



**Wales Centre for Public Policy**  
**Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru**

## **Youth Homelessness and Leaving Care**

An international  
evidence review

Andrew Connell  
15 May/Mai 2019

## **Digartrefedd Pobl Ifanc a Gadael Gofal**

Adolygiad rhyngwladol  
o dystiolaeth

# Introduction

Complementary reports published by WCfPP October 2018

- *Preventing Youth Homelessness: an international review of evidence* (Kaitlin Schwan, David French, et al)
  - Informed by focus groups and presentation at Llamau
- *Youth homelessness & care leavers: mapping interventions in Wales* (Tamsin Stirling)
- Commissioned by the Welsh Government as part of its commitment to end youth homelessness in Wales by 2027.
- Informed statement on youth homelessness by Minister for Housing and Regeneration, 20 November 2018

 @WCfPP

# The international evidence review (Schwan, French et al): questions and methods

- Which factors (or patterns of factors) are known to increase risk of youth homelessness?
- Which policies and programmes are effective in preventing youth homelessness?
- What are the characteristics of effective strategies to prevent youth homelessness?
- What evidence is still needed to support the prevention of youth homelessness, and how might it be generated?

International review of all available scholarly/grey research on youth homelessness prevention published since 2000

Broader review of other relevant policies and interventions

International practice review

 @WCfPP

# The international evidence review: definitions

- Youth Homelessness: “the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2016, p.1).
- Youth homelessness prevention: “Policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that someone will experience homelessness. It also means providing those who have been homeless with the necessary resources and supports to stabilise their housing, enhance integration and social inclusion, and ultimately reduce the risk of the recurrence of homelessness.” (Gaetz and DeJ, 2017, p. 35)

# A socio-ecological model of factors causing youth homelessness

*Structural factors:* broad systemic, economic, and societal issues that affect opportunities, social environments, and outcomes for individuals

*System failures:* inadequate policy and service delivery within and between systems which make it more likely that a young person will become homeless

*Individual and relational factors:* personal circumstances that place people at risk of homelessness

Youth homelessness is often driven by structural and systemic factors that create the conditions under which personal or relational crises produce homelessness for young people.

 @WCfPP

# A five-part typology of homelessness prevention

*Structural prevention:* upstream work to address structural and systemic factors that expose people to the risk of homelessness.

*Systems prevention:* addressing institutional and systems failures that either indirectly or directly contribute to the risk of homelessness

*Early intervention:* helping young people as soon as possible to keep their current housing or get appropriate housing quickly.

*Eviction prevention:* helping young people who are at risk of being evicted to keep their housing.

*Housing stability:* supporting people to move from being homeless to having the right kind of housing, so that they never become homeless again.

 @WCfPP

# International Review Recommendations 1

## The Welsh Government should

- Adopt a cross-government commitment to preventing youth homelessness, with a national strategy and an emphasis on evidence-based interventions
- Set up a National Research Agenda to help understand better how different organisations and services can work together
- Create a tool for organisations and services to identify young people at risk of homelessness and give them the help they need
- Make sure young people, and professionals like teachers and doctors, know what services and benefits they can get.

## Health and Social Care services should

- Adopt 'zero discharge into homelessness' policies.
- Create youth-friendly ways to reduce risk from harmful behaviours
- Guarantee support for care leavers to age 25, if needed.

 @WCfPP

# International Review Recommendations 2

## Schools and education services should

- Set up partnerships with health and other services to identify young people at risk of becoming homeless, and help them get the support they need.

## The criminal justice system should

- Involve young people being discharged from the system in planning where they will live.
- Review how it works to make sure it does not put young people at risk of homelessness.
- Young people should be educated about their rights and get help to claim them

 @WCfPP

# International Review Recommendations 3

## Housing services should

- Invest in ways of providing housing that are focussed on young people, that work, and are grounded in the voices and choices of young people themselves.
- Focus on preventing young people from becoming homeless, as well as helping young people who are already homeless.
- The law on homelessness should be strengthened to focus on preventing youth homelessness, and on helping young people who are leaving the health, care, and criminal justice systems.

# Mapping interventions in Wales (Stirling)

Surveyed and mapped homelessness interventions in Wales specifically for people 16-25, and located them in context of international evidence review

- Identification and interrogation of source information e.g. homelessness strategies, local housing strategies, directories of Supporting People funded services, relevant statistics and publications
- Review of information about services available online
- Stakeholder interviews with a small number of key informants within and beyond Welsh Government;
- Telephone interviews with a member of the homelessness/housing options team in 19/22 local authorities.

 @WCfPP

# A profile of care leavers 2016-17 (Statistics for Wales 2017 cited in Stirling)

Total care leavers 2016-17: 677.

609 aged 18 or over, 116 aged 17, 52 aged 16.

Destinations

- Independent living and no longer looked after 193
- Returned to live with parents, relatives, etc 141
- Continued to live with former foster parents 80
- To care of adult social services 32
- Custody 28

'Suitable accommodation' 613: unsuitable accommodation 64

WLGA evidence to NAWPAC 2018 noted 25% rise in number of looked after children over a decade and highlighted increasing pressures on families due to cuts in welfare and services.

 @WCfPP

# Key findings

- Variation in approach & provision
- Information sharing & joint protocols not in place everywhere
- Nationally produced guidance used very differently across authorities but direction of travel = more use of positive pathway
- Gaps in provision
  - suitable emergency accommodation
  - young people with complex needs
  - affordable housing options
- Some innovation/interesting thinking going on

 @WCfPP

# The International Review's typology of prevention: interventions in Wales

- Most local interventions in Wales are **systems prevention, early intervention or housing stabilisation**
- LAs and partners do undertake **eviction prevention** work e.g. landlord liaison/mediation, but usually not young person specific.
  - There are some examples of work to reduce the likelihood of young people losing a tenancy e.g. pre-tenancy work and training settings. But as tenancy failure is a key cause of homelessness for care leavers these initiatives could be more widespread.
- **Structural prevention** probably cannot be achieved by local authorities on their own.

 @WCfPP

# Suggested actions 1

- WG & LAs use this mapping exercise as starting point for discussion about interventions to prevent youth homelessness.
- Focus on all five strands of the prevention typology
- Support LAs to apply & use the Positive Pathway and Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework more consistently, e.g. through the National Homelessness Network;
- Encourage LAs where robust joint working is not in place to improve arrangements between housing and children's services in particular;
- NHN to be the vehicle for sharing practice and experience, and make links between it and e.g. the Leaving Care Forum. Addressing untenable differences in delivery/provision might be a constructive challenge function for the NHN's members;
- LAs (singly or in regional groupings) fully consider the needs of young people who are / at risk of becoming homeless, including care leavers, when developing their homelessness strategies;

 @WCfPP

# Suggested actions 2

- LAs and young persons' specialist organisations review their online information to ensure that it is up to date and accessible to young people, their families/carers, and advocacy organisations;
- WG develops requirements relating to additional youth homelessness funding in 2019-20 that draw on conclusions of the international evidence review and this mapping exercise;
- WG's Affordable Housing Supply Independent Review takes account of the housing needs of young people, including care leavers.
  - Shortages of social rented one-bed properties and shared housing, and barrier to accessing PRS accommodation in the private rented sector created by a benefit limits.
  - The Review could look at evidence-based youth-specific housing models in order to increase available housing stock for this age group.

 @WCfPP

# Suggested actions 3

Short term	Medium term	Long term
<p>Current, accessible online info &amp; advice</p> <p>Robust, effective family mediation</p> <p>YP-focussed eviction prevention</p> <p>Nightstop/ supported lodgings + family mediation as appropriate</p>	<p>Multi-agency work to deliver 'no discharge into homelessness' approach</p> <p>Housing First for Youth</p>	<p>Prevent adverse childhood experiences</p>

Plus

Identify and deliver social/affordable housing options for YPs

Reduce/end poverty amongst families and YPs

Psychologically informed approach within all services

Ensure programmes/interventions support YPs' wellbeing, social inclusion, connection with community & engagement with education/employment/training

# Key elements of Ministerial announcement, 20 November 2018

- £3.7 million to fund prevention- making sure counsellors in schools, youth workers etc understand risks of homelessness- and a youth homelessness co-ordinator in each council
- £4.8 million for new ideas about providing housing for young people, including Housing First
- £1 million extra for St David's Day Fund- 'bank of mum & dad' for care leavers
- £250K for better information for young people and those working with them- in conjunction with EYHC
- £250K for tenancy support

WCPP's reports provided explicit context and framing for the announcement

 @WCfPP

# International Review: questions and comments from Llamau presentation November 2018

- Will the Welsh Government's promises help? They have to prove it.
  - It's up to the public, and people like us/ Llamau/ EHC, to make a fuss and keep them to their promises.
- What happens if people don't say they need help? Will they really speak up about being homeless or at risk of it?
- Would having someone in schools, youth clubs etc help? Yes- but they'll need more counsellors, youth workers, etc.
- What if people aren't on the (school etc) system, - how will they be helped?
  - Can you keep people from falling out of the system?
- You need to skill up social workers, and train the people who should know about homelessness already, so that they will offer real help
- When people move from one council area to another, councils need to talk to each other
- Make more housing available

 @WCfPP

# References

Schwan K, French D, Gaetz S, Ward A, Akerman J & Redman M (2018) *Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence*. Cardiff, Wales Centre for Public Policy

Stirling S (2018) *Youth homelessness and care leavers: Mapping interventions in Wales*. Cardiff, Wales Centre for Public Policy

Both reports available at

<https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/preventing-youth-homelessness/> (English)

<https://www.wcpp.org.uk/cy/cyhoeddi/atal-digartrefedd-pobl-ifanc/> (Welsh)

 @WCfPP



**Wales Centre  
for Public Policy**  
**Canolfan Polisi  
Cyhoeddus Cymru**

 @WCfPP

---

[www.wcpp.org.uk](http://www.wcpp.org.uk)

Cardiff University, 10/12 Museum Place. Cardiff, CF103BG  
Prifysgol Caerdydd, 10/12 Plas yr Amgueddfa, Caerdydd, CF103BG