defining and collecting data on homelessness. This not only affected our data collection procedure for gathering figures for youth homelessness, but it also changes the interpretability of each national figure. Depending on the nation, homelessness figures are either publicly published with an age breakdown, as is the case in Scotland and Wales, or we sent a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to determine the age breakdown of statutory homeless figures from government, in the cases of England and Northern Ireland.

## England

Currently, the MHCLG provides limited age-disaggregated statutory homelessness data at the local authority level, such as presentations or housing duty outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Without these statistics, we are unable to determine youth homelessness figures and the rate of successful outcomes for young people being offered housing support by their local authorities.

Data for England was collected through Freedom of Information requests submitted to 296 local authorities (excluding county councils). From these FOI requests, we asked local authorities for the number of young people who presented to them in the last year (April 2024 to March 2025) due to homelessness or risk of homelessness, the number of housing assessments offered to young people, as well as the outcomes for those who are assessed for relief/prevention duties and/or main duty, if applicable. This year, we had a response rate of 83 percent, or 246 local authorities who responded to our FOI request with full or partial data.<sup>6</sup>

### Treatment of missing and partial data

Data collected on England at the local authority level was at times incomplete or not provided at all, hence missing values were filled with estimates to provide a complete national picture.

We imputed missing values taking into account the median regional youth homelessness rate for a given local authority and the respective local authority's population of young people aged 16 to 24, according to the 2024 mid-year population estimate provided by the Office of National Statistics.

This is different from our approach last year, where missing values were filled by regional averages of youth homelessness

counts. The imputation methodology was changed this year for two reasons: 1) we used medians instead of mean values to avoid the influence of outlier values on our estimated data, and 2) to account for the youth population of the missing data's local authority. Methods were changed therefore to show an even more nuanced picture of youth homelessness in the various local authorities across England.<sup>7</sup>

## Scotland

Data on Scotland was taken from the annual Youth Homelessness in Scotland statistical release. For our purposes, data was collected from table 8, which provided figures on applications for housing assessment disaggregated by age and gender of the head of households.<sup>8</sup>

The Scottish government normally collects homelessness data by local authority on a quarterly basis, providing information across the application, assessment and outcome stages, and whether individuals are unintentionally/intentionally homeless and/or in priority need. The data is then publicly published on an annual basis by the Cabinet Secretary for Housing for the period of the financial year (April to March).

## Northern Ireland

A FOI request for the number of young people facing or at risk of homelessness between April 2024 and March 2025 was submitted to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The data collected by the NIHE includes information on the number of young person-headed households with main duty presentations and main duty acceptances (and therefore owed full housing duty), categorised by age range, gender, household type, and local authority. The age range provided is 16-25, which slightly limits the comparability of national results.

## Wales

Data on Wales is collected at the assessment stage, which represents the number of young person-headed households (16 to 24 year olds) that received prevention, relief, and/or main duty, by local authority between April 2024 to March 2025.<sup>9</sup> While this data does not represent presentations, it does provide information on households that received housing assessments, including those that were ineligible for main duty due to not being in priority need or experiencing intentional homelessness.

5 Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25 - GOV.UK

6 A detailed breakdown of response rates is located in the Technical Appendix.

7 Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics

8 Homelessness in Scotland: youth homelessness

9 Statutory homelessness: Prevention and relief

## Qualitative data

Several focus groups were conducted to understand the mechanisms behind trends we are seeing with youth homelessness on a national scale, which are detailed in the table below. In addition to focus groups, we have

also included a story from a young person who received services from Centrepoint, to provide more context on the experiences of refugees transitioning from Home Office accommodation (see “Nationality and Youth Homelessness”).

Focus group	Subgroup of young people	Insights provided
Centrepoint Helpline Advisors	Young people across England and Wales between the ages of 16 and 25, seeking housing support	The barriers that young people face as they seek initial help from local authorities and broader housing services
Two local authority representatives 1 x West Midlands 1 x London	Young people in these local authorities who reach out for housing assistance	The pressures local authorities are under, what trends they see in working with young people, and potential promising/best practices
LGBTQ+ service provider	Young people in London experiencing that identify in the LGBTQ+ community	The specific drivers of homelessness for young people in these specific subgroups and the unique barriers they face in getting housing assistance.
Service provider for young refugees and people seeking asylum	Young people who are refugees or seeking asylum in London experiencing homelessness or risk of homelessness, especially those between 18 and 24 years of age	
Domestic abuse service provider	Young people that are survivors of domestic abuse who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	
Representatives of housing charities in the devolved nations (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)	Young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (either between 18 and 24 or 18 and 25 in NI’s case)	Barriers to housing assessments and services that young people in devolved nations are experiencing—as Centrepoint does not offer housing services beyond England.





## Data quality

There are several limitations to our homelessness figures that are worth taking into consideration when comparing and interpreting the main findings of this year's Databank.

### Household and individual-level data

While data for England is represented at the individual-level, data for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is at the household-level. This means that even though most young person applicants are likely to be single individuals, there will be a certain percentage of young people represented in the count who are heads of multi-person households (e.g. couple, single person with dependents). For reference, in Northern Ireland, 80 percent of households that presented to local authorities in 2024-25 were single adults. Differences in the level of data does not adversely affect UK-level youth homelessness count figures, however it does affect the comparability of data between nations.

### Presentation and assessment data

Presentations data is the number of young people who approach their local authorities for housing support due to being homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is a particular aspect of our dataset for England that is not currently publicly available on the MHCLG website. Currently, the MHCLG publishes an age breakdown of those who receive prevention or relief duty, however this is only one part of the complete picture of youth homelessness, as there are a proportion of those who present as homeless to their councils who do not receive assessments for prevention or relief duty.

Last year's Databank findings from FOI requests to local councils revealed that about a third of young people in England were not receiving housing assessments, and as we explore in this year's report, assessment rates have lowered. This means that not only are over a third of young people not being assessed by their local authorities, but these young people are also not even being counted as part of official statutory homelessness statistics in England.

However, as there are different data collection methods and legislation in the devolved nations, data comparison is difficult. For this reason, Northern Ireland and England are the only nations for which we have available presentations data. Scotland's figures represent the number of households who were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness and Welsh data records the number of households who receive prevention, relief or main duty assistance, as well as those who are ineligible for main duty due to a lack of priority need or intentional homelessness.

### Hidden homelessness

Hidden homelessness is a frequent issue encountered in homelessness data collection, as certain groups are less likely to be enumerated by street/point in time counts or engage less in housing services and therefore are homeless but not counted in official statistics. Due to the nature of the UK's data collection of homelessness, Databank figures in turn do not reflect the full extent of youth homelessness figures. Notably, the Databank leaves out those who do not contact their local authorities for homelessness support, which is more likely to be those rough sleeping and sofa surfing.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, a UK evidence review by the Office for National Statistics found that certain groups such as young people, women, and ethnic minorities are more likely to experience hidden homelessness as they tend to rely more on natural support systems for housing assistance than seeking it out from the statutory homelessness system.<sup>11</sup> For young people specifically, this may be due to a lack of knowledge on their housing rights and support available to them, as well as the stigmatisation or fear of institutionalisation from local authority involvement.

As a result, our data is not able to pick up specific trends amongst different types of homelessness and is likely an underestimation of the true scale of youth homelessness in the UK.

<sup>10</sup> OECD Monitoring Framework to Measure Homelessness

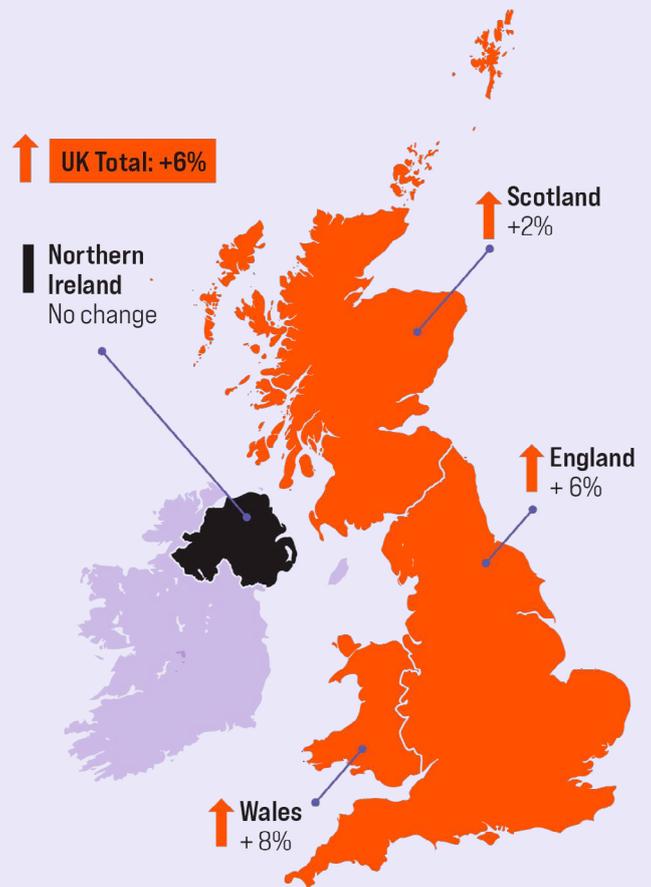
<sup>11</sup> "Hidden" homelessness in the UK: evidence review - Office for National Statistics

# Overall national figures

## National figures of youth homelessness and annual change

Nation	Number of young people homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2023/24	Number of young people homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2024/25	Yearly change (%)
England	101,184	107,585	6% increase
Scotland	7,434	7,604	2% increase
Wales	5,433	5,856	8% increase
Northern Ireland*	2,896	2,889	No change
United Kingdom	116,947	123,934	6% increase

\*Note: Northern Ireland figures represent young people aged 16 to 25, as opposed to 16 to 24 in the rest of the devolved nations



## United Kingdom

Overall figures from the UK show the total number of young people between the ages of 16 to 24 experiencing homeless or at risk of homelessness between April 2024 to March 2025 (FY 2024-25) was 123,934 with a 6,987 person or a 6 percent increase from last year's Databank.

This equates to about 1 young person every 4 minutes who experienced homelessness or risk of homelessness in the UK in FY 2024-25.

**This means that 1 in every 60 young people in the UK were estimated to be facing homelessness in 2024-25.**



# Discussion of findings in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland



In order to provide better context to the Databank figures in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, we conducted focus groups with service providers from each nation. This helps to highlight key trends observed in youth homelessness seen by those working on the frontline and any relevant policy context that is particularly relevant for this year's figures.

## Wales

In Wales, there were 5,856 young people-headed households with main applicants aged 16 to 24 who received prevention, relief or main duty assistance in the previous financial year, an increase of 8 percent or 423 young people from last year's Databank figures.<sup>12</sup> Welsh figures also include households who applied but were denied due to ineligibility, outlined under Regulation 6 of the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Despite their preventative approach, Welsh homelessness organisations we spoke with suggested the number of young people affected is not decreasing. Young people are consistently underrepresented in current figures due to hidden homelessness and quality of data collection. Most commonly, staff see young people at risk of homelessness when they are asked to leave by family, linked to overcrowding and relationship breakdowns.

**“Being asked to leave the family is obviously the main driver of youth homelessness as we see it in Wales. But then...it's the detail below that as to what has driven that.”**

**- Welsh homelessness service provider**

Care leavers as well as international students with no family within the UK are also commonly reported within their services. There is also an increasing number of LGBTQ+ young people, as well as those with neurodiverse conditions or disabilities, and those from refugee or migrant backgrounds. Although staff spoke of a more progressive

policy context in Wales, there still remains a need for holistic prevention that includes support for young peoples' employment, education and mental health needs.

**“But it just seems like the whole system is just all over the place... It doesn't really keep young people at the heart of it, and I think it comes back to all of that stuff around crisis and only being eligible for support when you're in crisis.”**

**- Welsh homelessness service provider**

Although the current Welsh Homelessness strategy committed to increasing social housing with a target of 20,000 new homes, staff spoke of the decline in affordable, accessible housing options for young people. As a result, they are seeing overspend on temporary accommodation, and increased levels of gatekeeping of young people from local councils.



Staff encouraged a preventative approach which works more holistically across housing, health and education sectors to reach young people before they are in crisis. This includes interventions at an earlier age through school based programmed such as Upstream.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Data from Wales was amended from the previous Databank to exclude households not eligible for prevention/relief duty.

<sup>13</sup> Centrepoint Upstream Interim Report 2025.pdf

## Scotland

In FY 2024-25, there were 7,604 households headed by young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, who applied to their local authorities for housing assessment in Scotland. This is an increase of 2 percent from last year's Databank figure of 7,434.<sup>14</sup>

To contextualise these figures, a focus group was held with a Scotland-based homelessness charity. The discussion suggested that youth homelessness is likely to be under-reported in official statistics due to hidden homelessness, as well as noting similar drivers of homelessness as England, primarily family breakdown.

**“We know there’s massive underreporting in the official stats; we know hidden homelessness is much more prevalent amongst young people”**

**- Scottish homelessness charity**

The focus group with a frontliner worker suggests that, as is the case in England, it seems the lead cause is also family breakdown.

**“We still hear regularly young people being asked to leave because the family feel that they can’t afford to keep them, so they can’t afford to feed them. They can’t afford to look after them, and that just exacerbates a lot of the sort of arguments and disagreements that can fuel family breakdowns”**

**- Scottish homelessness charity**

## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, a total of 2,889 households headed by young people aged 16 to 25 presented to their local authorities as homeless or at risk of homelessness in the last financial year, a figure which has remained largely constant since last year's figure of 2,896.

Of those who presented to their local authorities, the data showed that 1,745 of young person-headed households were accepted, representing a national acceptance rate of 60 percent.

To supplement these findings, a focus group was conducted with a Northern Ireland-based youth homelessness charity. This discussion provided qualitative insight into barriers to accessing support, the causes of youth homelessness, levels of demand for services, and the experiences of different groups of young people.

In Northern Ireland, youth homelessness must be understood within a complex political and social context following the Troubles. Focus group findings highlighted how the

trauma continues to affect young people and their families, contributing to mental health challenges, family breakdown and housing instability. Participants described how these pressures, alongside limited funding for support services and high demand for housing, push young people into forms of hidden homelessness such as sofa-surfing or staying in unsafe or overcrowded homes.

**“Northern Ireland has been a victim of Troubles and with that comes an increased complex trauma. We see high levels of young people experiencing childhood adversity [...] Their trauma is embedded in homelessness. Their risk is higher [...] even though some of these young people have never lived through the Troubles or their parents maybe haven’t lived through the Troubles, it’s definitely kind of entrenched in them.”**

**- Northern Ireland-based youth homelessness charity**

Young people in Northern Ireland also face a severe shortage of affordable housing, with high demand for both the social and private rented sectors. This leaves many young people with limited housing options and extended periods of insecurity.

**“In Northern Ireland, there is a severe shortage. I’m going to say we’re past the crisis. We’re now in a terrible situation with affordable housing and that includes social housing, private rented, any sort of housing.”**

**- Northern Ireland-based youth homelessness charity**

As in England, focus group participants in Northern Ireland highlighted experiences of gatekeeping, with young people facing obstacles to accessing homelessness support despite presenting with clear housing need.

**“They [YP] may not meet the criteria for statutory homelessness because they haven’t done this or they haven’t done that [...] [NIHE ask YP to] prove experiences more, when I first started out I could have done a letter, whereas now you’re looking at, you know, police records, when did you report it? How many times did you report it? How many times have you gone to hospital? And sometimes, as we know, people just don’t so it can be incredibly difficult for young people to access support they need or are entitled to.”**

**- Northern Ireland-based youth homelessness charity**

<sup>14</sup> Scotland began in 2025 to publish separate data on youth homelessness that was previously only published in the Equalities tables. As a result of this new statistical release, data was amended from last year's Scottish youth homelessness figures in the Databank.

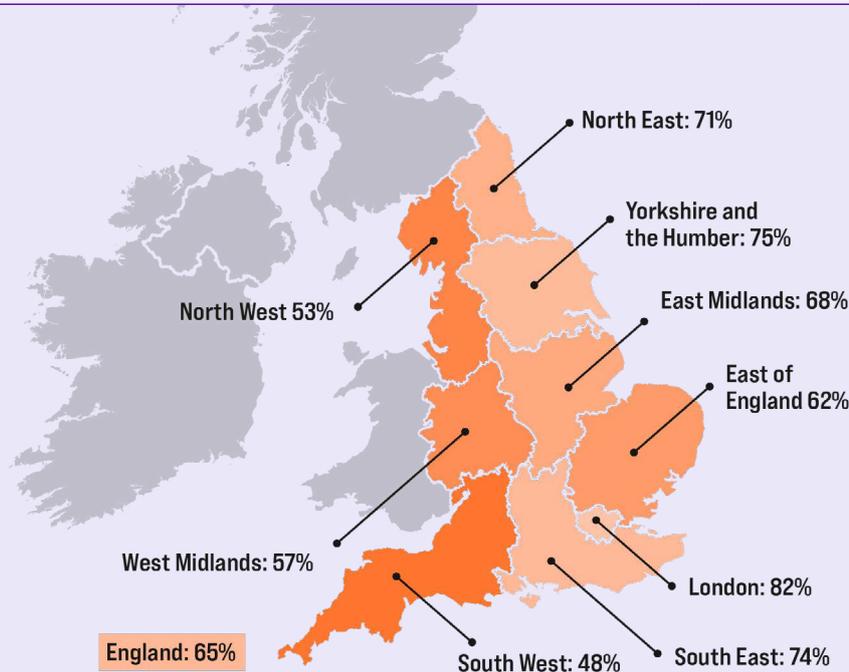
# England findings: regional breakdown

In England, approximately 107,585 young people experienced homelessness or risk of homelessness in FY 2024-25, representing a 6 percent annual jump from last year's Databank. There has been an annual decline in the national assessment rate whereby only 65 percent of young people are being assessed for housing duty by their local councils, with roughly 35 percent of young people not receiving housing assessment (including those who might be otherwise eligible for support) and therefore for which we have no data of documented support from their local authorities.

Certain regions have particularly low assessment rates, such as the South West, where less than half (48%) of young people who present as being homeless or risk of homelessness are assessed by their local councils. Other regions, such as the North West and West Midlands only assess about half of young people, with the North West having the highest rate of youth homelessness in England (23 of every 1,000 young person) and the greatest increase in youth homelessness in the past year (35%). Disparities between these regions and others such as London and Yorkshire point to a need for more targeted approach to improve housing service accessibility and availability for young people.

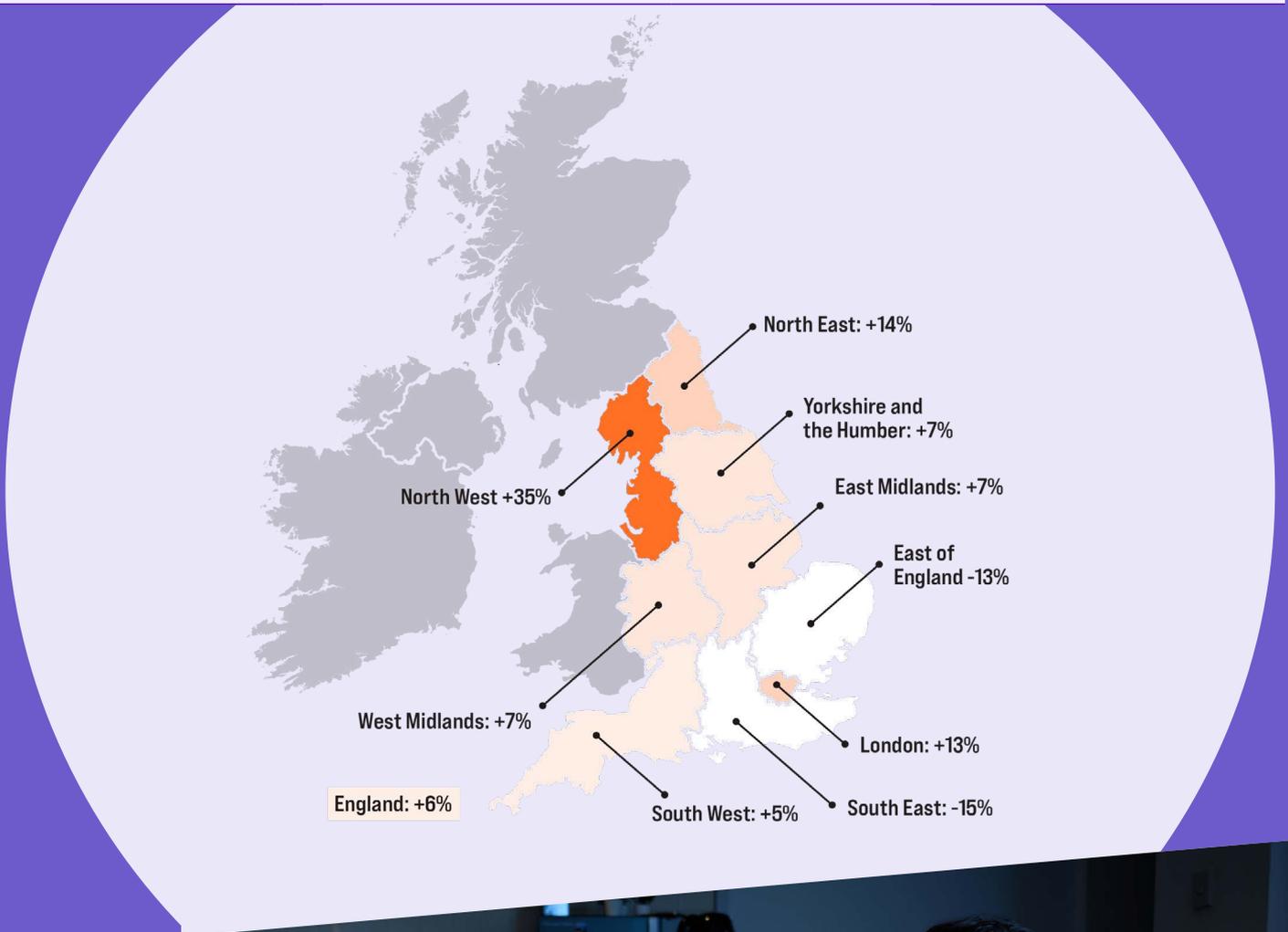
## Youth homelessness figures and assessment rates in England

Region	Number of young people who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness (2024/25)	Number of young people assessed for homelessness assistance (2024/25)	Assessment Rate [%]	Number of young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness per 1,000 young people
East Midlands	8,988	6,109	68	16
East of England	10,520	6,529	62	17
London	17,000	13,972	82	16
North East	4,588	3,258	71	15
North West	19,587	10,378	53	23
South East	12,782	9,434	74	13
South West	12,890	6,247	48	21
West Midlands	12,899	7,316	57	19
Yorkshire and The Humber	8,331	6,941	83	13
<b>England</b>	<b>107,585</b>	<b>70,184</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>17</b>



## Annual change in youth homelessness presentations in England

Region	Number of young people who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness 2023/24	Number of young people who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness 2024/25	Yearly Change (%)
East Midlands	8,366	8,988	7
East of England	12,158	10,520	-13
London	15,041	17,000	13
North East	4,033	4,588	14
North West	14,471	19,587	35
South East	15,047	12,782	-15
South West	12,259	12,890	5
West Midlands	12,058	12,899	7
Yorkshire and The Humber	7,751	8,331	7
<b>England</b>	<b>101,184</b>	<b>107,585</b>	<b>6</b>



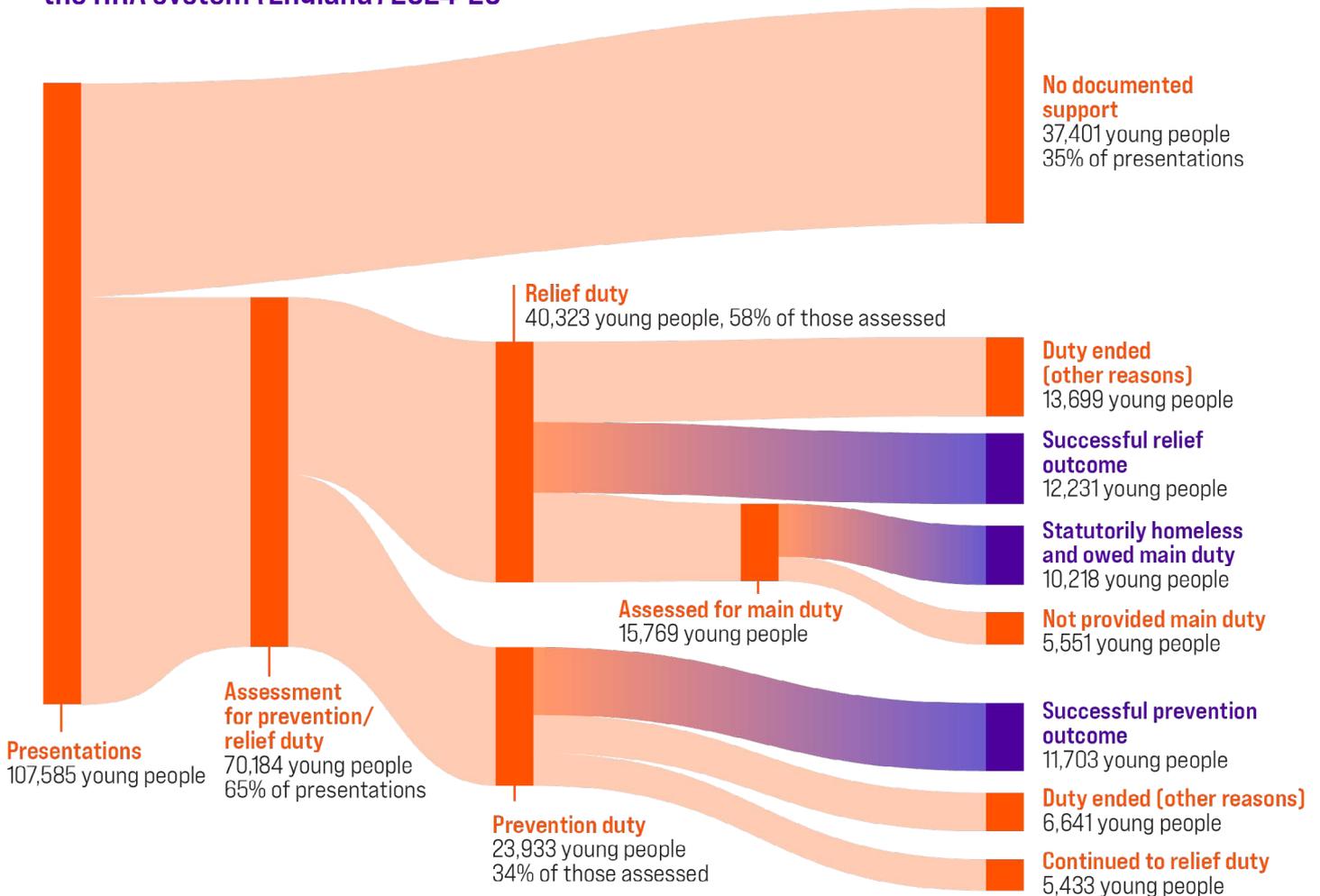
# England findings: flows through the HRA system

The following chart shows the various pathways young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness take when entering the HRA pathway system in England, with about 35 percent of young people receiving no documented support after presenting as homeless or at risk of homeless to their local councils. Of those young people not receiving documented support, some of may be ineligible due to nationality and others may be eligible for housing assessment but are turned away due to barriers like gatekeeping. In addition, those not receiving any documented support despite presenting as homeless are not being counted as part of statutory homeless statistics, which means that statutory homelessness statistics published on young people in England do not accurately capture the full national extent of young people experiencing homelessness or risk of homelessness.

Amongst those young people who were assessed for housing assessment, about 58 percent (40,323) were owed relief duty and 34 percent (23,933) were owed prevention duty. Of those who received a prevention or relief duty, 37 percent of young people ended their duties with accommodation secured. The rest of young people receiving either of these duties either ended their duty due to other reasons (32%), or went on to receive other housing duties following unsuccessful outcomes.

Following unsuccessful prevention and/or relief duty, 25 percent (15,769 young people) received a final assessment for main housing duty. Of those young people who received this final main duty assessment, about 65 percent (10,218 young people) were offered a main housing duty, with the rest of the 5,551 young people (35%) likely ineligible due to not meeting the criteria for priority need or being intentionally homeless.

## Pathways of young people through the HRA system (England) 2024-25



\*Assessment—there is a slightly greater number of young people assessed than those granted Prevention/Relief duties, due to a portion of cases being assessed for main duty (pathway not covered by our FOI responses)

\*Owed a relief duty—a number of local authorities did not disaggregate data for those who received relief duty after assessment or as an outcome to prevention duty. Therefore, this figure represents the combination of both pathways to relief duties to account for this data reporting issue.



# Assessment rates in the HRA system

This year's 65 percent assessment rate means that there are over a third of young people (35%) who are not being assessed for a housing duty despite presenting to their local authorities as being homeless or at risk of homelessness. This figure is largely consistent with last year's assessment rate of 67 percent, demonstrating the absence of effective response to combat this lack of access to homelessness services.

## The practice of gatekeeping

The phenomenon has been discussed in Centrepoint's report on Local Authority Gatekeeping<sup>15</sup>, which found that roughly 1 in 10 calls to Centrepoint's Helpline between July 2024-25 involved gatekeeping by local authorities. There are likely a proportion of those not assessed who do not meet the eligibility criteria for assessment due to nationality, however, focus groups with the Helpline show that housing assessments are becoming increasingly challenging to access even for eligible young people.

The leading types of gatekeeping reported by Helpline callers between July 2024 and 2025 included being refused assessment due to not being seen as priority need (31%) and not being able to make initial/follow-up contact with their local councils (34%). The first form is unlawful under the HRA, as any person who presents as homeless or at risk of homelessness (in the next 56 days) is entitled to an assessment, regardless of priority need. Local authorities have also been shown to limit service opening hours and staff capacity amidst a growing number of young people presenting for homelessness support from councils. Helpline staff also highlighted how councils are requiring increasingly higher burdens of proof to administer assessments even if there is reason to believe that a young person may be homeless.

**“The amount [local councils] are requesting before an assessment can be booked is getting more and more and there is just refusal to engage [with youth] before that is all done.”**

– Centrepoint Helpline staff member

Furthermore, Helpline staff highlighted how young people can be asked to provide proof of unintentional homelessness and/or priority need which can be hard to obtain in cases of family breakdown and abuse. In certain cases, young people fleeing or being forced to leave home are asked to provide eviction letters from their parents in order to even receive a housing assessment.

**“You know, parents have said you're not coming back home [over text], they can probably show that to the Council as evidence. But yeah, a lot of the time the Council would take a very blanket approach and be like no, we'll need to speak with them or we need an eviction letter from the mum or dad.”**

– Centrepoint Helpline staff member

In terms of communication with councils, long waiting times either at initial contact or receiving follow-up was a commonly observed theme—practices which can be barriers to receiving timely support for young people in crisis. For those sleeping rough, this can pose further challenges, especially in local authorities where the only offered mode of communication is online support. Recently, Helpline staff have noticed that some council housing services have shifted to outsourcing assessments to external companies, which has added to waiting times to be assessed for priority need.

**“I've had it a few times where I've asked when are you expected to make that decision around priority need, and been told it's with this company and they'll get back to us in seven working days, and I find that alarming.”**

– Centrepoint Helpline staff member

## Local authority capacity

Assessment rates are declining amidst a context of rising overall homelessness since the end of evictions moratoriums and renters' relief measures from the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from all-ages MHCLG data shows an increase of 21 percent in prevention or relief duties being offered between Q1 2021 and Q3 2024.

Local authority representatives we spoke with pointed to prevention being the missing piece.

**“While [certain prevention services] have been helpful, it's pretty much the same story as nationwide. There's a lack of financial resource and investment into those tertiary or pre-emptive support options before there's a problem.”**

– Local council housing services representative

This is corroborated by evidence of local councils using their Homelessness Prevention Grants (HPG) on temporary accommodation for households awaiting main duty support as opposed to services for those threatened by homelessness. In FY 2023-24, local councils used an average of 49 percent of their prevention grants on temporary accommodation, with regions like South West (45%), South East (48%), and

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London (60%) spending particularly high amounts.<sup>16</sup> There has been the introduction of partially ring-fenced HPG this year, however given that only 49 percent of funding is ring-fenced, questions remain of whether this will change the actual usage of prevention funds.

Local authorities that we spoke to pointed to successful best practices when working collaboratively with non-statutory homeless services. One service provider we spoke to mentioned how the Duty to Refer pathway can be employed even when young people seek help from external partners, which enables public bodies and services providers to refer to housing services directly to local authorities. This duty effectively creates another pathway to assessment where young people can access external, tailored support while still being referred for statutory homelessness duties.

## Social housing roadblocks

Even after being approved for main duty, young people may face further roadblocks like long waiting times for social housing. Those approved for main duty wait for permanent housing in temporary accommodation (TA).

**In 2024 there were 11,750 young people aged 18-24 in England waiting in temporary accommodation, of which a third had been waiting over one year.<sup>17</sup>**

One housing manager pointed to the lack of available social housing stock as a reason for long TA waiting times.

**“We’ve got 10,000 households on the waiting list. We let about 800 properties a year. We get 150 new applications a week. So, the wait for social housing is ridiculous.”**

**– Housing manager from local authority**

This shortfall between the availability of council social housing stock and the number of main duty entitlements was further illustrated in our “Youth Homelessness and Move On 2023/24” report.<sup>18</sup> The report showed that nearly all English regions experienced a shortfall in 2023-24, with the South West reporting the largest allocation shortfall (9.9 percentage points), particularly in available one-bedroom housing. The South West was also found to have the lowest youth assessment rate (48%) in this year’s Databank, as well as having the second-highest youth homelessness rate in England.

## Private rented sector difficulties

Young people housed outside of the statutory route, are often faced with having to pay unaffordable rents in the private rented sector due in part to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) freeze. Although there was a temporary unfreezing of rates in 2024, LHA rates are not currently linked to inflation and are failing to keep up with rising private rented sector costs. This year, the LHA affordability gap was shown to be 14 percent, and is expected to rise to a record of 17 percent next year.<sup>19</sup>

LHA freezes limit options for young people in the private rented sector, effectively eliminating housing choice. One local authority representative noted that even when providing housing advice, there are few options available for young people not in priority need and renting in the private market.

**“I think it’s more about what the government provides in terms of their Local Housing Allowance rate versus what a young person wants, so that can be difficult to provide a service sometimes if we can’t provide what [young people] are looking for.”**

**– Housing manager, local authority representative**

There are many systemic barriers at play affecting young people’s access to housing support. Gatekeeping at the earlier stages of the HRA pathway is corroborated by evidence from Databank, however, there are also further challenges beyond the housing referral process that are important considerations to resolving youth homelessness too.



<sup>16</sup> Homelessness Prevention Grant 2025-26: technical note - GOV.UK

<sup>17</sup> Statutory homelessness ad hoc analyses - GOV.UK

<sup>18</sup> Summary Report: Youth homelessness and move on 2023/24

<sup>19</sup> Affordability gap between Local Housing Allowance and local rents set to reach record level next year • Resolution Foundation



## Funding shortfall analysis

WPI Economics was commissioned to provide an estimate of the funding needed to ensure all young people aged 16 to 24 years who present as homeless be assessed by their local councils. This year's analysis shows that a total of £325 million is required to provide assessments and subsequent housing duties to all young people who presented to their local authorities in FY 2024-25 but did not receive any housing assessment and support.

The number of unassessed cases increased this year; however, the shortfall estimate is less than last year's figure of £400 million<sup>20</sup> as there are far more many unassessed cases this year in local authorities where the costs of

housing duties (e.g., housing costs, rents, labour) are lower (e.g., North West) and a decrease in unassessed cases in higher-cost regions (e.g., London, South East). There were also fewer young people who received main duty this year—the most expensive duty—and more young people who were assessed as not being eligible for it, which was associated with a decrease in the shortfall figure as well. This year's analysis shows that there still remains a significant funding shortfall which requires a targeted, regional approach so that local authorities have the resources to determine eligibility and provide support to all young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

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20 No Young Person Left Out: Estimating the local authority funding needs to support young people experiencing homelessness

# Drivers of homelessness in England

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the primary causes for youth homelessness in the UK were the following as reported by MHCLG:<sup>21</sup>

- 1. Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (29,830, 51%)**
- 2. Domestic abuse (6,420, 11%)**
- 3. Evicted from supported housing (4,300, 7%)**
- 4. End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (3,950, 7%)**
- 5. Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support (3,570, 6%)**

The above list represents the lead causes of homelessness reported by households with young people main applicants when they were assessed by their local authorities for prevention/relief duty during the previous financial year. Family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate is by far the most common reason for youth homelessness in England—continuing a trend from previous years as the top driver of youth homelessness—however

it is worth acknowledging that the lead causes are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Reasons for homelessness reported by the MHCLG are mostly individual-level factors, but there exist many structural factors and system failures that also affect national homelessness trends. These broader drivers of homelessness may include family poverty, youth unemployment, availability and allocation of social housing stock, social protections for those leaving institutions (such as care leavers), discrimination, and refugee and asylum policy.



<sup>21</sup> Statutory homelessness ad hoc analyses - GOV.UK



# Family breakdown and youth homelessness

Our report 'Waiting for the Next Blow-up: Family Breakdown and Youth Homelessness' (2025), showed that while conflict happens in all families, it is far more likely to escalate in households that are already facing multiple challenges (such as mental health problems, financial stress, overcrowding risk, and domestic abuse).<sup>22</sup> Centrepoint conducted a survey which found that young people experiencing homelessness were approximately three times less likely to feel emotionally supported by their parents or carers and half as likely to feel like they could be at home all the time compared to the general youth population.<sup>23</sup> Although the prevention of family breakdown is a proven effective measure against youth homelessness, the report found that only one in four young people with experience of homelessness ever received support related to family conflict.

Family breakdown as a driver of homelessness is observed by frontline services as well, who have noted how they are seeing more cases in tandem with the cost-of-living crisis increasing rates of family poverty and NEET amongst young people. In Centrepoint's research on family breakdown, money was the second most frequently cited topic of argument between young people experiencing homelessness and their carer(s), which was highlighted by a housing manager in a local authority interviewed as part of this research.

**“You’ve got parents with kids who are struggling to move out because of the expense of doing so and [subsequent] frustrations and family breakdowns.”**

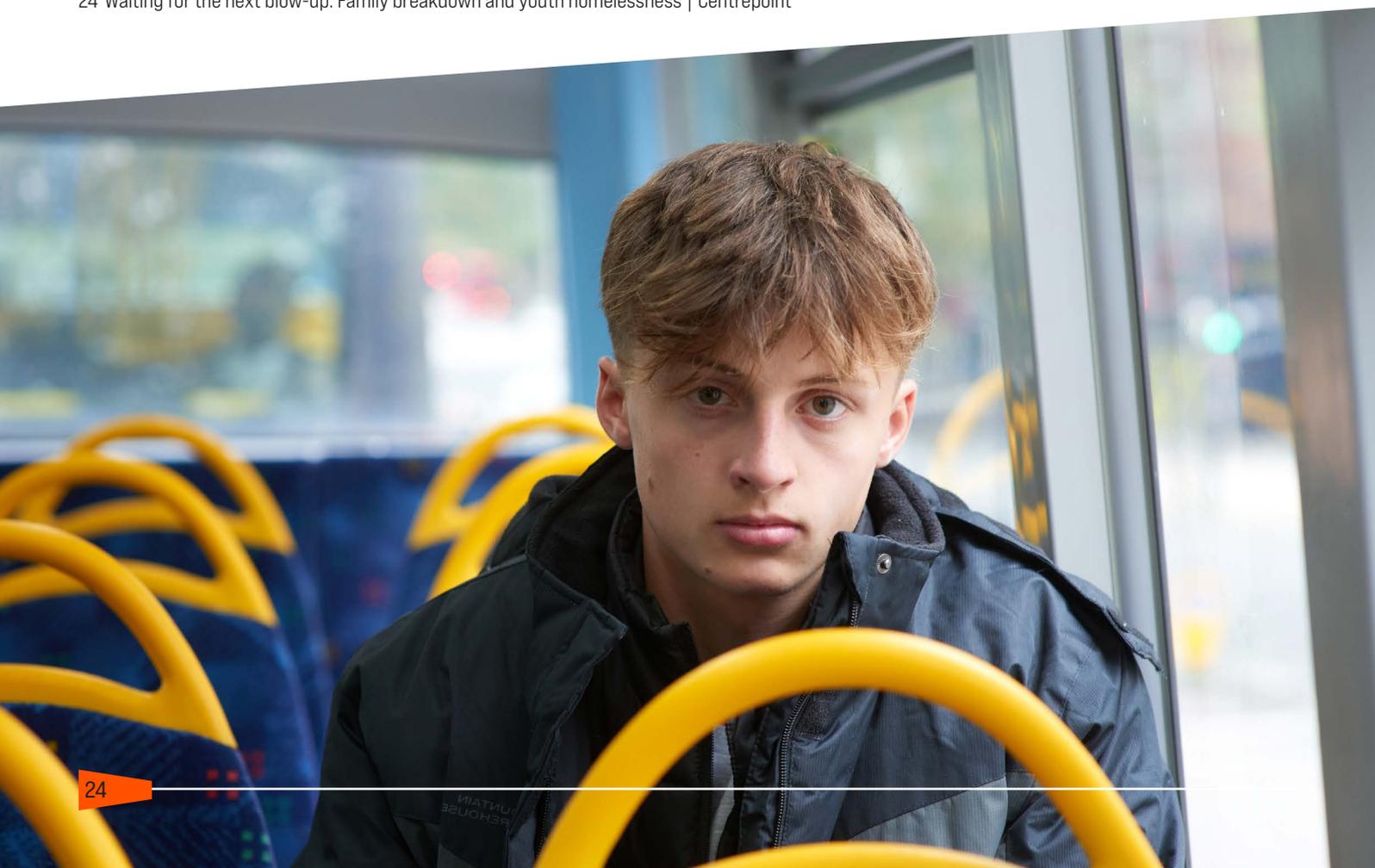
**– Housing manager, local authority**

Family breakdown can happen as a result of other drivers too, such as mental health, neurodiversity, family composition (e.g., single parent household, foster care), and privacy (e.g., having one's own bedroom). Certain groups of young people are more likely to experience family breakdown as well. For example, arguments with carer(s) around gender identity and sexual orientation are twice as likely to occur for homeless young people than the general young people population.<sup>24</sup>

22 Waiting for the next blow-up: Family breakdown and youth homelessness | Centrepoint

23 Waiting for the next blow-up: Family breakdown and youth homelessness | Centrepoint

24 Waiting for the next blow-up: Family breakdown and youth homelessness | Centrepoint



# LGBTQ+ young people and family breakdown

LGBTQ+ young people can be particularly vulnerable to homelessness, and discriminatory treatment. For many, the pathway into homelessness begins when their sexual orientation or gender identity becomes known at home, leading to conflict, abuse, or exclusion. Others encounter instability within care settings, education, or community environments that fail to provide understanding and support. Young people who identify as LGBTQ+ and/or neurodiverse were more likely to report frequent arguments with their parent(s)/carer(s) and reported higher rates of abuse.<sup>25</sup> Our internal data shows that 6% of young people using Centrepoin services self-reported to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community. This is an over-representation from the general population, with the ONS census 2021 reporting around 3% of people reporting to be LGBTQ+.\* 2% of young people in our services self-reported to be transgender.

Through focus groups with the Centrepoin Helpline team, specialist LGBTQ+ organisations, and a young person from the LGBTQ+ community with a history of homelessness, we were able to investigate the particular nature of family breakdown for LGBTQ+ young people.

**'I've had an increase in LGBTQ+ [...] One [case] was just leaving university and one was a flatmate with abuse. The latter thought it was because they were non-binary and autistic and thought it was like a hate crime.'**

**– Centrepoin's Helpline team**

For many LGBTQ+ young people, family rejection is one of the most immediate and severe drivers of homelessness. For many LGBTQ+ young people, family rejection is one of the most immediate and severe drivers of homelessness. Coming out, or simply being perceived as LGBTQ+, can result in conflict, verbal or physical abuse, and in some cases, being forced into homelessness.

**'I pretty much got kicked out of my mom's place and I was homeless and staying at my aunt's spare room. They [councils] don't really take it seriously enough until you're not, you know, have nowhere to go.'**

**– Ari, they/them, North of England**

Focus groups with a specialist organisation corroborated this, as did Centrepoin's Helpline team who report that young LGBTQ+ people were especially susceptible to family and friendship breakdown as a cause of homelessness.

Focus groups with a specialist organisation corroborated this, as did Centrepoin's Helpline team who report that young LGBTQ+ people were especially susceptible to family and friendship breakdown as a cause of homelessness.

**'When people present to us, they've got like a list of the most common types of housing situation they are prior to doing the referral. Living with family is the biggest one at 28% of our referrals'**

**– LGBTQ+ specialist charity**

LGBTQ+ young people face additional barriers to accessing timely and trauma-informed homelessness support, notably when being asked to present evidence of homelessness by local authorities. Although there is a statutory expectation that authorities provide a housing assessment to all those they have "reason to believe" may be homeless, in reality this is not a universal practice. Many young people are left to provide evidence of evictions, including in situations of family breakdown or abuse, and where it may be dangerous to do so.

**'There's a lot of gatekeeping and needing to provide evidence like before the actual time frame of needing to provide evidence, whether that's like medical evidence or domestic abuse evidence, police evidence. Also a lot of times asking to speak with friends or family that they're living with or sofa surfing with or having to leave, even when that's a risk to the young people and a lot of times they'll just contact parents of the young person when [...] they're actually not out to their parents and that's the reason they need to leave for safety'**

**– LGBTQ+ specialist charity**

**'I was probably one of those young people that kind of got stuck in this sort of system of just like really lost and not knowing what to do and people just telling me to go do this, go do that. It's easy, just go do it. And I'm just like, I don't know what you want me to do. I'm so very confused'**

**– Ari, they/them, North of England**

Overall, LGBTQ+ young people face a heightened risk of homelessness due to family rejection, abuse, and a lack of understanding following disclosure or perception of their identity. These risks are intensified by systemic barriers and gatekeeping within homelessness services, leaving many without timely, safe, and appropriate support.

<sup>25</sup> Waiting for the next big blow-up: Family breakdown and youth homelessness

\*Note: both census figures and internal Centrepoin data are likely to be underestimates due to limitations with self-reporting.

# Domestic abuse and youth homelessness

Domestic abuse is the second most frequently cited primary reason for youth homelessness, representing about 11% of young people receiving prevention/relief duty in FY 2024-25. Domestic abuse specifically refers to any incident or pattern of violent, controlling or coercive behaviour between those aged 16 or over, who are or have been personally connected to each other.<sup>26</sup> The abuse young people face at home can take many forms including physical, emotional, financial and “honour-based” violence.

Even when not recorded as the primary cause, a history of abuse can still contribute to a young person needing to leave their home. Our recent family breakdown research found that 50% of young people with experiences of homelessness reported prior emotional, physical or sexual abuse by a parent/carer whilst growing up.<sup>27</sup> The stigma attached to victimisation, and its close relationship with family breakdowns, means sometimes abuse may be a factor even if it is not recorded as the primary cause of homelessness.

## Policy context: Domestic Abuse Act 2021

In 2021, following the Domestic Abuse Act, domestic abuse experienced people were recognised as priority need for the first time, which made them entitled to broader housing support, such as main duty under the HRA (amending part seven of the Housing Act 1996). The Act introduced a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognised under 18s as primary victims for of abuse as well.

Additionally, the Act had direct impact on local authorities’ implementation of HRA, as it amended the Housing Act to remove the “vulnerability” test domestic abuse survivors previously had to meet to be provided support. Instead, it grants all domestic abuse survivors “priority need” eligibility, which in addition to main housing duty, also entitles them to emergency and interim accommodation prior to a completed housing assessment.<sup>28</sup> Local connection tests were also removed for those with histories of domestic abuse in July 2025.<sup>29</sup> These legislative changes have had a significant impact on how local authorities respond to people who have experienced domestic abuse.

**“Haven’t seen any legislation changes that have had a massive impact on us apart from the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021. So, we’ve seen it’s now our second biggest reason for homelessness.”**

**– Local authority representative**

While these changes should have theoretically expanded access to local housing services for young people who have experienced domestic abuse, 16% of Centrepoin’s Helpline recorded gatekeeping cases between August 2024 and July 2025 involved domestic abuse as a cause of homelessness. Our conversations with specialist domestic abuse services revealed the specific challenges young people who have experienced domestic abuse can face.

## Awareness of domestic abuse support

Domestic abuse does not look one specific way, so often it can take longer for young people to recognise when they have experienced abuse. Even when it is recognised, the fear of speaking out can make them reluctant to seek housing support and they may often not be aware of preventative initiatives available.

**“Young people don’t usually know what options are available to them. So, when they’re told...you can go into refuge, they believe that’s the only option that is available rather than actually knowing that other options are available, such as making a homelessness application.”**

**– Domestic abuse-facing housing services**

This perception that a refuge is the only housing available may lead young people to stay in unsafe home environments for longer and not contact local authorities for housing services. In reality, those experiencing domestic abuse can apply for housing duties even prior to leaving their accommodation, due to an amended definition of homelessness for people who have experienced domestic abuse.<sup>30</sup> As a result, statutory duties aim to prevent housing situations for those in abusive environments from reaching crisis points (e.g., rough sleeping, severe trauma). Making young people aware of this fact would avoid situations where they stay in abusive environments for longer—and contact local authorities before they are homeless.

26 Circular 003/2013: new government domestic violence and abuse definition - GOV.UK

27 Waiting for the next blow-up: Family breakdown and youth homelessness | Centrepoin

28 Vulnerable people given greater access to social housing - GOV.UK

29 Shelter Legal England - Priority need due to domestic abuse - Shelter England

30 Section 177, Housing Act 1996

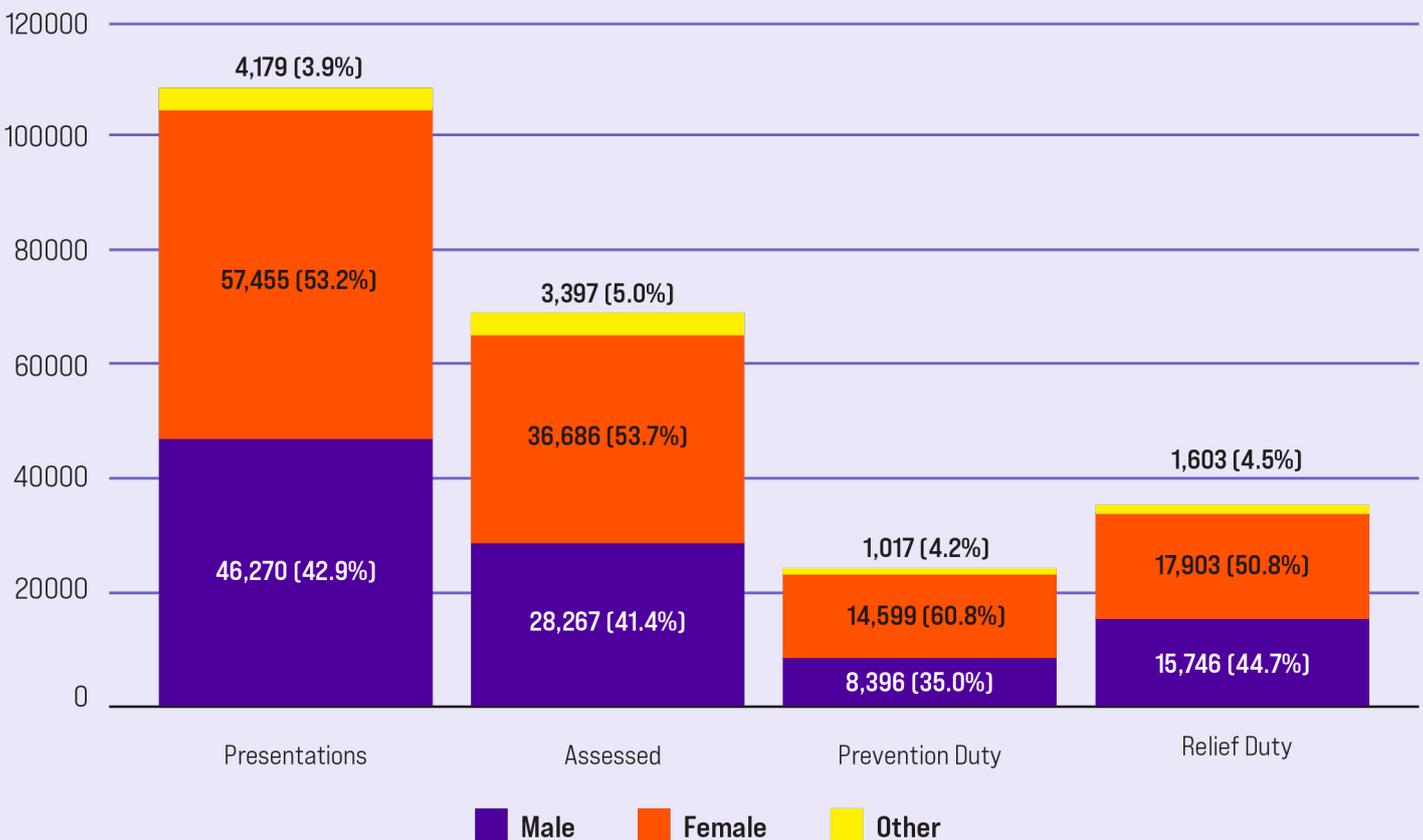
# Databank and gender

Breaking down Databank results by gender, women are more represented than men in most stages of the HRA pathway, especially those young people who receive prevention duty (see figure below). This finding corroborates with last year's Databank, and generally reflects that women are more likely to seek prevention support than men are. Relief duties show greater gender parity, which demonstrates the tendency for men to seek external help once they are experiencing homeless and less so when at risk.

Amongst the 36,686 women who received an initial housing assessment during FY 2024-25, 9,130 (or 25%) were assessed for main duty, and 7,221 were deemed as priority need (amongst other criteria) and received a main housing duty. Priority need is always given to those pregnant or with children, people who have experienced domestic abuse, and young people aged 18 to 20 who were in care when they were 16 or 17. It is also given to those that are more at risk, or vulnerable, if they become homeless due to illness, disability, or another reason. Therefore, Databank statistics do not provide specific picture of homelessness for people who have experienced domestic abuse, as they are grouped together with all priority need applicants.



## Young people by HRA stage and gender



## Access to timely support

For young people fleeing domestic abuse, access to safe and secure housing should be readily available. However, high evidence thresholds due to gatekeeping from local authorities mean young people are having to repeatedly prove their negative experiences, thereby making housing services inaccessible and risking secondary trauma.<sup>31</sup> This discourages young people from accessing support they are entitled to and contradicts the Homelessness Code of Guidance which states housing authorities should not have a blanket approach to proving domestic abuse, as the housing authority may be the first entity to which the individual may have confided in about their abuse.<sup>32</sup>

An interview with Helpline staff revealed young people who have experienced domestic abuse still face gatekeeping from local authorities, even when young people have disclosed their domestic abuse to housing staff.

**“There’s been cases where I’ve heard they’ve actually been told to return home and return to the abusive environments, which is really concerning.”**

– Centrepointhelpline staff member

The Homelessness Code of Guidance explicitly states the people who have experienced domestic abuse must not be asked to return to their property to collect evidence if it could put them in danger. It also requires housing authorities to avoid asking the people who have experienced domestic abuse unnecessary questions about their abuse when already documented by a domestic abuse service. Similarly, it states corroborative or police evidence is not required to provide housing support and authorities should be respectful of the victim’s own judgement of their risk.

**“I think that would be my main thing is...not to challenge a young person straight away on proving [domestic abuse] ... I think [they should] believe in what they say.”**

– Centrepointhelpline staff member

## Specific barriers for underrepresented groups

Young people who are from minority groups such as LGBTQ+ may experience abuse related to their sexuality or identity but can also face additional barriers accessing support. They may experience misunderstanding or misgendering from housing authorities, as well as delays to housing due to a gap in temporary and permanent options that are LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Similarly, those from migrant or refugee backgrounds face additional barriers due to the lack of available language translators, poor understanding of specific cultural forms of

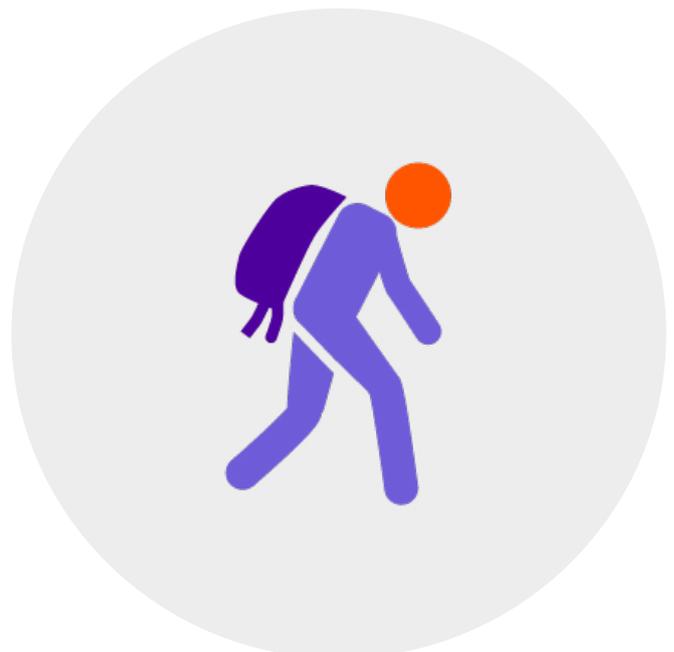
violence, and no perceived recourse to public funds. Often, they may not be aware of their eligibility for financial support such as the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession<sup>33</sup> which provides temporary access to public funds and temporary permission to stay whilst they apply for indefinite leave to remain. Frontline domestic abuse staff we spoke with encouraged greater training for housing officers’ guidance and awareness training to improve trauma-informed practices in working with these young people.

## Receiving suitable housing

Even when receiving priority need, safe and appropriate housing is not guaranteed. Young people who have experienced domestic abuse often have additional needs preferences concerning location, age, and/or gender of other occupants, which are not always respected when being placed in temporary accommodation. Although they should ideally be placed in specialist safe accommodation (refuge, sanctuary scheme), some are placed in temporary accommodation that can exacerbate trauma. Staff working on domestic abuse services noted that many survivors feel pressured to take the initial offer of accommodation due to the lengthy process to review council decisions and lack of other options.

**“I remember someone I was working with, and she was placed in temporary accommodation, which was basically a hotel accommodation, but she was a victim of sexual violence...she was just surrounded by males, which was really traumatising for her. And the housing officer just didn’t take anything seriously.”**

– Domestic abuse-facing housing services



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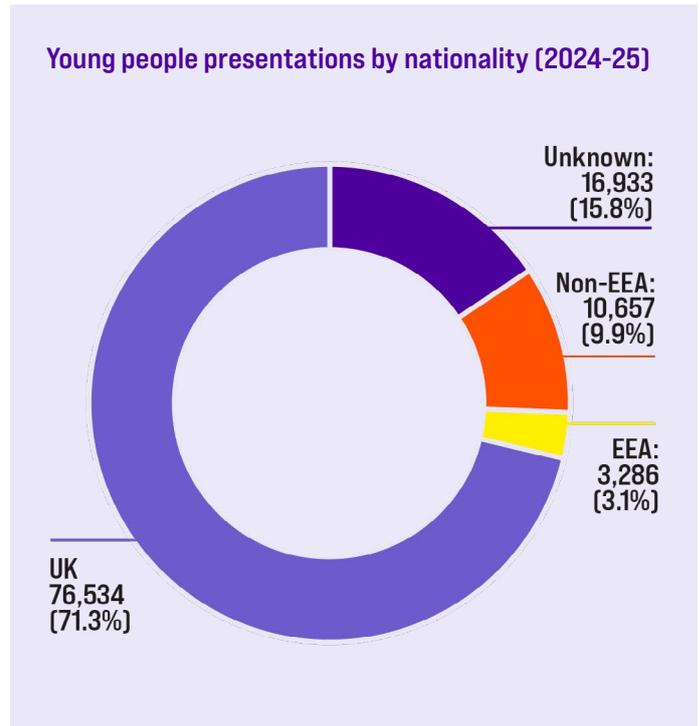
32 Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Chapter 21: Domestic abuse - Guidance - GOV.UK

33 Migrant victims of domestic abuse concession - GOV.UK



# Youth homelessness amongst refugees

This year, 6 percent or 3,570 of young people given prevention or relief duty were homeless due to a Home Office eviction, according to data from the MHCLG. However, the statistics for all those who present as homeless to their local councils paints an even starker picture. In this year's Databank, approximately 10 percent of young people who presented to their local authorities were non-EEA nationals (2.5 percent annual increase from previous Databank), the majority of whom we can assume to be refugees due to the prevalence of homelessness amongst this particular group.<sup>34</sup> Our data shows that other nationalities, such as UK citizens and EEA nationals, have both decreased in number during this period too. These statistics align with Centrepoint's own services too, where the share of refugee arrivals within services (excluding supported accommodation) rose by 3 percentage points from 6.5 to 9.5 percent between FY 2023-24 and 2024-25.



34 Homelessness, Refugees, and Resettlement - Centre for Homelessness Impact



## Refugee housing pathway

Refugees experience a unique pathway through housing services. While awaiting decision on refugee status, people seeking asylum receive accommodation from the Home Office until a decision on their asylum application is reached. While in the asylum system, people are not entitled to statutory homelessness assistance as there is a different system of support where people are provided with accommodation and subsistence from the Home Office to meet their basic needs if they are destitute. After obtaining refugee status, refugees are subject to a short move on period after which their Home Office accommodation and support payments are terminated.

The move-on period for most newly-recognised refugees is 28 days, within which refugees are expected to find alternative accommodation and income. However, since most people seeking asylum are not allowed to work and asylum support payments are not sufficient to be able to build savings to cover the cost of rental deposits, most newly-recognised refugees lack the adequate financial resources to “move-on” within four weeks. Furthermore, it is unlikely for refugees to gain alternative income within the 28-day move on period given there is a minimum five-week wait period to begin receiving Universal Credit payments, and they are unlikely to find work within such a short notice without an employment history in the UK. Even within HRA, it is acknowledged that 56-day period is needed to find

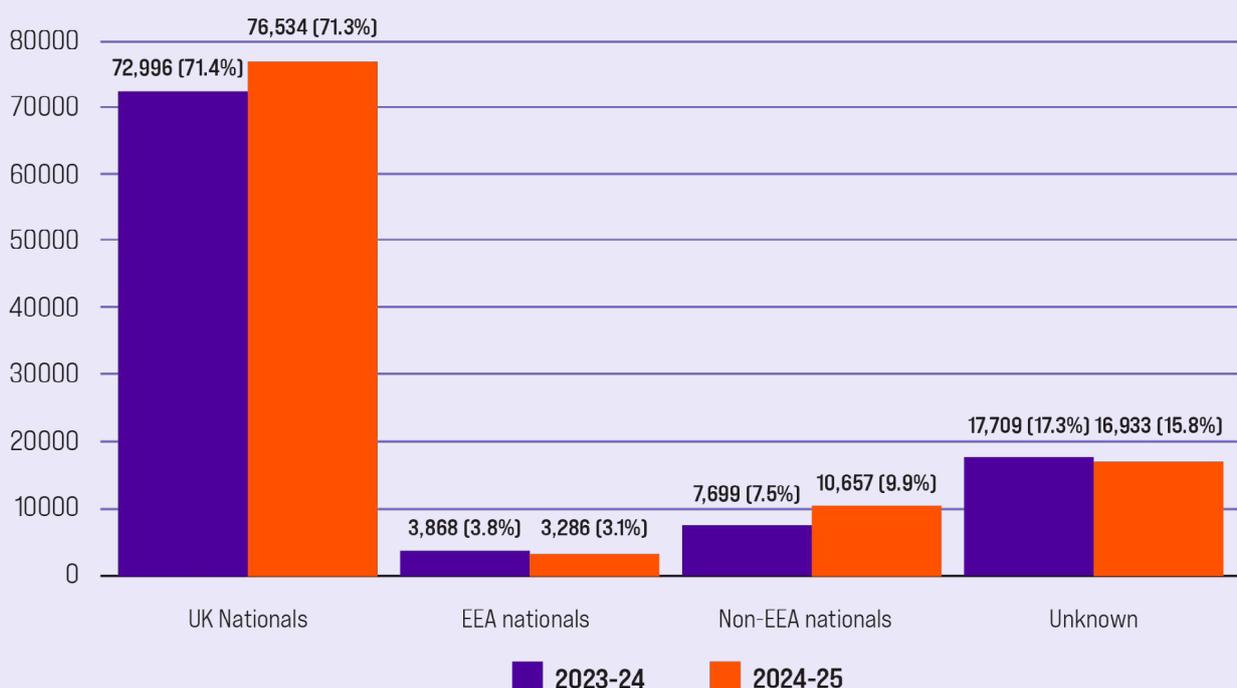
accommodation and prevent homelessness.<sup>35</sup> Inevitably, this situation leads to destitution and homelessness as the move-on period is not adequate to obtain both income and housing.

In December 2024, the Government announced a trial of a longer move-on period of 56 days, which helped ease pressures on homelessness and refugee charities, but this trial ended in August 2025. Currently, only refugees who are pregnant, families with children, older adults, and people with disabilities are continued to be given the 56 days. In December 2025, the Home Secretary made an interim agreement to extend move-on to 56 days for those at risk of homelessness until January 16, 2026. The Databank figures cover both time periods before the trial period when move-on was 28 days for all refugees (April to November) and for a portion of the 56-day trial period (December to March).

Unaccompanied children are most often given support by their local councils as looked-after children (Section 21 duty) and are therefore considered priority need once they turn 18. However, for young adult refugees who arrive after the age of 18 or not placed in local authority care, accessing statutory housing can become very challenging due to not being considered priority need. Databank figures include both housing pathways, however young people who were previously in care are likely to be represented in the portion of young people accepted into main housing duty as opposed to prevention and/or relief efforts.

35 Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Overview of the homelessness legislation - Guidance - GOV.UK

### Annual change in presentations of young people by nationality



## Harry's story: supported by Centrepoint

Harry, 21, arrived in the UK in early 2025 after fleeing Sudan. When he first arrived in the UK, he was living in a hotel where he was placed by the Home Office whilst his asylum claim was processed. He was quickly given status, however, shortly after this came through, he was made to leave his hotel forcing him to rough sleep.

**“I'm now living in the private sector but before I got my refugee status, I was in a hotel, and they evicted me.”**

**- Harry**

Unable to find anywhere to stay, he began staying overnight in nearby parks, something that can be hugely dangerous and put him at risk of harm. After a few weeks of moving between different bedding sites around the city, and trying

to make ends meet, Harry found out about and called the Centrepoint Helpline to explain his situation.

Harry was referred to one of Centrepoint's Rough Sleeper homes, where he was able to share his experiences with the support team and what he hoped for the future. Together, they were able to support him with ensuring that he had access to the medical care he needed, and he was able to buy a few new pieces of clothing, suitable for British weather.

Alongside this, they also helped him to enrol in college so that he can study ESOL (English for Speakers Of another Language) so that he could get the qualifications he needed to step into independence.

## Impact of the lack of adequate move-on period

We spoke with a refugee-facing service provider, who highlighted how there is often a unique mix of bottlenecks and challenges experienced by refugees. The majority arrive to their services once they have received a notice to vacate from their temporary asylum accommodation. They noted how the move-on period does not facilitate an adequate transition period for young people to get work, training, or benefits set up, even if they do everything they can to get ahead.

**“It takes 5-6 weeks to get set up for Universal Credit or longer for these young people. Because they often don't have skills, tools, languages ready to get going on that. And also, even if you weren't going on to benefits, which everyone is because you're not ready to instantly get a job and start working full time—you definitely don't have a deposit for housing.”**

**- London refugee service provider**

Refugees face additional barriers, such as language and digital tools, to accessing benefits, healthcare and entering the job market. Local authorities are legally obliged to provide interpreter services to ensure equal access to services<sup>36</sup>, however this is not always carried out in practice. Centrepoint's research on gatekeeping showed several instances where young people requiring language interpreters were not provided with one, thus hindering their access to and understanding of the support available to them.<sup>37</sup> Refugees may also face digital exclusion, which affects applications they make to benefits, healthcare access, and applying for jobs.

**“What we've seen is people aren't ready to go into work. They need ESOL, like they get plunked in hotels with nothing, like no psychological support, no appropriate food, no access to education.”**

**- London refugee service provider**

## Impact of dispersal policy

In order to ensure the responsibility of accommodating people seeking asylum is not concentrated in regions like London and the South East, the Home Office disperses people to other parts of the country. In FY 2024-25, the North West hosted the highest number of people seeking asylum supported by the Home Office<sup>38</sup>, with cities like Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester have long been significant dispersal locations. Since asylum accommodation is provided on a “no-choice” basis<sup>39</sup>, some refugees can be sent to areas far away from potential cultural and refugee support. Service providers noted that as a result of this policy, some newly-recognised refugees move away from Home Office accommodation in search of service-rich urban centres and therefore lose out on local council housing because they are no longer in the area where they have local connection. Refugees in this situation are more susceptible to rough sleeping, as there are limited options for them in private rented sector.

Stories like Henry's highlight the need for increased autonomy and housing choice, as well as support that goes beyond housing. Services must also consider the unique needs of refugees in order to successfully plan their transition, addressing the unique traumas they face in getting to and adjusting to the UK.

36 Equality Act 2010

37 Centrepoint Gatekeeping Report 2024-25

38 How many cases are in the UK asylum system? - GOV.UK

39 Allocation of asylum accommodation policy - GOV.UK

# Recommendations

- 1. Improve data availability and quality on youth homelessness.** Current statistical releases by the MHCLG do not provide data on the number of young people who present to their local authorities as homeless. In order to provide a complete picture of youth homelessness, MHCLG should provide presentations data broken down by age group. This would enable greater scrutiny of the implementation of the HRA and report on how youth assessment rates compare to the general population.
- 2. As more young people are presenting as homeless, the Government should undertake a formal review into youth homelessness assessment rates by councils in England,** examining their consistency, accuracy, and alignment of statutory interpretation with legal requirements as well as the operational, resource, and systemic barriers councils face in delivering the HRA in practice.
- 3. The commitment to develop a national Youth Homelessness Prevention Toolkit and dedicated chapter of the Homelessness Code of Guidance on young people** in the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness is very welcome. It is essential that these clarify what local authorities need to consider when young people present to their services and what constitutes a realistic burden of proof for this group. This chapter should be grounded in the lived experiences of young people and draw on the expertise of the youth homelessness sector.
- 4. The Government should provide sufficient funding to local authorities in England** to ensure that all young people who report to homelessness support services receive an assessment and support if required. The commitment in the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness to increase funding to local authorities and shift emphasis to prevention is welcome, but Government should also ensure there is no shortfall in funding allocations at a local level, so no young person is turned away because of councils' concerns about resources.
- 5. Increase the supply of social housing that is suitable for young people.** This should include a commitment to prioritising the development of one-bedroom social homes within its wider housing development planning. Family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate remains the leading cause of youth homelessness and young people very often approach their council for homelessness support as a single applicant, having lost any family support. It is vital that there are appropriate affordable housing options available for them.
- 6. Local authority housing staff should receive mandatory training on domestic abuse risk assessment.** The reality of young people who have experienced domestic abuse is not reflecting their priority need entitlements under the HRA. Training on risk assessment should be made mandatory to support staff and managers to ensure housing authorities adhere to legislation when dealing with people who have experienced domestic abuse and educating them on all forms of abuse.
- 7. The Government should permanently extend the move-on period for newly recognised refugees from 28 days to 56 days,** in line with the recent Home Office trial. The short time from notice to eviction does not give refugees sufficient time to secure alternative housing and does not align with the 56-day period for prevention duty in the HRA.



# Technical appendix

## Missing data and imputation

Following our FOI request, the overall response rate from the 296 local authorities contacted was 83 percent (246 local authorities). Broken down by each question, the response rates were the following (as a percentage of 296 local authorities):

Question	16-17 response rate (%)	18-24 response rate (%)
How many individuals presented themselves as homeless or at risk of homelessness, as main applicant?	78	79
How many individuals were assessed for prevention and/or relief duty under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996?	73	75
How many individuals were assessed for a statutory main housing duty under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996?	67	72
How many individuals ended prevention duty with accommodation secured?	65	72
How many individuals ended relief duty with accommodation secured?	65	73

### 1. Imputing presentations data

To fill missing values for presentations, we first calculated the rates of homelessness for each local authority that had provided data and then determined each region's median rate of homelessness. For a given missing value, we multiplied its relevant regional rate of homelessness by the local authority's young person population (16-17 or 18-24) using the ONS 2024 mid-year population estimate (the most recent at the time of analysis).<sup>40</sup>

### 2. Imputing subsequent questions

A similar method was followed for subsequent questions, where we calculated the rates for each local authority that did provide us with data (as a proportion of the number of presentations) and determined each question's regional median rate. Following that, we similarly multiplied each missing values' regional median rate by the number of presentations.

## Shortfall analysis

The shortfall analysis is a part of commissioned work from WPI Economics and was calculated using the same FOI responses used for Databank figures. Missing values were filled using the 2024-25 statutory homelessness figures from MHCLG<sup>41</sup> and ONS 2024 mid-year population estimates.

## Updated Welsh figures

Figures for Wales were updated to avoid double-counting households that were accepted for prevention/relief duty. This amendment was made to this year and the previous year's figures and reflects data provided by Stats Wales on the number of households provided homelessness assistance.<sup>42</sup>

40 Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics

41 Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25 - GOV.UK

42 Households for which assistance has been provided by outcome, age and gender





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