

GETTING THE SYSTEM WORKING FOR YOUNG SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE



Summary Report



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A safe and secure home is the foundation from which young people can build fulfilling lives. However, our research with the domestic abuse and housing sector demonstrates that systemic barriers faced by young survivors mean many continue to be driven into homelessness after experiencing domestic abuse. To strengthen the housing system for young survivors, local authorities must work with the housing and domestic abuse sectors to identify at-risk young people early and ensure support is provided.

This research is based on a policy review, analysis of MHCLG data and statistical data gathered by our Helpline team, as well as twenty interviews and one focus group with domestic abuse and housing professionals, and five case studies of young survivors' experiences.

How Domestic Abuse drives youth homelessness

- Opportunities to prevent and respond to domestic abuse are too often missed by housing and support services, leaving young people without the timely, specialist support needed to safely escape abusive environments.
- MHCLG data shows that 6,420 cases or 11 per cent of young people who presented to their local authority for a prevention or relief duty were driven into homelessness because of domestic abuse in FY 2024-2025.¹
- Domestic Abuse can include physical, sexual, economic, psychological and emotional abuse, and controlling or coercive behaviour.² Both familial abuse and former or current intimate partner abuse can lead directly to a young person losing their home or being at risk of homelessness.

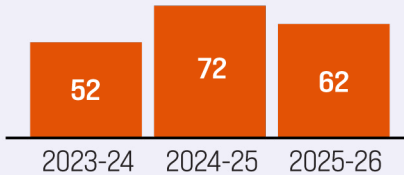
Prevention: Preventing young people being driven into homelessness by domestic abuse

- Local authorities and the broader housing system should strengthen preventative efforts with schools, universities and the wider community, to identify young survivors at risk of homelessness earlier before they lose their home with nowhere safe to go.
- Training on all forms of domestic abuse should be delivered for staff who engage with young people alongside education for young people themselves.
- The complexity of the housing system and homelessness assessments can also be a significant barrier. Local authorities should increase its multi-agency working with the education, social care and health sectors to provide clear visible information that signposts young survivors' legal entitlements.



Response: Systemic barriers for young survivors accessing homelessness support

Figure 1. Domestic Abuse gatekeeping cases recorded by Centrepoint's Helpline 2023-2026



Source: Centrepoint Helpline.

- Housing systems gatekeeping young survivors from support means they are often being left in harmful environments.^{3,4} To meet their legal obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, local authorities must provide all young survivors who require homelessness support with an assessment and the relevant duties.⁵
- In FY 2025-2026, over 20 per cent or around one in five local authority gatekeeping cases received by our Helpline were from young people driven into homelessness due to domestic abuse.

“Young people shouldn’t have to be advocating for themselves so much that it exhausts them...You’re in a position where you’re making the decision whether a young person gets a place to live or not. And for some random person who doesn’t care to have that power, it scares me at times.”

– Young Person

“Councils have started to ask clients to provide proof of experiencing domestic abuse...But the reality is some of our clients can’t approach their perpetrators and shouldn’t be expected to.”

– Domestic Abuse specialist organisation

Routes Out: Housing young domestic abuse survivors

- The housing system should provide young survivors with safe interim accommodation that is age-specific and has appropriate specialist support offers, to prevent further harm.
- Allocations of permanent social housing should consider young survivors’ needs and local authorities should not be ceasing Main Duty if an initial offer isn’t accepted, if it is not safe for the young person to do so.
- Social housing providers often do not sufficiently safeguard young survivors, including misreporting domestic abuse as anti-social behaviour.



Key recommendations

1. Local authorities should lead a coordinated community response through embedding specialist services and resources in existing youth settings. This includes **increased multi-agency meetings with schools, universities and youth groups to identify high risk young people**, as well as providing resources and training on Chapter 21 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance to staff and young people.
2. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should mandate that all local authorities and social housing providers provide a yearly return detailing the figure and percentage of staff that have received professional training on all forms of domestic abuse delivered by an external domestic abuse specialist organisation.
3. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should require that as part of their annual data returns on domestic abuse safe accommodation, local authorities provide a full breakdown of their provision of youth-specific safe and supported accommodation. From this, MHCLG should **prioritise sufficient funding dedicated to meeting gaps** in youth-specific refuges and safe and supported accommodation.
4. The Social Housing Bill should widen its applicability of the joint tenancy changes for domestic abuse survivors to include those that can evidence established residency at the property. Where this is not possible but domestic abuse is present, the Bill should include a clause for priority reallocation of an alternative social home.

References

- 1 MHCLG. 2025. Statutory homelessness ad hoc analyses. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-homelessness-ad-hoc-analyses>.
- 2 UK Government. 2021. Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents>.
- 3 Centrepont. 2025. Local Authority Gatekeeping. Available at: <https://centrepont.org.uk/research-reports/local-authority-gatekeeping>.
- 4 Gatekeeping refers to the denial of a homelessness assessment and/or support by local authorities to people who have a legal right to them.
- 5 UK Government. (2017) Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/section/5#section-5-2>.