



MOVE ON: FOR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN 2024/25



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About this research

No young person should experience homelessness, yet Centrepoin’s most recent Youth Homelessness Databank revealed that over 107,000 young people faced homelessness in England in 2024/25¹. Ensuring that young people can move on from homelessness or housing insecurity into safe, stable, and affordable accommodation is a critical challenge for housing policy in England. At a pivotal stage in their lives, access to appropriate housing enables young people not only to avoid homelessness but also to build independence, pursue education or employment, and establish a secure foundation for the future. Yet, as this report shows, too many young people continue to face significant barriers when attempting to move on into suitable housing.

This report brings together comparative analysis drawing from the first iteration of this research published in 2025, alongside new analysis of the pathways young people take through the housing system by drawing on multiple data sources to better understand the availability, affordability, and suitability of accommodation available to them.

This research has been funded by Nationwide as part of their Fairer Futures strategy. Centrepoin would like to express gratitude to Nationwide for graciously funding this research to aid understanding of how move on for young people experiencing homelessness changes.

We are grateful to WPI Economics, who were commissioned by Centrepoin to undertake the analysis that underpins this report. A full description of the methodology used can be found in the technical appendix.

Executive summary

Amid ongoing pressures within England's housing system, many young people continue to face significant barriers to securing safe and stable accommodation. Examining these barriers is key to understanding why many struggle to move on from homelessness into stable housing. This report, funded by Nationwide, commissioned by Centrepoint, and based on research conducted by WPI Economics, presents an evidence-based analysis of move-on options and outcomes for young people in England in 2024/25.

This data-driven report marks the second year of a three-year research programme examining the accessibility and affordability of housing for young people who have experienced homelessness. As this report builds on the first year of the research programme, it includes comparative analysis to assess how outcomes have changed over time. By examining these trends, the report helps to track access to housing for young people, particularly as the Government moves forward with proposed reforms to the social and private rented housing sectors.

The analysis comes at a particularly important moment for homelessness policy. Recent government announcements, including the 2025 Budget and the publication of the National Plan to End Homelessness², signal renewed focus on tackling homelessness and improving housing outcomes. These developments create an opportunity to strengthen the systems that support young people experiencing homelessness and to ensure that policy reforms address the structural barriers that prevent many young people from securing stable housing. This sits alongside wider housing commitments, including the government's target to deliver 1.5 million homes and the £39bn Social and Affordable Homes Programme, which will be central to expanding the supply of affordable housing.



Key findings

Young people and social housing

- This year's analysis found that there were around 20,000 social housing allocations where the lead claimant was a person aged 16-24 in 2024/25.
- This represents 17% of total allocations and a slight decrease from the number seen in 2023/24.
- In 2023/24, a shortfall was reported between social housing allocations and the main duty entitlements. However, in 2024/25, this shortfall had closed, with 14% of main duties owed to young households, and over 17% of social housing allocations going to young households.
- Suitability should also be considered, alongside availability, when looking at social housing. We found that the most commonly given reason for difficulty securing a social tenancy among young people surveyed was limited availability of suitable housing, cited by nearly a third (31%) of respondents.
- There are approximately 130,000 young households on housing registers. If social housing was allocated at its current rate, and there were no new social housing applications from young households, it would take more than six years to clear existing housing registers.

Young people and the private rented sector

- We found that one third of young people in the private rental sector (PRS) reported discrimination by landlords or agents. Employment status (37%) and ethnic or racial background (35%) were reported as the main reasons for discrimination against prospective tenants.
- In England in 2024/25, there were 458,000 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). This is a 10% decrease in available HMO stock since 2019/20. Since 2023/24, there has been a 3% drop in HMO stock, largely driven by reductions in the south of England.
- Survey results broadly indicated that some young renters had difficulties with affordability in the PRS in 2024/25.

Young people and temporary accommodation

- In 2024/25, more young people were staying in temporary accommodation (TA) and for longer periods of time.
- In 2024/25, there were 12,390 young households in TA, up from 11,840 young households in TA in 2023/24.
- Nearly a quarter of young people (22%) reported having lived in the family or parental home prior to entering temporary accommodation.
- We estimate that 4,400 young households entered into relief duties from the private sector, while 2,700 young households entered into relief duties from the social rented sector.
- We found that the most common destination for young people leaving TA was the social rented sector (SRS), with 25% of young people moving into social housing, however, there were significant proportions of young people who moved into PRS, the family or parental home or supported accommodation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this year's research, Centrepoin believes that tackling pressures and barriers in the housing system and supporting young people to move on into stable accommodation will require action in the areas below.

- 1. Increase the availability of one-bedroom homes to improve access to suitable and affordable housing options for young people.**
- 2. Reduce barriers to accessing and sustaining social rent tenancies for young people, by ensuring that social housing is affordable and accessible.**
- 3. Limit time spent in unsupported temporary accommodation.**
- 4. Increase access to the private rented sector by abolishing the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) and resetting Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**
- 5. Expand Stepping Stone accommodation to support young people to transition into sustainable independent tenancies.**
- 6. Improve data availability and quality on youth homelessness.**

Introduction

Young people in England continue to face significant barriers to accessing housing that is secure, suitable and genuinely affordable. Following on from last year's report³, concerns remain about the availability of appropriate homes, long waits for social housing, and the overall suitability of options available to young people. Simultaneously, the private rented sector remains difficult to navigate, with high costs and experiences of discrimination limiting access, while changes in the supply of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) are further constraining options.

Alongside these pressures, increasing numbers of young people are spending time in temporary accommodation, often for extended periods and following a range of housing pathways, including the family home, the private rented sector and social housing. This reflects a system in which young people's housing journeys are complex and often unstable, spanning multiple tenures without delivering long-term security.

Taken together, these challenges point to a housing system that is not consistently meeting the needs of young people. This research is therefore intended to build on the Move On 2023/24 report⁴ to paint a picture of the barriers young people face to access social housing, the private rented sector and temporary accommodation, and to inform policy solutions that can improve access to safe, stable and appropriate housing.

This report forms the second year of Centrepoin't's three-year Move On research programme. It draws on a range of evidence, including national datasets, Freedom of Information requests, a survey of young renters, and insights from the Centrepoin't Youth Homelessness Databank⁵. The analysis presented has been undertaken by WPI Economics, with further detail on methodology provided in the technical appendix.

Glossary

Young person - the young people referred to in this report are aged 16-24

General needs social housing – social housing provided by local authorities or housing associations that comes with no specialised support or care.

Social rent – the most affordable type of rent, most associated with general needs social housing, defined by a formula that considers local incomes, amongst other key factors. Social rents are typically set at 50 percent market rate.

Affordable rent – a deflated rent, set at around 80 percent of market value, developed to increase the available stock of discounted rental housing products.

Temporary accommodation – provided by local authorities to people experiencing homelessness while a more permanent housing option is found. Temporary accommodation, such as a hostel, bed and breakfast (B&B) or room in shared accommodation, is typically provided to those who are homeless, eligible for assistance and/or in priority need.

Supported temporary accommodation - short-term housing provided with structured support to help individuals move towards independent living. Therefore, unsupported temporary accommodation, is short-term housing without the described support in place.

Universal Credit – payment to help people with living costs. Eligibility for Universal Credit is awarded to those on low incomes, who are out of work and/or cannot work.

Local Housing Allowance – used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. For those living in the private rented sector, Housing Benefit is provided as part of a Universal Credit award.

Shared Accommodation Rate – the lowest rate of Local Housing Allowance, given to recipients of Universal Credit who are under 35 and living in the private rented sector. Some people are eligible for exemptions to this rate, including those who have lived in homelessness hostels or refuges for over three months or care leavers, and should be provided a higher rate of Local Housing Allowance.

Main Housing Duty – often called the Main Duty, is provided to people who are experiencing homelessness, have a local connection and priority need status. This award provides recipients with greater priority for temporary accommodation.

Priority need status – person or household typically considered to be the most vulnerable, who are entitled to greater access to support and housing when experiencing homelessness. Examples of groups considered priority need are care leavers, those with experiences of domestic abuse and/or those with dependents

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.

Housing registers - (often called a housing waiting list) is a list maintained by local authorities or housing associations of households who have applied for social housing.



Policy context

Youth homelessness is still on the rise in England. Centrepoin’s most recent Youth Homelessness Databank revealed that there was 6% increase in the number of young people facing homelessness between 2023/24 and 2024/25⁶.

Young people experiencing or facing homelessness remain among the most vulnerable members of society. At critical moments in their lives, timely and effective support from statutory services can help young people move from homelessness to secure stable housing. However, limited, unsuitable and increasingly costly housing stock means that, when young people are in need of housing, suitable accommodation is not always available in a timely or appropriate manner.

Homelessness policy in England has entered a period of renewed focus, with the publication of the government’s National Plan to End Homelessness⁷ in December 2025. The strategy sets out a long-term vision to prevent homelessness before it occurs, halve the number of people experiencing longterm rough sleeping, and improve emergency responses and recovery support. It includes a significant £3.5 billion package of investment over three years and introduces proposals such as a statutory “Duty to Collaborate,” designed to ensure public bodies work together to prevent homelessness and new funding for supported housing and rough sleeping innovation. The plan also seeks to end the unlawful use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families and improve local prevention services.

It is also important to highlight the government’s target to deliver 1.5 million homes⁸ alongside the £39bn Social and Affordable Homes Programme⁹, both of which will play a critical role in shaping the homelessness landscape and the availability of secure, affordable housing.

Social housing

Local authorities allocate social housing in line with national legislation and guidance. The framework established by the Localism Act 2011¹⁰ gives councils greater discretion to determine their own housing allocation schemes, including whether to apply local connection criteria when prioritising applicants.

Alongside allocation policies, local authorities have statutory duties towards people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Priority need categories include households with dependent children, individuals who are vulnerable due to age, disability or other circumstances, and young people aged 18–20 who were previously in care. Care leavers are also supported under provisions linked to the Children Act 1989, which places duties on local authorities to provide ongoing support as they transition to independent living. Where a local authority accepts that a household is owed the main homelessness duty, it must provide suitable temporary accommodation while longer-term housing options are secured.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 strengthened the responsibilities of local authorities to intervene earlier by introducing prevention and relief duties for households at risk of homelessness. HRA aimed to ensure that people receive support before reaching crisis point, although access to long-term housing solutions remains constrained by limited housing supply.

Social housing is typically let at rents below those in the private rented sector, making it an important source of affordable accommodation for young people with limited or unstable incomes. In principle, this should allow young tenants to sustain their housing without facing excessive financial pressure. However, rising living costs, persistent inflation, and gaps between welfare support and housing costs continue to present challenges for many young people seeking to access or maintain social housing.

Private rented housing

Many young people who are homeless, or who are at a risk of homelessness, the private rented sector (PRS) is often the most immediate housing option. While social housing has historically provided a route into stable accommodation, limited supply and long waiting lists mean that local authorities and homelessness services increasingly rely on the PRS to house young people. However, the availability of private rented homes has tightened in recent years, and rents have continued to rise making it more difficult for young people to access and sustain tenancies.

High demand and constrained supply have driven significant increases in private rents across England. In many areas, rents have grown faster than incomes and welfare support, creating affordability pressures for households relying on housing support. As a result, even where young people are able to secure a private tenancy, sustaining that tenancy can remain challenging.

It should be noted that the forthcoming Renters' Rights Act¹¹ is expected to strengthen security within the private rented sector by ending no-fault evictions and introducing measures to ban discrimination for prospective renters. While these reforms should improve stability for tenants, they are being introduced against a backdrop of already high and rising rents, meaning affordability pressures are likely to persist for many households at risk of homelessness.

For young people in receipt of housing support, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) plays a key role in enabling access to the PRS. LHA determines the maximum amount of housing support available to tenants renting privately through Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. After being frozen for several years, LHA rates were updated in April 2024 to reflect the 30th percentile of local market rents. However, the government has subsequently announced that LHA rates will again be frozen until at least 2027. This means that, over time, support is likely to fall further behind rising market rents, reducing the number of properties that are affordable to people receiving Housing Benefit.

Affordability pressures are particularly acute for young people under the age of 35. Under current benefit rules, most single people in this age group are subject to the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR), which limits housing support to the cost of renting a room in shared accommodation rather than a self-contained property. While exemptions exist for certain groups (such as care leavers under 25 or those who have spent time in homelessness accommodation) many young people remain restricted to this lower level of support.

At the same time, the supply of shared housing has become increasingly constrained. Much of this accommodation is classified as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), the number of which has been decreasing in recent years.



This combination of limited supply and restricted housing support means that many young people relying on the SAR struggle to access suitable accommodation in the PRS.

Together, these pressures mean that, although the private rented sector is often presented as a key route out of homelessness, structural barriers relating to affordability, supply, and welfare policy continue to limit its accessibility for many young people.

Temporary accommodation

The use of temporary accommodation (TA) continues to rise as housing pressures across England intensify. The most recent MHCLG statistics revealed that 134,760 households were in temporary accommodation in July to September 2025¹². A significant proportion of those in TA are families with children, highlighting the scale of housing need among households experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Local authorities' responsibilities for temporary accommodation are defined under the Housing Act 1996 and the HRA. Councils must assess all eligible applicants who present as homeless or threatened with homelessness and, where owed a duty, provide interim and potentially ongoing TA until settled housing can be secured.

In principle, temporary accommodation should function as a short-term safety net for people who have no immediate housing alternatives while local authorities secure more stable housing solutions. However, shortages in affordable housing supply mean that local authorities are increasingly reliant on temporary accommodation to manage homelessness demand. Without significant increases in the availability of affordable housing and effective move-on pathways, the risk remains that temporary accommodation will continue to be used as a longer-term housing solution rather than the short-term support it was designed to provide.



Young people and social housing

Social housing is a key component of the housing sector and should be an available option for young people experiencing or facing homelessness. As such, young people can be allocated social housing for multiple reasons, including being at risk of homelessness or being a care leaver.

Routes into social housing

To map out young people’s movement into social housing, this year’s Move On analysis examined where young people were living before their social housing allocations. Data from the Continuous Recording of Lettings in Social Housing in England (CORE) dashboard shows that just under a quarter (24%) of young people who were allocated social housing in 2024/25 were moving from temporary accommodation (see table 1.1). This means a substantial amount of young people are ‘moving on’ from less temporary housing to more

permanent housing. However, it is important to note that the majority of social housing allocations (46%) for young people were issued when they were living with friends or family members. This aligns with Centrepoin’s Youth Homelessness Databank which reports MHCLG data that revealed 51% of youth homelessness was driven by family or friends being no longer willing or able to accommodate young people¹³. One interpretation of the allocation data could be that a significant amount of young people who are at risk of homelessness due to family breakdown move directly into social housing (without experiencing time in temporary accommodation).

Other routes into social housing allocations include a small number of young people who were in a private rental (7%) and sleeping rough (1%).

Table 1.1: Previous accommodation of young households allocated social housing in England, 2024/25.

Category	Number of cases	Proportion of total
Temporary accommodation	4,659	24%
Living with friends and family	9,036	46%
Private sector tenancy	1,452	7%
Rough sleeping	181	1%
Other	4,368	22%
Total	19,696	100%

Source: CORE dashboard 2024/25

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Core Social housing lettings sub-national data dashboard, 2024-25.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2024-to-march-2025>. Accessed 19/02/2026.

Number of allocations

In 2024/25, CORE data shows that 19,696 young people were allocated social housing (see table 1.1). This represents 17% of overall allocations, a slight decrease on the previous financial year. The proportion of social housing allocations going to young households decreased because allocations to young people slightly declined while the total number of allocations across the population increased year on year, rising from 109,363 to 112,638.

On a regional level, the region with the highest number of social housing allocations was the North West which saw over 3,300 allocations. However, the region with the higher proportion of allocations to young people was the East Midlands, with just over 19% of all allocation being made to young people. The proportion of allocations to young people is fairly consistent across regions, except for London, which stands out as an outlier with only 12% of allocations being made to young households.

Table 1.2: Social housing allocations made to young households and in total, 2024/25 and 2023/24.

	2024/25			2023/24		
	16-24	Total	% 16-24	16-24	Total	% 16-24
England	19,696	112,638	17%	19,790	109,363	18%
North East	1,479	8,595	17%	1,638	8,755	19%
North West	3,315	18,328	18%	3,111	17,649	18%
Yorks & Humber	2,382	14,532	16%	2,409	14,286	17%
East Midlands	1,959	10,290	19%	1,871	9,535	20%
West Midlands	2,579	13,752	19%	2,667	14,378	19%
East of England	2,268	11,945	19%	2,421	11,768	21%
London	1,476	11,969	12%	1,286	9,206	14%
South East	2,675	14,789	18%	2,672	14,933	18%
South West	1,563	8,438	19%	1,715	8,853	19%

Source: CORE dashboard 2024/25

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Core Social housing lettings sub-national data dashboard, 2024-25.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2024-to-march-2025>. Accessed 19/02/2026.

The Centrepoint Youth Homelessness Databank¹⁴ showed that in 2024/25, there were 10,218 young people who were owed a main homelessness duty. This represents 14% of the total of more than 72,000 duties owed. This is a drop from the previous year (2023/24), in which 19% of main duties were owed to young people. Part of the decline is due to fewer young people being owed main duty (down from over 12,000 in 2023/24), while another factor is the substantial increase in the total number of people of all ages receiving main duty, which rose by nearly 7,000 compared with 2023/24.

On a regional level, London had the greatest number of main duties owed to young people with over 2,300, which is 12% of the main duties owed in the region. The region with the highest proportion of duties owed to young people is the East Midlands, with 20% of duties owed to young people in 2024/25.

We can assess how well allocations meet need by comparing the share of allocations received by young households with the share of main duties owed to them. If young people receive a smaller proportion of allocations than the proportion of main duties owed, it suggests their housing needs are being addressed less fully than those of older households.

In 2023/24, young households accounted for just under one in five main duties (19%). Despite this, only 18% of social housing allocations went to young people.

By 2024/25, this shortfall had closed. Around 14% of main duties were owed to young people, while over 17% of social housing allocations went to young households. However, it is important to consider broader year-on-year trends. Even though the shortfall disappeared in 2024/25, there were year-on-year reductions in both the absolute number of allocations made to young households, and the proportion of total allocations that were made to young households.

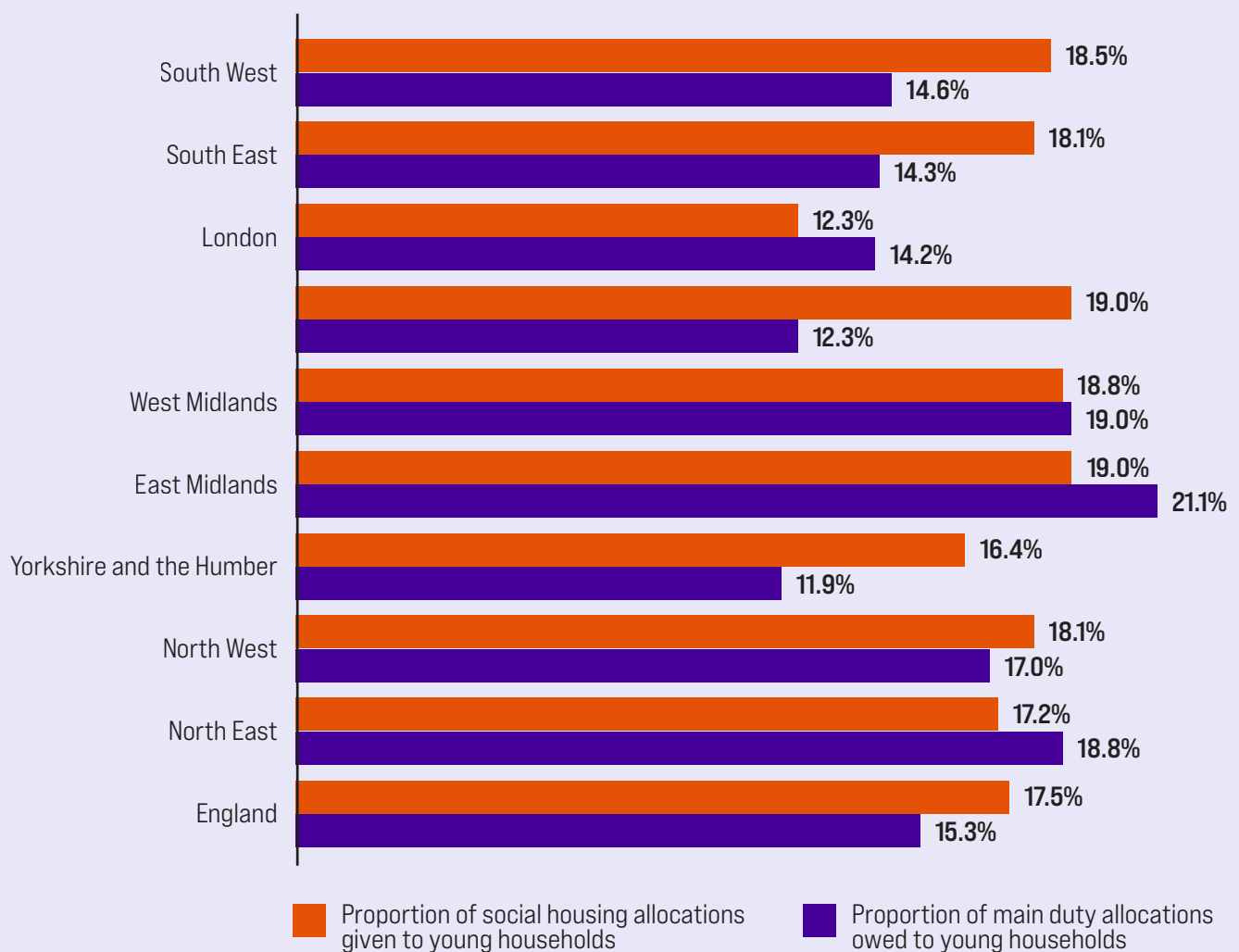
It is important to note that whilst there has been a reduction in the allocation shortfall, other areas of allocation are still failing to meet young people's need. For example, long waiting times and limited availability of one-bedroom and shared properties mean that, in practice, improved proportional access to allocations does not necessarily translate into timely or sustainable housing outcomes.

It should also be noted that not every young household in need will receive a main housing duty before being allocated social housing. Therefore, the absence of a shortfall does not indicate that the system fully meets the housing needs of

young people. Moreover, these comparisons are based on the proportion of main duties identified through the Databank (young people) and MHCLG data (whole population), and, in the context of rising numbers of young people not being formally assessed, this is likely to underestimate the true scale of those who would be entitled to support.

While the overall gap between main duties owed and social housing allocations narrowed between 2023/24 and 2024/25, shortfalls remain in some regions. Notably, material shortfalls are evident in the North East (1.5%), and the East Midlands (1.1%).

Figure 1.1: A comparison of the proportion of main duties owed to young people to the proportion of social housing allocations made to young people, comparison of regions, 2024/25.



Source: data for young households is from the Centrepoint Databank; Centrepoint (2025). Databank (2024 and 2025). data for total population is from MHCLG statutory homelessness tables for 2023/24 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Tables on homelessness, detailed local authority level tables: 2023-24. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>. Accessed 19/02/2026. and for 2024/25. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Tables on homelessness, detailed local authority level tables: 2024-25. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>. Accessed 19/02/2026.

It should be noted that the number of young households allocated social housing (19,696; see Table 1.2) exceeds the number of young households owed main duties (10,218; see Centrepoint’s Youth Homelessness Databank¹⁵). However, not all social housing allocations are made to households in temporary accommodation. Many are made to households at different stages of the homelessness system, including those on housing registers or receiving support under the HRA, such as households at risk of homelessness who are not yet in crisis. In some cases, social housing allocations may also be made earlier in the process, without a period in temporary accommodation.

One way to assess this source of demand for social housing among young people is by examining housing registers. While those on waiting lists may not have the same urgency of need as households owed main duty, many are at risk of homelessness and could enter the formal Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) system if social housing is not provided promptly. Although central government collects housing register data from local authorities, it does not record the number of young households specifically.

To address this gap, we submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to local authorities, asking for the proportion of their housing register made up of young households. Further details on this FOI request, including response rates, can be found in the technical appendix.

Using the completed FOI responses, we estimated the proportion of young households on housing registers in each region and across England. From this, we estimate there are 130,000 young households on housing registers (see table 1.3). At the current rate of social housing allocations, assuming no new applications, it would take six years to clear this waiting list.

These 130,000 young households represent 10% of all households on housing registers. The regions with the largest numbers of young households on registers are the North West (30,000), London (20,000), and Yorkshire and the Humber (20,000). Although London has the lowest proportion of young people on its housing register, it has the largest overall register population, resulting in one of the highest numbers of young households on registers nationally.

Overall, the proportion of young households on housing registers (10%) is lower than both the proportion of social housing allocations to young households (17%) and the proportion of main duties owed to them (14%). This likely reflects, at least in part, that young households are less likely than older households to be long-term, lower-priority applicants on housing registers.

Table 1.3: Young people on the social homes waiting list, on the 31st of March 2025 (2024/25).

Region	Social homes waiting list	Percentage of young households on waiting list (from FOI)	Estimated young households on waiting list
England	1,340,435	10%	130,000
North East	63,211	11%	5,000
North West	209,887	15%	30,000
Yorks & Humber	172,536	12%	20,000
East Midlands	83,509	14%	10,000
West Midlands	127,179	9%	10,000
East of England	91,871	11%	10,000
London	341,421	6%	20,000
South East	117,590	11%	10,000
South West	133,231	10%	15,000

Source: MCHLG local authority housing register data;

MHCLG (2025). Live Table 600: Number of households on local authority housing registers.

See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/691338a18c90b927c818ad85/Live_Table_600.ods. Accessed 20/02/2026.

WPI Economics FOI request of local authorities (see technical appendix).

The suitability of social housing

Young people face a range of barriers when applying for social housing including allocations and affordability, however, suitability has also continually been shown to be a prominent barrier to young people accessing social housing.

In our survey of young renters (see technical appendix for methodology), respondents highlighted several key challenges. The most common barrier was limited availability of suitable housing, cited by nearly a third (31%) of respondents (see table 1.4). Affordability concerns were also raised by just under a third (31%).

Other significant barriers included difficulties in proving priority need or eligibility (29%) and restrictions on eligibility or priority (28%). Additionally, a quarter of applicants (25%) reported challenges in passing housing affordability checks.



Table 1.4: What challenges, if any, did you face when applying for social rented accommodation?

Reason	% of respondents citing reason
Limited housing availability (e.g. of smaller homes or one-bedrooms)	31%
Affordability concerns (high rent relative to total income, including benefits)	31%
Difficulty proving priority need or eligibility	29%
Restrictions on who is eligible for social housing, or has priority	28%
Difficulty passing housing association affordability checks	25%
Proximity issues (e.g., housing far from work, school, or family)	25%
Poor quality of available housing (e.g. unsafe, mould)	24%
Not enough support or guidance on the application process	23%
Long waiting lists	14%
Not sure / I can't remember	1%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Notes: survey question was asked only of respondents who were in social accommodation as their main address in the 2024/25 financial year.

The most common difficulty in seeking social housing is the limited availability of suitable properties. While there are widespread shortages of social housing across the UK, there are particular challenges in accessing one-bedroom homes.

Analysis of the social housing stock shows that around a quarter (25%) of General Needs Social Rent properties are one-bedroom, as are one in five (20%) General Needs Affordable Rent properties (see table 1.5).

This availability varies by region. London has the highest proportion of one-bedroom social homes, with 27% of General Needs Social Rent and 32% of General Needs Affordable Rent properties falling into this category. In contrast, the North East has the lowest proportion: 22% of General Needs Social Rent and just 8% of General Needs Affordable Rent properties are one-bedroom.

Table 1.5: Stock of social housing, by region, and proportion of stock that is one-bedroom.

	General Needs Social Rent			General Needs Affordable Rent		
	Total stock	One-bed stock	% of stock one-bed	Total stock	One-bed stock	% of stock one-bed
England	3,253,813	800,808	25%	400,770	81,178	20%
North East	215,371	47,392	22%	23,026	1,800	8%
North West	435,067	103,929	24%	65,535	8,933	14%
Yorks & Humber	351,618	98,311	28%	31,376	3,747	12%
East Midlands	239,035	55,931	23%	30,910	5,596	18%
West Midlands	377,847	95,988	25%	36,052	5,356	15%
East of England	320,580	70,242	22%	53,336	13,536	25%
London	657,084	179,482	27%	57,000	18,444	32%
South East	400,538	93,800	23%	69,445	16,402	24%
South West	256,673	55,733	22%	34,090	7,364	22%

Source: Regulator for Social Housing.

Notes: This data includes general needs affordable and social rent housing provided by both local authority and privately-run registered providers registered with the Regulator of Social Housing

Overall, just under a quarter (24%) of General Needs housing stock is one-bedroom. Nearly two in five (38%) are two-bedroom, and a third (33%) are three-bedroom (see table 1.6).

One way to assess if allocation is matching need is by comparing the share of one-bedroom properties to the proportion of households on social housing registers requiring a one-bedroom home. The mismatch is striking. While only 24% of properties are one-bedroom, nearly half (48%) of households on housing registers need a one-bedroom property (see table 1.7).

In some regions, the mismatch is even more pronounced. In the South West, for example, just 22% of stock is one-bedroom, yet over half (55%) of applicants require a one-bedroom property.

Young people, who are disproportionately likely to need one-bedroom social housing, are particularly affected by this imbalance compared with other age groups.

Table 1.6: Proportion of General Needs housing in each size category, 2021/22 to 2024/25.

Category	Proportion (%) of General Needs housing in category			
	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-self-contained	0%	0%	0%	0%
Bedsit	1%	1%	1%	1%
1 Bedroom	24%	24%	24%	24%
2 Bedroom	37%	38%	38%	38%
3 Bedroom	34%	33%	33%	33%
4 Bedroom	3%	3%	3%	3%
5 Bedroom	0%	0%	0%	0%
6+ Bedroom	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Regulator for Social Housing.

Table 1.7: Comparison of one-bed stock as a proportion of General Needs housing stock to the proportion of housing register families in need of a one-bed home.

Region	Proportion (%) of General Needs housing stock that is one-bed	Proportion (%) of housing register households that require a one-bed	Shortfall (percentage-point)
England	24%	48%	24%
North East	21%	53%	32%
North West	23%	52%	29%
Yorks & Humber	27%	40%	13%
East Midlands	23%	51%	28%
West Midlands	24%	46%	22%
East of England	22%	49%	27%
London	28%	45%	17%
South East	23%	47%	24%
South West	22%	55%	33%

Sources: MHCLG Local Authority Housing Statistics.vii Regulator for Social Housing.

MHCLG (2026). Local Authority Housing Statistics data returns for 2024 to 2025.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2024-to-2025>. Accessed 23/02/2026.

Notes: This data includes general needs affordable and social rent housing provided by both local authority and privately-run registered providers registered with the Regulator of Social Housing.

It is clear that addressing this issue will be challenging. The proportion of one-bedroom stock has remained unchanged since 2022. This is unsurprising given historically low levels of social housing construction, but government plans to increase building rates should take this under-supply into account.



The affordability and quality of social homes

Our survey of young renters found that 25% of young people in social housing struggled to afford their rent during the 2024/25 financial year (see table 1.8). Over half (55%) reported falling behind on rent at some point (see table 1.9), and two-thirds (66%) said they were at risk of becoming homeless during the same period (see table 1.10).

The differences in these proportions may be larger than previously anticipated. We hypothesise that this is partly due to the timing complexities faced by young people as they enter, and move through, the benefits system and the social housing sector.

For example, some young people entering social housing for the first time in 2024/25 may have been simultaneously undergoing the one-month assessment period, and five-week wait for Universal Credit. This timing can lead to immediate rental arrears.

Additionally, many social housing providers require weekly rent payments, while Universal Credit is paid monthly. This mismatch can increase the likelihood that young social renters temporarily fall behind on their rent between payments.

When examining rents for one-bedroom social housing across both private registered providers (PRPs) and local authority registered providers (LARPs), we see significant increases in the period following the pandemic. In 2024/25, social rents rose by an average of 8.2%, while affordable rents increased by 9.1%. This followed substantial rises in 2023/24, when social rents went up by 7.2%.

These increases were not exceptional, coming after a period of strong CPI inflation. Inflation was 10% in March 2023, having peaked at 11.1% in October 2022. Wages and benefits also increased over the same period. The minimum wage rose by 9.8% in April 2024 and by 6.7% in April 2025 for those aged 21 or above. Most benefits, including Universal Credit, were uprated by 10.1% in April 2023 and by 6.7% in April 2024.

Even so, these rises in social rents will have created additional affordability challenges for young renters. Many of them will not have seen corresponding increases in their pay, making it harder to keep up with rent payments.

Table 1.8: How difficult was it to afford your rent during the period April 2024 to March 2025? [Social renters only]

Response	Percentage
Very difficult	6%
Fairly difficult	19%
Fairly easy	40%
Very easy	33%
I can't remember / prefer not to say	2%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Table 1.9: Did you fall behind on your rent at any point during the period April 2024 to March 2025? [Social renters only]

Response	Percentage
Yes	55%
No	32%
I can't remember / prefer not to say	13%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Table 1.10: How at risk of becoming homeless were you during the period April 2024 to March 2025? [Social renters only]

Response	Percentage
High risk	20%
Somewhat at risk	46%
Very low risk, or not at risk at all	28%
I can't remember / prefer not to say	5%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Where young people go after social housing?

According to our survey of young renters, the majority of young people leaving social housing remain within the social-rented sector, but there are notable movements to other tenures.

Nearly two in five (37%) took up another social tenancy after leaving their previous home (see table 1.11). The next most common move was into the private-rented sector, with almost a quarter (22%) of young people making this transition.

While more than half of young people moved into another long-term rental tenure, a significant minority entered temporary or supported accommodation. Around 15% move into temporary accommodation, and 12% into supported housing. Based on government homelessness data, we estimate that 2,700 young households will enter Relief Duty from social housing, with a large proportion of these being placed into temporary accommodation.

Table 1.11: Destinations after leaving a social rental accommodation.

Accommodation type	Proportion entering accommodation type
Social-rented	37%
Private-rented	22%
Temporary accommodation	15%
Supported accommodation	12%
Family/parental home	8%
Care or foster provision	4%
Other	1%
Not sure	0%

Source: Survey of young renters (see technical appendix).



Young people and temporary accommodation

Young people enter temporary accommodation for a variety of reasons, with a significant proportion due to family or relationship breakdown. Temporary accommodation (TA) is short-term housing provided by local authorities for people who are homeless while they secure longer-term accommodation. It is used during the Relief Duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act for up to 56 days and can also be provided to those owed a Main Duty while they search for permanent housing.



The number of young people in temporary accommodation

To examine the number of young people in TA, an FOI was submitted to MHCLG to ascertain the number of young people in TA on the 31st of March 2025 (see table 1.12). The technical appendix contains the details of the FOI.

The results of the FOI revealed that, on the 31st of March 2025, there were 12,390 young person households (where the lead applicant was aged 16-24) in TA. This means that young households accounted for 9% of all of the households in TA at that time.

Table 1.12: The number and proportion of young households in temporary accommodation (TA) on the 31st of March 2025, compared to on the 31st of March 2024.

	On the 31 st of March 2025		On the 31 st of March 2024	
	Young households in TA	% of total households in TA	Young households in TA	% of total households in TA
England	12,390	9%	11,840	10%
North East	160	13%	150	13%
North West	1,040	12%	1,080	14%
Yorks & Humber	530	14%	490	14%
East Midlands	730	17%	640	18%
West Midlands	720	8%	720	9%
East of England	1,240	13%	1,140	13%
London	4,960	7%	4,710	7%
South East	2,190	14%	2,060	14%
South West	830	15%	840	16%

Sources: FOI requests of MHCLG; MHCLG Additional temporary accommodation breakdown 31 March 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2024-25>. Accessed 18/02/2026. MHCLG Additional temporary accommodation breakdown 31 March 2024. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2023-24. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2023-24>. Accessed 18/02/2026.

The region with the largest number of young households in temporary accommodation is London, with 4,960 households on 31 March 2025. However, because London has a relatively high overall number of households in temporary accommodation, this represents only 7% of the total, the lowest proportion of any region. By contrast, the East Midlands has the highest proportion, with 730 young households making up 17% of all households in temporary accommodation.

Between 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2025, the total number of young households in temporary accommodation increased from 11,840 to 12,390. The proportion of young households, however, fell slightly from 10% to 9%, reflecting a greater proportional increase in the total number of households in temporary accommodation. The rise in demand for temporary accommodation seen across the population has also affected young people.

Following the method used in Move On 2023/24¹⁶, we can estimate the number of households entering temporary accommodation in 2024/25 by counting those in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2025 who had been there for less than 12 months. This provides a lower-bound estimate, as households that moved in and out within the 12-month period are not captured.

Using this approach, we find that at least 7,870 young households moved into temporary accommodation in 2024/25, down slightly from 8,090 in 2023/24. Despite this small reduction, the total number of young households in temporary accommodation has grown due to an increase in the average length of stay.



Why are young people in temporary accommodation?

Homelessness among young people can result from many factors. Family breakdown is a common cause, with over recent MHCLG data showing that 51% of young people were driven into youth homelessness due to family and friends being no longer willing or able to accommodate them¹⁷. Domestic abuse was reported to be the second lead cause, at 11%, followed by evictions from supported housing (7%), the end of assured shorthold tenancies (7%) and being required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support (6%).

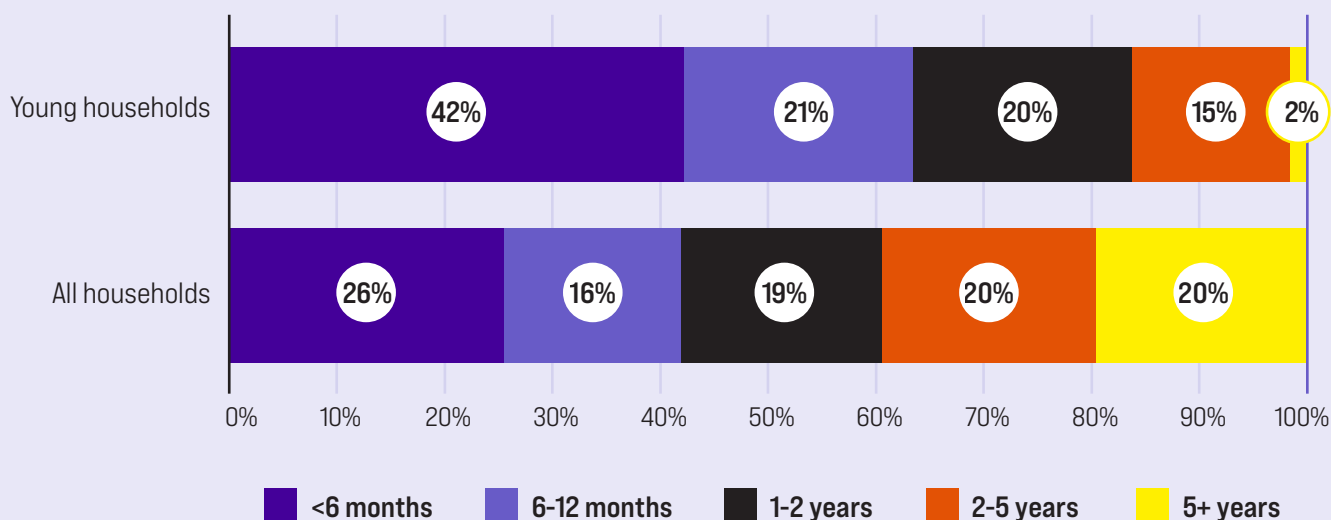
A large proportion of young people experiencing homelessness are care-experienced. Just under half (48%) of young people supported by Centrepoin have been in care¹⁸.

Our survey evidence (see technical appendix for further details) showed that nearly a quarter (22%) of young people in temporary accommodation had lived in the family or parental home immediately prior to moving into temporary accommodation. This figure does not include young people whose housing insecurity was caused by family breakdown but who were living elsewhere immediately before moving into temporary accommodation. Just over one in ten (11%) left care, consistent with the proportion of homeless young people who are care-experienced. Over one in five (21%) moved from supported accommodation, indicating a substantial flow between supported accommodation and temporary accommodation.

A notable number of young people move into temporary accommodation from rented tenures. Among survey respondents in temporary accommodation, 14% had previously been in social rented accommodation and 8% in the private rented sector. Official homelessness statistics corroborate these trends. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 184,540 households were owed Relief Duty, of which 24,980 (14%) had previously been in the private rented sector and 15,430 (8%) from the social rented sector. Around 17.7% of these households were aged 16-24. Assuming similar tenure balances, this suggests that roughly 4,400 young households entered Relief Duty from the private rented sector and 2,700 from the social rented sector.

The relationship between HRA duties and TA allocations is not always straightforward, and local authorities may discharge Relief Duty in different ways. However, temporary accommodation is a common method for housing households on Relief Duty, who are experiencing homeless rather than at risk. Between April 2024 and March 2025, just over half (52%) of Relief Duty cases lasted beyond 56 days, requiring a Main Duty decision. Many of these cases are likely to result in temporary accommodation being provided. It is therefore probable that a significant proportion of the 4,400 young households from the private rented sector and 2,700 from the social rented sector will receive TA during this period.

Figure 1.2: Average length of time in temporary accommodation, for young households (households headed by someone aged 16-24) compared to all households, on the 31st of March 2025.



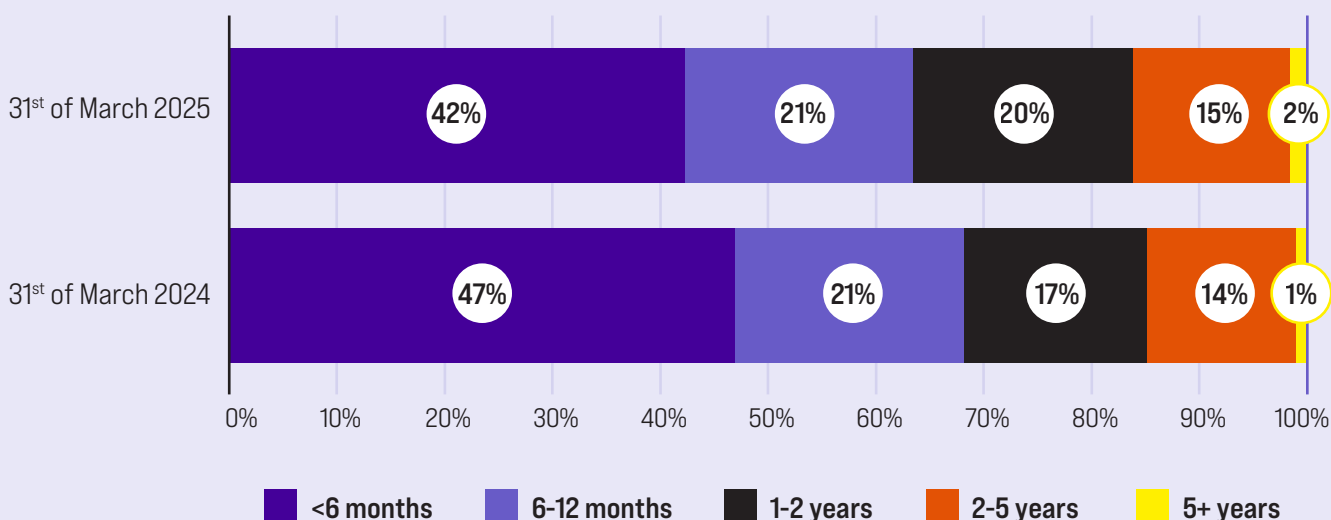
Source: FOI requests of MHCLG; MHCLG Additional temporary accommodation breakdown 31 March 2025. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025). Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2024-25>. Accessed 18/02/2026.

We can also see that the share of young households with shorter stays in temporary accommodation has fallen over time. On 31 March 2024, 47% of young households in temporary accommodation had been there for less than six months (see figure 1.3). By 31 March 2025, this had declined to 42%. In contrast, 35% of young households had been in

temporary accommodation for 1-5 years on 31 March 2025, up from 31% on 31 March 2024.

This suggests that, on average, young households are spending longer in temporary accommodation than in previous years.

Figure 1.3: Average length of time in temporary accommodation, young households, 31st of March 2025 compared to 31st of March 2024.



Source: FOI requests of MHCLG.

Where do young people go after temporary accommodation?

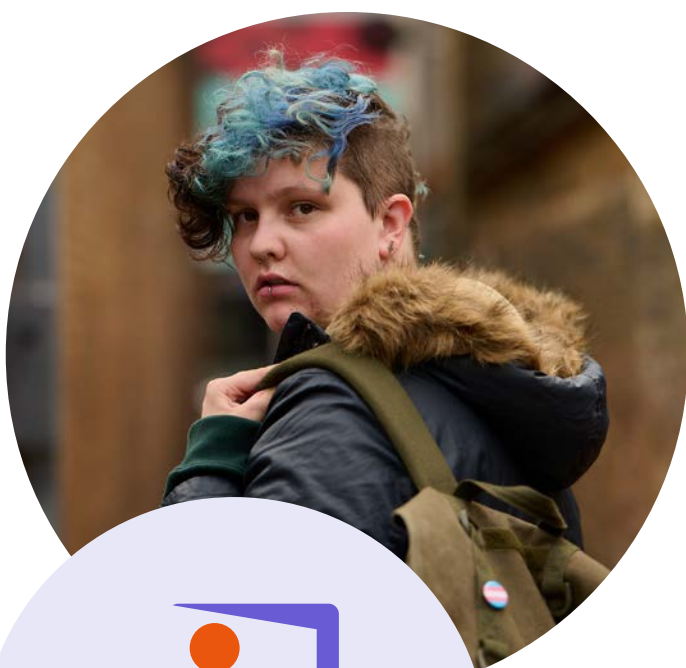
Young people leave temporary accommodation through a range of routes. These include moving into social housing, entering the private rented sector, returning to the family home or moving in with relatives, or moving into another form of temporary or supported accommodation.

Our survey of young renters provided insight into the destinations young people typically moved to after spending time in temporary accommodation (see table 1.13).

Table 1.13: Destinations after leaving a temporary accommodation.

Accommodation type	Proportion entering accommodation type
Social-rented accommodation	25%
Private-rented accommodation	18%
Family or parental home	15%
Temporary accommodation	14%
Supported accommodation	14%
Care or foster provision	10%
Other	3%
Not sure	1%

Source: Survey of young renters (see technical appendix).



Our survey showed that around a quarter (25%) of young people leaving temporary accommodation moved into social housing, while a further 18% entered the private rented sector (see table 1.13). Just under one in six (15%) returned to the family or parental home. However, more than a quarter did not move into permanent accommodation, instead entering supported accommodation (14%) or another instance of temporary accommodation (14%).

Social housing remains an important pathway into stable and affordable long-term housing for vulnerable young people. Historically, it has been the primary route to secure housing for those without the immediate means to buy their own home.

Using social housing allocation data, we can examine flows from temporary accommodation into social housing. In 2024/25, a total of 4,659 young households moved from temporary accommodation into social housing. However, we have already established a lower-bound estimate that at least 7,870 young households entered temporary accommodation during the same period.

This suggests that allocations of social housing to young households alone were not sufficient to reduce the overall number of young people in temporary accommodation. However, this does not necessarily indicate a lack of demand solely for social housing, as many young people may prefer or be better suited to other options, such as HMOs or the PRS, depending on their circumstances and stage of life.

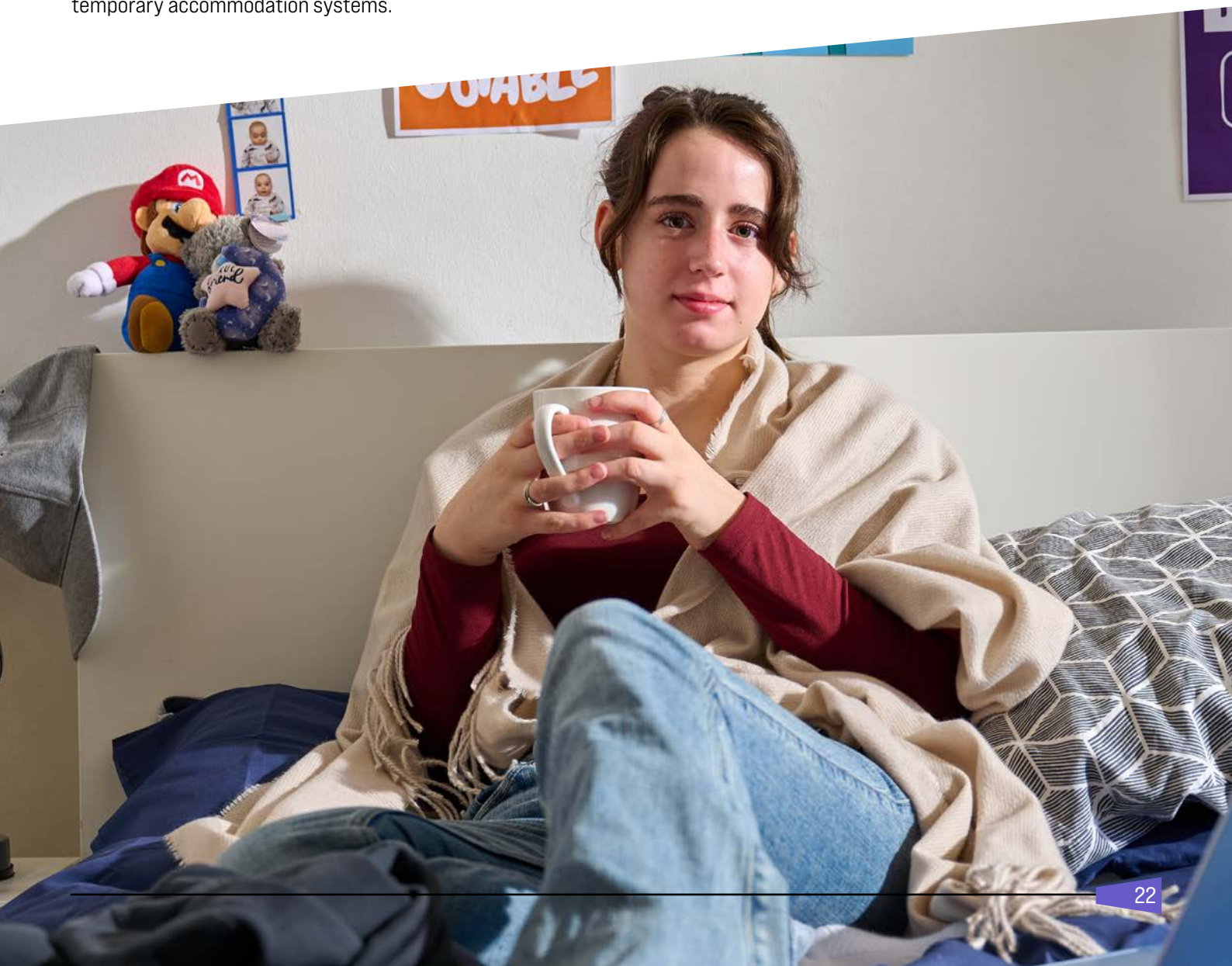
As demonstrated earlier, it is common for young people led households leaving temporary accommodation to move into a range of tenures aside from social housing. This reflects both the diversity of young people's preferences and the role that the PRS and shared housing can play in providing more flexible or accessible options. While this movement has likely helped to prevent a sharper rise in the number of young people remaining in temporary accommodation, it also underscores ongoing constraints within the system. In particular, limited access to genuinely affordable and secure options across all tenures, whether social housing, HMOs or the PRS, means that many young people continue to face restricted choice and, in some cases, may move into housing that does not fully meet their needs.

Across England, just under a quarter (24%) of social housing allocations to young households were made to those previously living in temporary accommodation. While it is important that sufficient social housing is available for households in temporary accommodation who wish to move into it, social housing must also remain accessible to young households who are not currently in temporary accommodation. Increasing the share of allocations going to households in temporary accommodation is therefore not a sustainable long-term solution and instead reflects significant pressure within both the social housing and temporary accommodation systems.

This pattern is particularly visible in London. The capital has relatively few social housing allocations to young households relative to its population size, but a high proportion of those allocations go to young households leaving temporary accommodation. This suggests both a high level of need among the young people who do secure social housing and a system that is less likely to allocate social homes to young people unless their need is especially acute. The importance of this pathway varies significantly by region. In London, 34% of allocations to young households are made to those leaving temporary accommodation, compared with just 8% in the North East.

A notable share of young people leaving temporary accommodation also move into the private rented sector. In our survey, 18% reported finding long-term housing in private rented accommodation.

Together, these patterns highlight the growing pressure on both the temporary accommodation and social housing systems, with many young people required to seek housing outside the social rented sector before a stable long-term home becomes available.



Young people and the private sector

Navigating the private rental sector

While some young people may choose to enter the private rented sector because it offers greater choice and flexibility, it is clear that many rely on it because they have few alternatives. The social rented sector is not fully meeting demand. A significant number of young people remain on social housing waiting lists, and there is a gap between the proportion of main duties owed to young people and the rate at which social housing is allocated to them. Our survey evidence also shows that a notable share of young people leaving temporary accommodation move directly into the private rented sector. In many cases, young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are increasingly offered rooms in shared accommodation, including houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), rather than self-contained homes.

Given the growing role of the private rented sector in housing young people, including those who are financially vulnerable or at risk of homelessness, it is important to assess how well the sector meets their needs. Evidence suggests that many young people face disadvantages even after entering the sector.

Our survey of young renters (see technical appendix) highlights the challenges young people face when trying to secure private rented accommodation. These questions were asked only of respondents whose primary residence

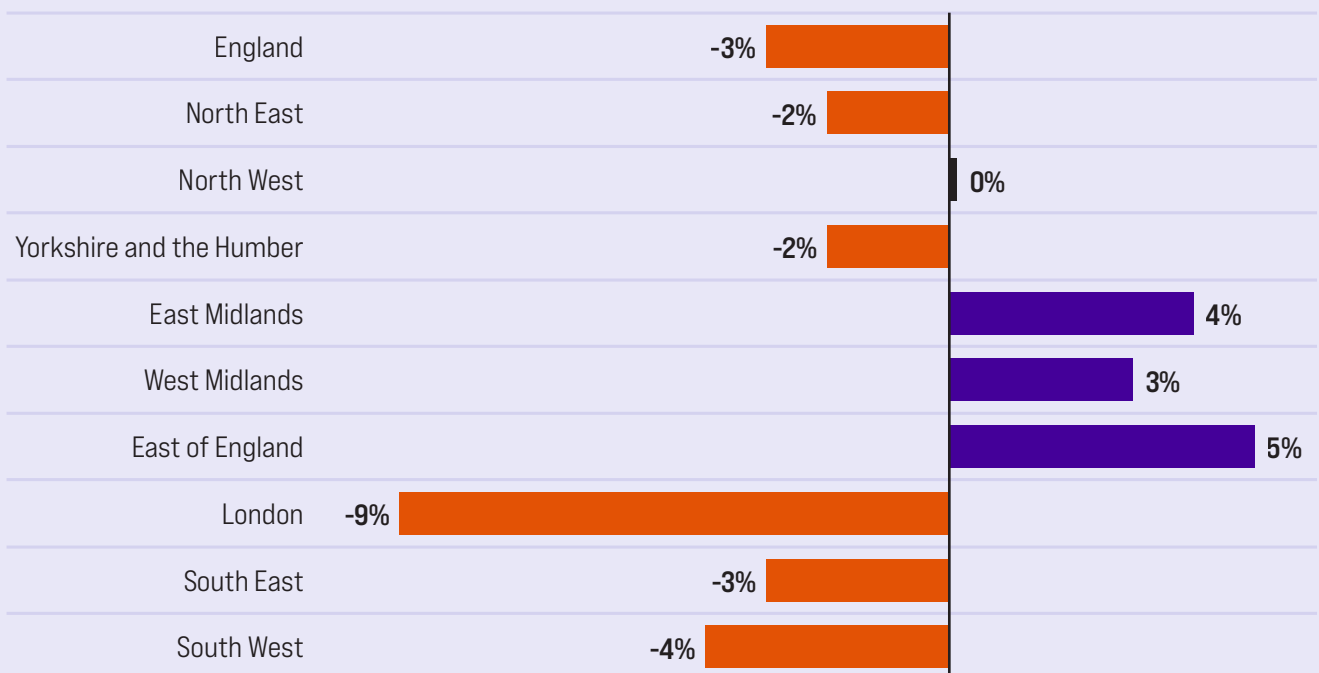
during the 2024/25 financial year was in the private rented sector. As a result, the findings are likely to reflect some degree of survivorship bias, since only those who were ultimately successful in securing accommodation were able to respond. The survey may therefore underestimate the true scale of the barriers young people face when trying to access the private rented sector.

More than a third (34%) of respondents said they felt that discrimination from a landlord or letting agent had affected their application. A third cited difficulties relating to location or proximity, and a similar proportion reported limited availability of suitable properties, such as one-bedroom homes. Just under a third (32%) raised concerns about affordability, while 29% highlighted high upfront costs in particular. Other commonly reported challenges included uncertainty or instability in rental agreements (27%) and poor-quality housing (27%).

Stock in the private rental sector

The 2024/25 English Housing Survey (EHS) indicates that the private rented sector (PRS) housing stock has remained broadly unchanged over the past year. Latest figures show that the previously observed levelling off in the number of households in the PRS (following a surge in the late 2000s) continues, with around 4.7 million households recorded in 2024/25.

Figure 1.4: Percentage-change in the estimated number of HMOs between 2023/24 and 2024/25, by region.



Source: MHCLG Local Authority Housing Data.

MHCLG (2025). Local Authority housing data. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data>. Accessed 24/02/2026.

Private rented sector: quantity, conditions, and regional variation

In 2024/25, around 19% of UK households live in the private rented sector (PRS), a proportion that has remained broadly stable over the past decade. This share is higher than that of the social rented sector (16%) but substantially lower than owner-occupied housing (65%). These figures contrast with late-2000s trends, when the social rented sector predominated over the PRS (14% in 2008/09) and owner-occupation was more common (68% in 2008/09).

The housing picture in London diverges from national patterns: more than 28% of households in the capital live in the PRS - over 10 percentage points above the England average excluding London.

Housing conditions within the PRS vary. Around 6% of households experience overcrowding, higher than the 1% rate among owner-occupiers but lower than the 9% observed in social housing. Overcrowding in the PRS has changed little over the past decade, whereas the social rented sector has seen an increase of almost three percentage points, suggesting the current overcrowding gap primarily reflects rising pressures in social housing rather than improvements in the PRS.

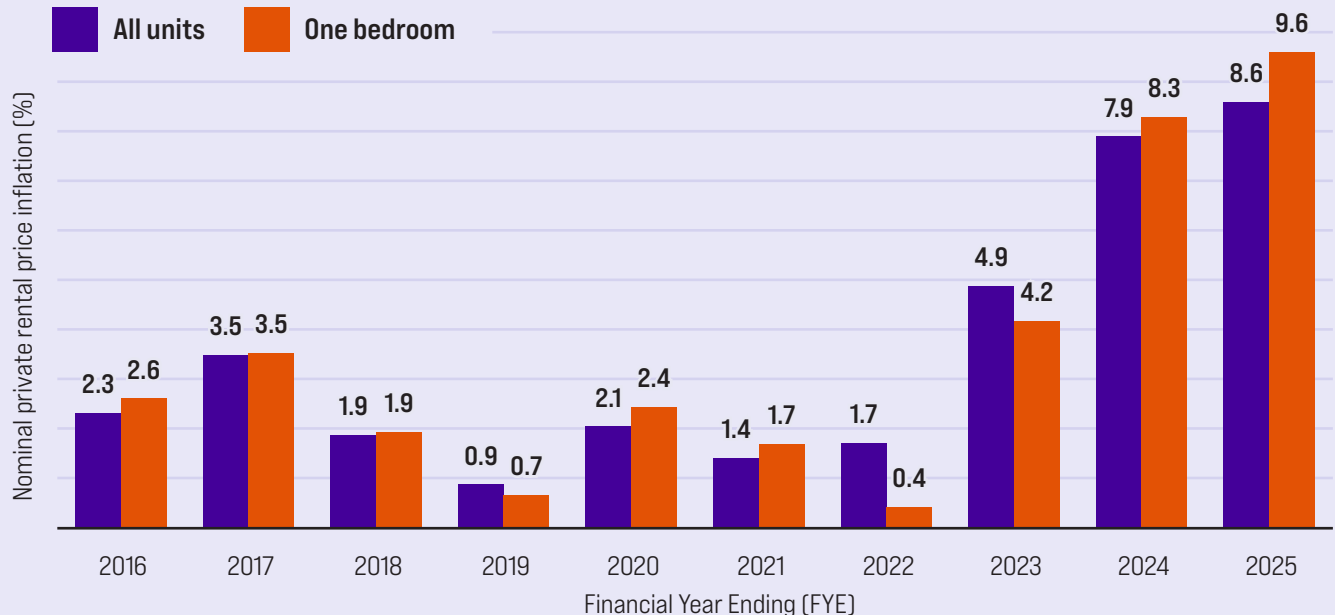
Non-decent housing remains a pressing issue in the PRS. In 2024, 22% of PRS households lived in non-decent homes, compared with 10% in the social rented sector and 15% in owner-occupied housing. This represents an additional 60,000 households in non-decent accommodation compared with the previous year. Regional disparities are pronounced: 17% of PRS households in London live in non-decent housing, rising to 27% in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Rising costs in the private rental sector

The PRS has become increasingly costly, creating clear affordability pressures for young renters. Official data show that rents have risen sharply in recent years, with an 8.6% increase in 2024/25 and a 7.9% rise in 2023/24 (see figure 1.5).

Rents for one-bedroom units have risen even faster, increasing by 9.6% in 2024/25 and 8.3% in 2023/24. This trend disproportionately affects younger households, who are more likely to seek smaller flats, and is contributing to a shift towards shared accommodation as affordability becomes more constrained.

Figure 1.5: Nominal private rental price inflation (%), from 2015/16 to 2024/25 financial years.



Source: Price Index of Private Rents.

ONS (2025). Price Index of Private Rents, UK: historical series.

See: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/priceindexofprivaterentsukhistoricalseries>. Accessed 20/02/2026.

Rental inflation has varied between regions. The region with the fastest rental price inflation in 2024/25 was London, where prices increased by 10.2% in nominal terms. Prices also increased more than for England as a whole in the North

West (9.4%) and in the East Midlands (8.7%). The region with the lowest (albeit still significant) increase in rents was Yorkshire and the Humber (6.2%).

Affordability and risks for young renters

Our survey of young renters in 2024/25 highlights significant affordability pressures in the private rented sector (PRS). Around 41% of young people report difficulties in meeting their rent, while 51% have fallen behind on payments at some point during the year. Additionally, 37% report having been at risk of homelessness. It is important to interpret these findings in the context of the young people who are responding; young people might have different impressions of what counts as “difficulties” in paying rent (e.g., a temporarily delayed payment may not be interpreted as a difficulty in paying rent), and the extent to which difficulties in paying rent influences proximity to homelessness will vary depending on the wider context of a young person’s life.

Comparisons with the social rented sector reveal key differences. Young people in the PRS are far less likely to experience homelessness risk than their counterparts in social housing (37% versus 66%). However, falling behind on rent is only marginally lower in the PRS, with a four-percentage-point difference between sectors. Affordability challenges are notably more acute in the PRS, with 41% of young renters struggling compared to 25% in social housing.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while young private renters face similar day-to-day financial pressures as those in social housing, they generally experience greater security against severe outcomes such as homelessness.

Table 1.14: How difficult was it to afford your rent during the period April 2024 to March 2025? [Private renters only]

Response	Percentage
Very difficult	15%
Fairly difficult	26%
Fairly easy	35%
Very easy	23%
I can't remember / prefer not to say	2%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Table 1.15: Did you fall behind on your rent at any point during the period April 2024 to March 2025? [Private renters only]

Response	Percentage
Yes	51%
No	36%
I can't remember / prefer not to say	12%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Table 1.16: What challenges, if any, did you face when applying for private rented accommodation?

Reason	% of respondents citing reason
Discrimination by landlords or agents (e.g. stigma associated with being on benefits, reluctance of landlords to accept young people as tenants)	34%
Proximity issues (e.g., housing far from work, school, or family)	33%
Limited housing availability (e.g. of smaller homes or one-bedrooms)	33%
Affordability concerns (high rent relative to available income, including benefits)	32%
High upfront costs (e.g., deposits, fees)	29%
Uncertainty or instability due to insecure rental agreements	27%
Poor quality of available housing (e.g. unsafe, mould)	27%
Difficulty securing a guarantor	19%
N/A – I / We did not experience any challenges when trying to obtain private rental accommodation	2%
Not sure / I can't remember	1%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Notes: survey question was asked only of respondents who were in private rented accommodation as their main address in the 2024/25 financial year.

Among respondents who reported experiencing discrimination from landlords when applying for private rented housing, relatively few believed this discrimination was directly related to their age. Around one in six (16%) said they felt they had been discriminated against on the grounds of age.

However, other forms of discrimination were reported more frequently. Almost two in five (37%) said they felt they had been treated unfairly because of their employment status, while nearly one in three (31%) cited discrimination related

to their benefit claim status (see table 1.17). Given that many young people facing housing insecurity are more likely to have unstable employment or rely on benefits, these forms of discrimination can represent significant barriers to accessing private rented housing.

Respondents also reported other perceived sources of discrimination. Around 35% cited their ethnic or racial background, 32% referred to marital status, and 29% reported discrimination related to sexual orientation (see table 1.17).

Table 1.17: What, if anything, do you think were the main reason(s) for discrimination you faced from landlords when looking for private rental accommodation?

Reason	% of respondents citing reason
Employment status	37%
Ethnic or racial background	35%
Marital Status	32%
Benefits status	31%
Sexual Orientation	29%
Disability	22%
Religion	21%
Education	19%
Gender	17%
Age	16%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Notes: survey question was asked only of respondents who were in private rented accommodation as their main address in the 2024/25 financial year, and who said that they felt they had been discriminated against in their application.

A third (33%) of respondents reported a lack of suitable housing when searching for private rented accommodation. Increasingly, young people, particularly those who are single, rely on houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) as one of the most affordable options in the private rented sector.

However, the availability of HMOs has declined in recent years. In 2019/20 there were more than 510,000 HMOs in England. By 2024/25, this had fallen to 458,000 (see figure 1.6). This represents a 10% reduction in available HMO stock over the period.

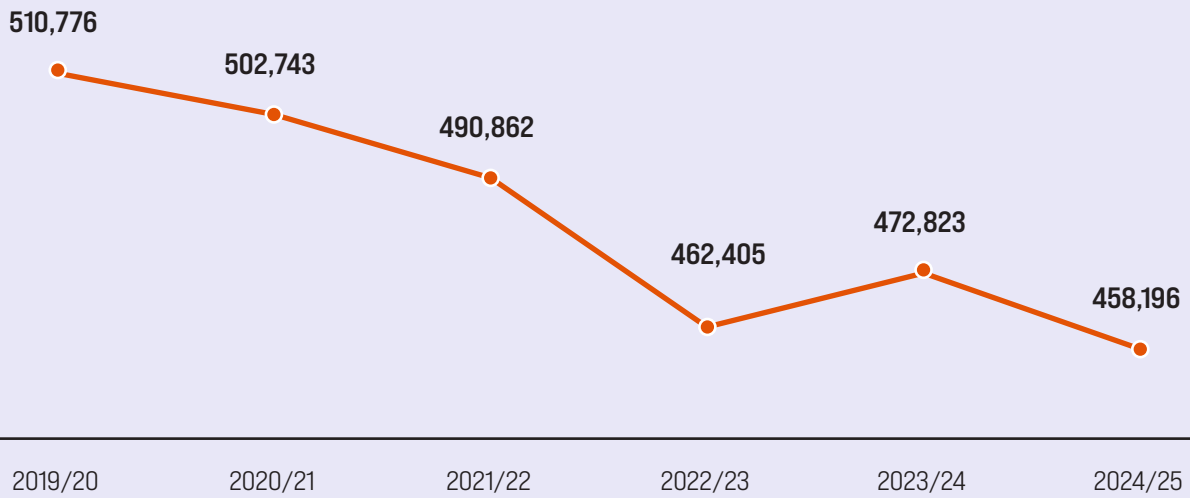
There has been a 3% fall in the number of HMOs between 2023/24 and 2024/25. This decline appears to have been largely driven by reductions in the south of England. The number of HMOs in the South West fell by 4%, while the

South East saw a 3% decrease. The most significant change was in London, where the number of HMOs dropped by 9% in a single year. This is particularly concerning given the high cost of private rented housing in the capital, where HMOs are often the most accessible option for young renters.

These declines have been partially offset by increases in other regions. The number of HMOs rose by 5% in the East of England, 4% in the East Midlands, and 3% in the West Midlands.

Overall, the reduction in HMOs, combined with limitations that SAR creates on young renters, and which limits the level of support and the types of properties available to many young people, makes it significantly harder for young renters to access affordable options in the private rented sector.

Figure 1.6: The estimated number of HMOs in England, from 2019/20 to 2024/25.



Source: MHCLG Local Authority Housing Data.

MHCLG (2025). Local Authority housing data. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data>. Accessed 24/02/2026.

Young renters' perceptions of housing suitability

Our survey indicates that young people generally rate private-rented housing less favourably than social housing in terms of space, proximity, and safety and comfort.

Our survey examined the suitability of housing across three domains: space and layout; proximity to work, education, or family; and safety and comfort. In each area, a majority of young private renters reported that their housing "somewhat," "mostly," or "completely" met their needs (see table 1.18). However, the proportion of respondents indicating that their housing "barely" or did not meet their needs was consistently higher in the private rented sector than in social housing.

- Safety and comfort: 30% of private renters reported that their accommodation barely or did not meet their needs, compared with 23% of social renters.
- Location: 26% of private renters reported issues with proximity to work, education, or family, versus 20% of social renters.
- Space and condition: 28% of private renters rated their accommodation poorly, compared with 20% of social renters.

These findings suggest that, while most young renters find their housing broadly adequate, private-rented homes are more likely to fall short of their needs across key quality and convenience measures.



Table 1.18: Suitability of private-rented (private rented sector) and social-rented (social rented sector) housing, reported by young renters (age 16-24) who were renting in the period 2024/25, referring to their main residence during this period.

Proportion responding that housing met their needs	Space and layout		Proximity to work, education and/or family		Safety and comfort	
	Private-rented	Social-rented	Private-rented	Social-rented	Private-rented	Social-rented
Completely met my needs	20%	19%	22%	23%	19%	23%
Mostly met my needs	29%	31%	30%	29%	24%	29%
Somewhat met my needs	23%	27%	19%	26%	24%	22%
Barely met my needs	16%	11%	17%	13%	15%	11%
Did not meet my needs at all	12%	9%	9%	7%	15%	12%
Not sure	1%	3%	4%	3%	2%	2%

Source: survey of young renters (see technical appendix).

Where do young people go after the private sector?

The highest percentage of young people leaving the private rented sector (PRS) accommodation move into the social rented sector, with the next largest percentage of young people remaining in the PRS. Our survey found that 36% of young renters transitioning from the PRS subsequently entered the social rented sector, while a substantial proportion (30%) remained within the PRS.

Comparing this with movers from the social rented sector, a slightly smaller share moved into social housing from the PRS, while a larger proportion stayed in the PRS (30% versus 22%). Around 15% of young PRS renters moved into temporary accommodation, the same proportion observed among young movers from social housing.

Official data provide further context. Analysis from CORE shows that 1,452 young households from the PRS entered the social rented sector in 2024/25, representing roughly 7% of the total intake of young households. Additionally, official homelessness statistics indicate that around 4,400 young households from the PRS were placed into relief duties during 2024/25, a substantial share of whom are likely to subsequently enter temporary accommodation.



Alternative housing options for young people

The data discussed above shows that the housing sector is continuing to fail young people. Improvements can and should be made to ensure that young people have better housing choices (see our Recommendations at the end of this report), but it is also vital that national, regional and local governments, and social housing providers and charities, explore alternative housing models for young people.

Given the problems young people experience when attempting to access and afford homes in the social and private rented sector, expanding the provision of alternative housing products can help to overcome barriers relating to local allocations and affordability gaps. These products complement the existing tenures that young people usually rely on and provide an additional option for those who are underserved in terms of provision such as those who would have limited priority for social homes or low incomes.

An example of the type of alternative housing model that could work is Stepping Stone Accommodation, such as Centrepoin's Independent Living and St Basil's Live and Work programmes. This type of accommodation provides good-quality, genuinely affordable, fixed-term housing to young people who would otherwise face difficulties accessing social and private rented sector homes. Rents are set below market levels and are below LHA and social rent rates.

In Centrepoin's Independent Living Programme, rents are linked to income and charged at one third of their gross annual salary. This level of rent enables young people to sustain work, pay rent, reduce reliance on the benefits, and learn to live independently. It also allows them to save for the future so they can move on to another tenure after up to five years.

There are wider social and societal benefits provided by this housing model and ensuring young people have an affordable, secure and sustainable home. Stepping Stone homes provide the environment where young people can become more independent and self-sufficient, hold down jobs, and have a stake in the local community and wider society. This level of security makes vulnerable young people less likely to return to homelessness and to develop physical or mental health issues.

This innovative type of housing product is still in its infancy, and although Stepping Stone Accommodation has been acknowledged by the Government in the Renters' Rights Act 2025, there is no formal recognition of Stepping Stone homes as an established affordable housing product. As a result, proposals are routinely delayed which slows delivery and creates uncertainty. For charities, housing associations and private developers to be able to build Stepping Stone Accommodation at scale, there needs to be a faster route to give local planning authorities the confidence to say yes and deliver more homes for young people.

Conclusion

The findings of the second iteration of the Move On research programme provides insight into the movement of young people between housing tenures, revealing patterns, challenges and overall, a continued failure by the housing sector to provide affordable and secure housing for young people.

Therefore, it remains essential in 2025 that alternative, innovative housing options are expanded and scaled. Stepping Stone Accommodation continues to provide a vital route into housing for young people who may otherwise struggle to access the social or private rented sectors, offering genuinely affordable and secure homes. In this context, government should actively support and champion such models, including by creating the conditions for providers to deliver homes at a Living Rent level.

At its core, the pressures on affordability and access across both the social and private rented sectors, unfortunately, are still rooted in a chronic lack of housing supply. Without a substantial and sustained increase in available homes, especially genuinely affordable social housing, young people will remain locked out of stable accommodation, with many continuing to experience insecure housing situations and ongoing financial strain.

The recommendations below outline how Centrepoin believe the challenges and limitations covered in the report can be addressed.

Recommendations

1. Increase the availability of one-bedroom homes to improve access to suitable and affordable housing options for young people.

One-bedroom homes are essential for young people but remain underrepresented, making up only 24% of social rented stock, while 21% of private rented households occupy one-bedroom units. Government should embed targets for bedroom-specific housing in the National Planning Policy Framework, prioritising one-bedroom homes where local demand exceeds supply. Investment should also be directed to social housing providers to deliver new homes that meet young people's needs.

2. Reduce barriers to accessing and sustaining social rent tenancies for young people, by ensuring that social housing is affordable and accessible.

We acknowledge that social housing providers are allowed to conduct affordability checks on potential tenants to assess whether they can afford tenancies, but this process must not be used to prevent those on the lowest income from accessing social housing. This is particularly vital for young people who are only entitled to receive lower rates of Universal Credit and, routinely, earn lower rates of pay.

3. Limit time spent in unsupported temporary accommodation

In 2024/25, 36% of young people in unsupported temporary accommodation had been there over a year. Government should ensure temporary accommodation where support is not provided is both time-limited and used only for those at immediate risk of homelessness. Rapid rehousing support should be provided upon entry, and those young people who have been in temporary accommodation for more than a year should be prioritised for social housing by their local authorities. This may require legislative amendments to grant this group of people priority need status.

4. Increase access to the private rented sector by abolishing the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) and resetting Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

Government should remove the Shared Accommodation Rate, which would enable young Universal Credit recipients to better afford one-bedroom private rentals. If immediate abolition is not feasible, a review of benefit rules and planning regulations for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) should be conducted to address barriers pushing vulnerable young people into a shrinking shared-housing market.

The Government should also return to the pre-2016 system of annual LHA reviews, aligning allowances with real-time rental market costs. The freeze in LHA until at least 2027 risks further widening the affordability gap for young renters.

5. Expand Stepping Stone accommodation to support young people to transition into sustainable independent tenancies.

Government should make changes to planning policy enable charities and registered providers to develop income-linked Stepping Stone accommodation. If stepping stone homes are recognised affordable housing product for single young people in work, this will help existing providers to build more affordable homes more quickly and will encourage other charities, housing associations, and private developers to replicate the affordable housing model to help meet the housing need across the country. This can be done through recognising Stepping Stone homes through a National Decision Making Policy (NDMP) so that developers have material evidence to support the planning process with Local Planning Authorities. We also recommend making a change to property use classes to introduce a sub-class to the C3 residential dwelling classification to establish stepping stone homes as a recognised affordable housing product.

6. Improve data availability and quality on youth homelessness

Current statistics do not provide a complete picture of youth homelessness. Following our FOI request, 33% of local authorities were unable to supply full waiting list data. Government should publish presentations data broken down by age, enabling scrutiny of HRA implementation and comparison of youth homelessness rates with the general population.

Endnotes

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- 9 The Government announced the new £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme in 2025. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hundreds-of-thousands-to-get-secure-roof-over-their-heads>
- 10 The Localism Act 2011 is an act that pertains to local authorities. See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>
- 11 The Renters' Rights Act is designed to transform areas of renting. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-renters-rights-act/guide-to-the-renters-rights-act>
- 12 Official statistics on homelessness are available. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>
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