THE CENTREPOINT HELPLINE IMPACT REPORT

2025/26

CENTRE POINT
ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

"I have faced the worst day of my life and the support and help from everyone I spoke to was amazing! Can't thank them enough. I was so scared and now I feel safe."

Foreword from Paul Brocklehurst, Senior Manager (Centrepoint Helpline)

Since its launch in 2017, the Centrepoint Helpline has become the UK's only dedicated advice line for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Across the country, thousands of young people[1] face housing instability every year. Many are navigating complex family breakdowns, unsafe living situations, financial pressures, or sudden crises that leave them without a secure place to stay. Others encounter barriers that make it difficult to access the help they are entitled to, from not knowing their rights, to struggling with council processes.

The Centrepoint Helpline exists to remove those barriers. What makes the Helpline so powerful is its ability to meet young people where they are. Whether they reach out by phone, webchat, WhatsApp or email, they are met by a trained adviser who listens without judgement, understands the urgency of their situation, and helps them take the next step towards safety.

Launched in April 2025, WhatsApp has quickly become one of the most popular ways for young people to get in touch, overtaking webchat in a matter of months. It offers a fast, discreet and familiar way to communicate, making it easier for advisers to stay connected with young people who may be moving between places or unable to talk openly. The early success of WhatsApp demonstrates the Helpline's ability to adapt to young people's digital lives, meeting them where they already are and removing barriers to first contact.

Ultimately, regardless of the how young people contact us, the Helpline is not just a service; it is a lifeline. It provides clarity in moments of crisis, reassurance when everything feels uncertain, and practical guidance when young people need it most. It also plays a vital role within Centrepoint's wider mission, working alongside our staff, volunteers, supporters and advocates to ensure that no young person faces homelessness alone. This report showcases the breadth of the Helpline's work and the difference it makes every day. I am immensely proud of what the Helpline has achieved and grateful to the colleagues, partners and supporters who make this work possible.

P. Brocklehurst

Paul Brocklehurst
Senior Manager, Centrepoint Helpline

1 Databank 2025: The State of Youth Homelessness in the UK | Centrepoint, Centrepoint 2026

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The Centrepoint Helpline provides advice and support for young people aged 16-25 who are concerned about their housing situation or facing homelessness.

Call us free on 0808 800 0661

or visit centrepoint.org.uk/do-you-need-help

Lines open Monday to Friday (9am-5pm)

Since 2017, the Centrepoint Helpline has helped thousands of young people every year

2017
The Helpline opens as a small team of advice workers

2018
Live Chat feature launches and a second Helpline office opens in Manchester

2019
We become more effective, building new resources and signposting technology

2020
In response to the pandemic we reshape the Helpline systems to ensure we keep going

2021
A major milestone: 25,000 young people have been supported since launch

2023
Work begins on our biggest Helpline expansion to cope with increased demand

2024
Out-of-hours Chatbot launches to support young people over evenings and weekends

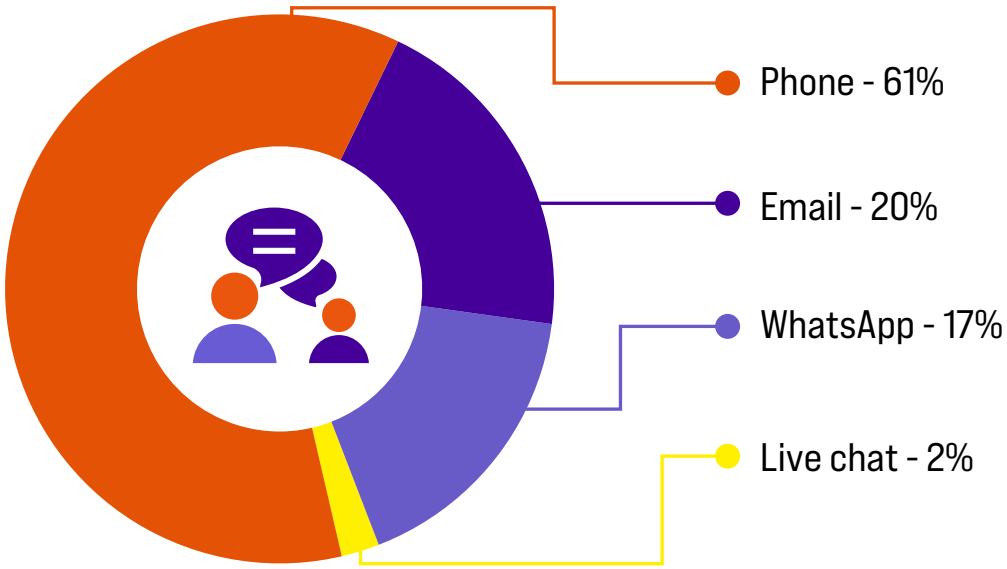
2025
Our legal clinic & Whatsapp services launch, and another milestone: 50,000 supported since launch

The Centrepoint Helpline in numbers

Young people can contact the Centrepoint Helpline in many ways. Each platform plays a vital role in making sure support is accessible, flexible and responsive, whether a young person needs urgent advice, a discreet way to reach out, or guidance outside of our core hours. Together, these channels ensure that no young person is left without a route to help.

5,411 young people were supported by the Helpline in 2025/26

How young people first contacted the helpline:



In the past year, the Centrepoint Helpline has seen:

12% increase - in young people contacting the Helpline for support.

10,645 phone calls - Open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, the free phone line remains our primary support channel.

3,465 text messages - After a call, advisers often send a text message summarising the young person's next steps. These messages are crucial in ensuring that support continues even after the call ends.

370 live chats - Accessible through the Centrepoint website, our live chat allows young people to speak with an adviser in real time.

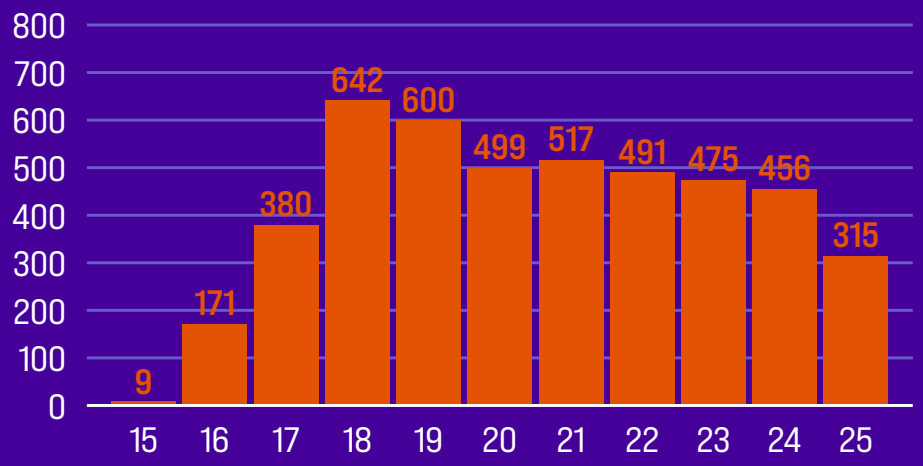
3,098 WhatsApp conversations - Launched in April 2025, WhatsApp has quickly become one of the most popular ways for young people to get in touch.

2,930 emails - Young people and partner organisations can contact the Helpline by email at any time. Email is particularly useful for young people who need to share documents, explain complex situations or communicate at their own pace.

Chatbot - The Chatbot provides an "always-on" layer of support when advisers are offline, ensuring that young people can still access information when they need it.

What does our data show?

Age



Young people under the age of 18 made up around 12% of all contacts this year. Because statutory thresholds apply differently to children, even a single contact from someone under-18 can trigger a substantial amount of follow-up work. For example, under-18s are more likely to require:

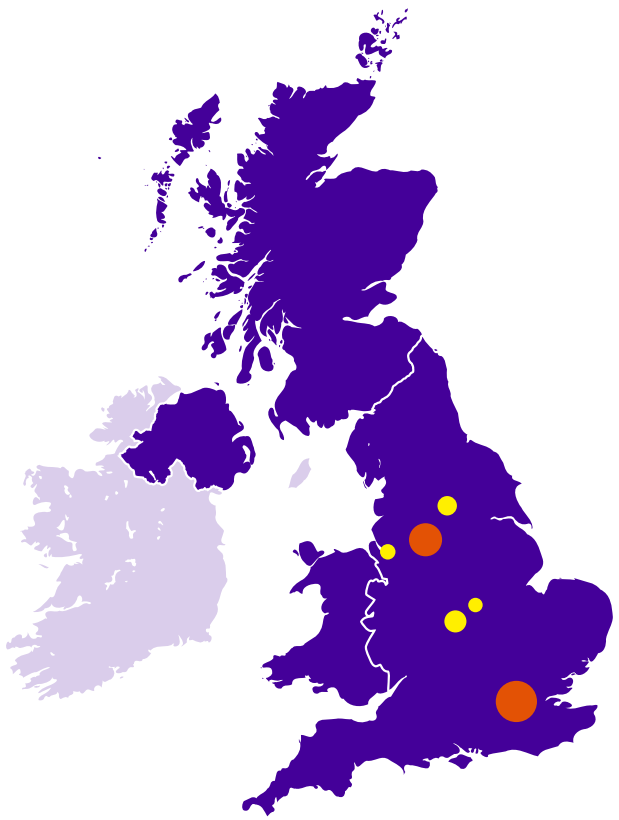
- Immediate safeguarding intervention
- Liaison with social services
- Multi-agency coordination
- Risk assessment and safety planning

The most common age of young people contacting the Helpline this year was 18 (642 young people, making up 14.1% of the overall figure). Many young people describe turning 18 as a point where parents and carers expect them to move out or become financially independent. Centrepoint's Helpline supports them to navigate this transition and take positive steps towards stable, independent adulthood.

Geographic location

London was the most common location of callers this year, with **1,688 (31%) of young people supported by the Helpline coming from the capital.** Young people in London often describe:

- Pressure linked to high living costs and overcrowded housing
- Challenges accessing overstretched local services
- Feelings of isolation despite living in a large city
- Barriers to support due to long waiting lists or inconsistent provision



Manchester was the second most common location, **with 1,336 (25%) young people supported.** As one of the UK's largest urban centres, Manchester has a high concentration of young people facing challenges related to poverty, housing insecurity, and mental health.

The data also highlights regions where very few or no contacts were recorded. These gaps do not indicate a lack of need, rather they suggest that there is still much more to do to ensure every young person, regardless of location, knows the Helpline is here to help.

What happens when young people contact us?

Every young person who contacts the Helpline begins a journey that starts in crisis and ends with greater safety, stability and confidence. By looking at how their needs change from the first conversation to the last, we can see the real impact the Helpline has at moments when young people need it most.

When young people first reach out for support, they are often overwhelmed and unsure where to turn. Their initial conversations tend to focus on immediate practical concerns, with questions such as: How do I get help? Who can I speak to? What are my rights? Terms like 'signposting', 'assessment' and 'referral' frequently arise in these early interactions, highlighting the need for guidance through systems that can often feel complex, intimidating and difficult to navigate.

By the end of the conversation, the focus shifts. Once immediate safety and housing concerns are addressed, young people begin thinking about the future - work, income and financial stability. Terms like 'work' and 'Universal Credit' appear more often in final contacts, reflecting a growing sense of direction and possibility.

Most young people only need one interaction with the Helpline - 68% of callers resolve their issue in a single contact. This reflects the Helpline's ability to provide fast, targeted guidance at moments of crisis.

In some cases, young people need more support spanning over the following days or weeks. Cases involving safety concerns often need additional time because of the complexity and level of risk involved, and immigration issues typically demand even deeper support due to the legal and barriers young people face. Despite this, the average number of conversations per young person remains fairly consistent, reflecting the Helpline's ability to respond to even the most complex situations efficiently and effectively.

'Signposting'

'Who do I speak to?'

'Referral'

'How do I get help?'

'Assessment'

'What are my rights?'

"The person I spoke to was really understanding and patient. They listened carefully to my situation and gave me clear advice and information that helped me feel more supported. I felt heard and respected throughout the conversation."

What are young people telling us?

The language young people use when they contact the Helpline offers a powerful window into their experiences and immediate needs. Across thousands of action notes, certain words and phrases appear repeatedly - ‘council’, ‘rough sleeping’, ‘mental health’, ‘emergency accommodation’ - signalling the practical barriers and emotional strain young people are navigating. Many callers describe feeling scared, panicked, worried or unsafe, and these emotions often sit alongside complex issues such as family conflict, financial instability, domestic abuse, or deteriorating mental health. For those in priority need, the language becomes even more urgent, terms like ‘pregnant’, ‘abuse’, ‘domestic abuse’ and ‘physical violence’ appear frequently, reflecting the dangerous situations they are trying to escape.

Seasonal pressures also shape the way young people express themselves. During winter months, when demand rises and the risks of rough sleeping increases, conversations contain more references to cold and illness, highlighting the immediacy of the support required.

For young people facing immigration challenges, the language used is distinct. These young people frequently reference ‘visa status’, ‘asylum’ and ‘refugee support’. Their situations often intersect with the homelessness pathway, as navigating council assessments and accessing statutory support becomes more complex.

Together, these patterns reveal the reality behind each call. Young people reaching out in moments of crisis, using language that reflects fear, urgency, confusion and hope. Their words highlight the complexity of youth homelessness and the critical role the Helpline plays in listening, understanding and guiding them towards safety.

What advice does the Helpline give?

The core of Centrepoint's Helpline service is empowering callers with knowledge and clear next steps. The data shows that advisers are focused on understanding each young person's situation and creating practical steps to move them forward.

Advisers ask detailed follow-up questions to fully assess risk and need, provide emotional reassurance, and offer guidance on housing options, financial support and mental health. Where necessary, this extends to urgent safeguarding action (e.g. making a referral to social services), emergency support (e.g. contacting a domestic abuse refuge, the police or ambulance service), or arranging follow up contact.

Most commonly, advisers empower young people with knowledge of their rights (58%), signpost to statutory services such as the council (64%), and link young people with local voluntary organisations (61%). Often, a young person will receive all of the above forms of support in one conversation.

Alongside these core actions, advisers also provide urgent, practical support when young people are unable to meet their basic needs. In the last financial year, 319 Food Vouchers were issued to Helpline callers, most of whom were rough sleeping and/or unable to reach a service offering free food.

"One misconception about homelessness is that people are always on the streets, but most young people we speak to are "hidden homeless". This could be sofa surfing, staying in unsuitable situations temporarily or even sleeping in their car. Every night is a fight to find somewhere to sleep."

- Hannah, Helpline Advice Worker

Knowledge of rights

Signposting to statutory services

Linking with voluntary organisations

Often, a young person will receive all of the above forms of support in one conversation.

"Hannah was very empathetic and I felt like I was talking to someone I could trust."

Aryan's story

Aryan first called the Centrepoint Helpline in September when he was rough sleeping after no longer being able to stay in his home. He had a part-time job working as a cleaner but at that moment, was unable to find somewhere affordable to live.

Aryan reached out to his local council explaining his situation. However, despite evidencing that he was rough sleeping, they told him that he was not a priority need and that they were unable to help.

Not knowing where to turn, Aryan had heard about the Centrepoint Helpline and spoke with an advisor about his situation. The team made a referral to a local support service who would offer him a dedicated case worker he could visit in person. After visiting the service, they were able to find a room in an emergency accommodation where he could stay for a couple of weeks.

Having this space allowed Aryan to work out his finances, speak with his employer and apply for a couple more jobs to help him make a longer-term plan. As he had been a practicing lawyer in his home country of India, he channelled his energy into finding roles that matched his skillset and before long found an intern role.

After extending the hostel booking for a few more weeks, he had been able to save up enough to move into a flat of his own.

Looking back on his journey, Aryan can see just how far he has come in a short space of time, and the vital role Centrepoint, and the local support organisation, played in helping him regain stability. After being turned away by the council for support, knowing that there were organisations out there who could support him has allowed Aryan to take important steps forward in his journey towards independence and a promising future in the law.

The role of volunteers

Alongside the paid staff on the Helpline, we also have volunteers to help us increase our capacity and speak to more young people. In the past, volunteers would act in the same role as an adviser, providing advice and support to young people reaching out to us. However, this approach presented its own challenges. Preparing volunteers to confidently provide advice required a significant investment of time, with extensive training and ongoing support. In many cases, volunteers also relied on staff members for guidance while handling calls.

In the last year, we've streamlined our volunteering offer by introducing a new 'triage volunteer' role. Volunteers act as the first point of contact for young people, gathering key information, providing initial emotional support, and passing details to the Helpline team, who then follow up with tailored advice on their rights and options.

This approach has proven highly effective. As volunteers are not expected to provide specialist housing advice, training requirements are lower and the role is less daunting. It also demonstrates our ability to adapt to operational constraints while continuing to meet young people's needs. By introducing triage volunteers, we've reduced waiting times and enabled more young people to access support quickly and efficiently.

"When I contacted Centrepoint Helpline, they responded quickly and did everything they could to help me as soon as possible. The support was professional, kind, and very helpful during a difficult time."

"I was very proud to be shortlisted for the Volunteer of the Year Award for Helpline Partnerships. I have felt so supported by the helpline team and being nominated has made me feel positive about my contribution on the helpline. I originally was a donor for Centrepoint then applied to support the helpline as an adviser. With a background of child nursing, I am keen to give something back to vulnerable people. Thank you very much to Centrepoint for the opportunity to attend the conference."

- Angela, Helpline Volunteer

Additional impact

As the first point of contact for thousands of young people each year, our advisers hold a unique and invaluable perspective on the realities of youth homelessness in the UK. Their frontline insights help Centrepoint understand not only what young people are experiencing, but why these situations are happening, and what needs to change.

This year, the Helpline played a central role in shaping Centrepoint's flagship annual report, **Databank 2025: The State of Youth Homelessness in the UK**[2]. Drawing directly on Helpline case notes, the report uncovered the most common drivers of youth homelessness in 2024-25 and highlighted the systemic barriers young people face when trying to access support. One of the most concerning issues raised was gatekeeping by local authorities.

The Helpline's data shows how widespread this is. In **2025/26** alone, advisers recorded **301** instances of gatekeeping – **6.4% of all contacts**. Gatekeeping can take many forms, from requiring a young person to travel to an inaccessible council office to refusing to offer an assessment. The latter is the most common and often occurs when a young person is not considered to be in 'priority need' - a legal status that includes circumstances such as being pregnant, having dependent children, being aged 16-17, or fleeing domestic abuse, and which obligates the local authority to provide emergency temporary accommodation. Regardless of priority need, any young person facing homelessness is entitled to an assessment. The Helpline's evidence has been crucial in shining a light on this practice and pushing for change. These findings were later featured in The Guardian, bringing national attention to a problem too often overlooked.

By feeding evidence into national reports, informing policy discussions, and supporting legal interventions, the Helpline is supporting the development of a fairer system for young people. It ensures that their voices are placed at the centre of conversations about homelessness, prevention and support.

This work directly connects to the **Helpline Legal Clinic**.

"Not only was Jack professional, supportive and knowledgeable, but he was clearly passionate about helping me and what he was doing, and that was the kicker."

"Honestly out of all the people I have talked to (council, universal credit, even student support) the chat with Daniel was the most useful."

2 Databank 2025: The State of Youth Homelessness in the UK | Centrepoint, Centrepoint 2026

The Helpline Legal Clinic

On the Helpline, advisers spend significant time trying to reach local councils to advocate on a young person's behalf. With long waiting times and inaccessible phone systems, getting through to councils was becoming an issue for the Helpline.

To change this, we launched the Helpline Legal Clinic (HLC) in October 2023 through a unique partnership between Centrepoint, Shelter, and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The Clinic provides specialist legal support to young people who have been unable to access the housing assistance they are entitled to. It is the first service of its kind dedicated specifically to Helpline callers, and its impact has been immediate and profound.

Through the HLC, our Helpline Advice Workers can refer young people for a remote legal appointment as soon as the next working day. LSE law students, trained and supervised by expert housing lawyers at Shelter, sensitively gather the facts and prepare detailed letters of advice and representation to local councils. This combination of legal expertise, academic rigour and compassionate listening gives young people an advocate who will ensure their voice is heard.

In its first months, the Clinic has supported young people in a variety of ways, with some securing accommodation directly because of the legal intervention, others gaining assessments that were previously refused, and several cases ongoing. Behind each outcome is a young person who might otherwise have slipped through the cracks - young women fleeing domestic abuse, young people rough sleeping, and those navigating complex immigration issues or family breakdowns.

The feedback from young people speaks for itself:

"Thank you all so much! You have been so supportive and listened to everything I've said. This will never go unnoticed."

"The efforts and time spent helping me will never be forgotten. Thank you for everything you have done during such a difficult period."

The partnership also creates meaningful opportunities for the next generation of lawyers. LSE students gain experience working with vulnerable young people and seeing the real-world impact of public interest law. One of the students involved said:

"Participating in the Homelessness Clinic has been profoundly meaningful. The young people we work with are often facing circumstances that feel insurmountable—navigating bureaucratic systems whilst dealing with housing instability and the stress of an uncertain future. Knowing that our efforts can help restore someone's sense of agency and hope, or simply provide reassurance during an overwhelming time, makes every case deeply rewarding. It's a privilege to contribute to work that genuinely improves outcomes for those who might otherwise have nowhere to turn for legal support."

The Helpline Legal Clinic is a powerful example of what can happen when organisations come together with a shared purpose, ensuring that no young person is denied their rights or their chance to move forward.

Challenges and aspirations

The environment in which we operate is becoming increasingly challenging. The cost of living crisis, rising homelessness, and the closure of local services mean that young people are facing more complex situations with fewer places to turn. At the same time, the organisations that support them, including Centrepoint, are navigating financial pressures that limit our ability to grow in line with demand.

In order to meet the rising need, we must strengthen our capacity and invest in the future of the service. Below are some of the key pressures we face - and the aspirations that could transform the support we offer with the right funding.

Current challenges

1. Gatekeeping and systematic barriers

Supporting young people who have been turned away by the local council requires time and specialist knowledge. While our policy and legal work is driving progress, the scale of gatekeeping means it remains a core barrier to young people accessing support.

2. Rising demand and fewer places to signpost

The cost-of-living crisis has pushed more young people into unstable housing.[3] Meanwhile, other charities have reduced capacity or closed entirely. This leaves our advisers supporting young people in urgent and complex situations with fewer external options available.

3. Managing WhatsApp demand

As a fairly new addition, WhatsApp brings its own challenges. Conversations unfold slowly over hours rather than minutes, stretching a team already balancing calls, emails and webchats. The time required to manage this is significant, and our current staffing levels are at capacity.

4. Winter pressures and service closures

Winter is always a critical period, but the closure of seasonal night shelters and stricter referral processes since COVID have made it even harder to find safe options for young people.

3 The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on homeless young people | Centrepoint, Centrepoint 2022

Aspirations for the future

Despite these challenges, the Helpline remains ambitious. With increased support, we could:

1. Increase capacity and extend opening times

Growing the team would create the potential to support more young people, reduce waiting times and better manage rising demand across all platforms, especially WhatsApp. With additional capacity, we could explore extended opening hours so support can be more consistent during the evening.

2. Continue to campaign for systemic change

By expanding our collaboration with the Policy Team and the Helpline Legal Clinic, we could continue to challenge unlawful decisions, amplify young people's experiences, and push for systemic change. This would also allow us to take on more cases, provide consistent legal support during university breaks, and ensure young people receive timely advocacy when they need it most. Together, these developments strengthen our ability not only to respond to gatekeeping, but to influence the systems that enable it.

3. Continue Innovating

As young people's needs evolve, so must our service. With more resources, we could transform our website into a clear source of information that rivals established organisations and becomes the go-to place for young people seeking help. Strengthening the digital presence will allow us to reach more young people earlier, offer clearer guidance, and provide support in ways that feel intuitive and relevant.

How we can help you

If you are in England and aged 16 to 25, talk to the Centrepoint Helpline to get advice on your housing situation and rights:

Speak to someone

To access other forms of support and advice, please visit our website:

Do you need help?

How you can help

The Centrepoint Helpline is entirely funded by donations, and every contribution, financial or otherwise, strengthens our ability to be there for young people. If you believe in the importance of a service that listens without judgement and offers practical guidance in moments of crisis, there are several ways you can support us.

Make a donation – any contribution helps keep Centrepoint and our services such as the Helpline running, ensuring young people have someone to turn to when they need support.

Visit our website – learn more about our work, get involved in current campaigns, and find resources to share with your networks.

Fundraise in your community – from sponsored challenges to local events, fundraising is a powerful way to support the Helpline while bringing people together.

Partner with us – organisations can support through strategic partnerships, staff fundraising, awareness campaigns, or pro-bono expertise.

Volunteer your time – there are opportunities across Centrepoint for people who want to contribute skills, time, or lived experience knowledge.

Get in touch with Supporter Care – whether you have a question, an idea, or want to explore ways to help, our team is here to talk.

However you choose to get involved, your support helps ensure that no young person must face their situation alone. Scan the QR code or visit centrepoint.org.uk/support-us to find out more.

Thank you to our supporters

The Centrepoint Helpline is only able to be there for young people because you choose to stand with us. Your support strengthens the service at every level.

You help ensure that when a young person turns to us, they aren't met with silence. They reach someone trained, calm, and ready to guide them towards safety and stability. That impact is real, and it starts with you.

In particular, we would like to extend a special thank you to The ASOS Foundation, one of the founding supporters of our Helpline. Since contributing to its launch, they have donated to the service every year for the past 10 years - an extraordinary commitment that has contributed to establishing the Helpline as our flagship prevention tool and a vital source of support for those who need it most.

A big thank you also to the Coventry Building Society and The Co-operative Bank for their long-standing support, and to everyone who has supported the Helpline in any way! Your commitment makes this work possible and continues to help young people across England positively transform their lives.

CENTRE POINT

ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Patron **HRH The Prince of Wales**

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We sometimes use models and change the names of the young people we work with to protect their identity, however, all stories are true and as told by the young person.

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR