

Housing, poverty and young people

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The role of housing and housing providers in tackling poverty experienced by young people in the UK

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Aims:

- to examine what works in tackling poverty amongst young people (16-25) who do not live in the parental home, with a focus on the role that housing providers can play;
- to investigate the feasibility of implementing such measures across the UK.

Partners

- Community Housing Cymru
- Centrepoint
- Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
- Housing Europe

Three streams of work

- Evidence review of what housing interventions work in tackling poverty for young people both in the UK and abroad:
 - a desk based literature review
 - an online survey of housing providers in Europe
- Case studies - new evidence from housing providers: actions and outcomes for poverty experienced by young people
- Quantitative analyses of housing and youth poverty in UK, drawing on secondary datasets

Role of housing providers

- In the UK, it is routine for social housing organisations to address issues critical to poverty such as financial exclusion, debt or unemployment. In some other countries, social housing provision is more strictly “accommodation” focused.
- However, few housing organisations in the UK consider reducing poverty to be an explicit goal.
- Projects which help young people may not always be exclusively aimed at young people.

The impact of social housing

- In England, poor young single person households are:
 - most likely to be tenants in social housing (71%), as compared to 26% of all young single person households (evidence from the English Housing Survey 2012/13)
- Longitudinal analysis of young, single people across the UK between 2009 and 2015 (using the survey Understanding Society) – the impact of becoming a social tenant on wellbeing. Positive impacts on:
 - Housing quality
 - Gross income and financial prospects
 - Personal health

How are housing providers addressing poverty?

	Housing circumstances	Wider work of housing organisations
Direct impact on reducing poverty	<p>low rent</p> <p>housing within HB limits</p>	<p>managing expectations regarding sharing and preparing for sharing</p> <p>employment</p> <p>money management</p>
Impact on employment	<p>stability to help find and sustain employment</p>	<p>support (financial) during transition to work</p> <p>employability skills</p> <p>work placements</p>
Impact on wider material consequences of poverty	<p>tenancy sustainment</p> <p>homelessness prevention</p>	<p>independent living skills</p> <p>improve tenants' health and wellbeing</p>

Case studies: approach and methods

- Chose innovative or unusual schemes (many award winners)
- Different ways of addressing youth poverty
- Chose schemes across Great Britain (3 in Wales, 1 in Scotland and 6 in England)
- Used a range of methods, including:
 - interviews with scheme leads
 - interviews and/or focus groups with clients (some with a longitudinal element)
 - interviews with clients who were referred, but did not attend a course
 - interviews with referral agencies
 - access to anonymised administrative data

Case studies: Pre-tenancy training schemes

MyPad : South Wales

Pre-tenancy training

one-day course designed to prepare young people for independent living and sustaining their tenancies

The Money House: London

Pre-tenancy training

5-day course designed to prepare young people for independent living and sustaining their tenancies

Case studies: Employability schemes

- **Traineeship: East Midlands**

Employment – traineeships

Course designed to make young people ‘work ready’ and a precursor to finding an apprenticeship. Included a work placement and Functional Skills in English and Maths.

- **Community Wellbeing Apprenticeship: NW England**

Employment – apprenticeships combined with college placement and community work.

The apprenticeship was designed to make young people ‘work ready’ and lead to work or an apprenticeship.

Case studies: Supported housing schemes (1/2)

Catch 22's Peer Landlord scheme : London

Shared housing with floating support and a lead tenant model

SmartLets: West Midlands (social lettings agency)

SmartLets acted as an intermediary between clients and private landlords. The housing was within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels and included shared housing for under 35s.

New Roots: East Midlands

Self-contained and shared housing with floating support

Case studies: Supported housing schemes (2/2)

Cantref Foyer: West Wales

Supported housing

Rock Trust: Scotland

Supported housing (including shared housing with lead tenant model) and drop-in advice centre

Denbigh Hub: North Wales

Supported housing and drop-in advice centre

Case studies: what worked well in tackling poverty (1/3)

- Known and trusted organisations – local reputation
- Coordination between services – individually tailored support
- Examples of good working relationships between arms of large organisations and different organisations, such as:
 - Housing scheme and CAB
 - Housing and young people's drop-in
 - Housing provider and colleges
 - Housing provider and probation service
 - Housing provider and social services

Case studies: what worked well in tackling poverty (2/3)

- Housing that provides a sense of independence, with on-demand support (knowing support is there if/when needed)
 - *“Schemes like this are worthwhile because there are **people out there who do need that bit of help and support** because they haven’t got family or friends who can help them or support them and it is a really good way, **using it as a stepping stone** to get themselves in a position where most people want to be, which is having their own place, **being able to live the life they want to live and go on from there**” (Client, social lettings agency)*
- Housing that allows for changing personal circumstances – e.g. new partner, have a child
 - allowing partners to live with a tenant
 - offering support to partners

Case studies: what worked well in tackling poverty (3/3)

- Some successes with shared housing models
 - overcoming initial anxieties about sharing
 - young people seeing the benefits of sharing
 - *“I’ve just turned 17 this week. To me, getting a single flat, when I’ve never lived on my own before is quite scary”*
(Client, supported housing)
- Tenancy training courses that engage young people and allow them to learn in a fun, interactive and informal environment
- Individually focused employment schemes

Case studies: challenges in tackling poverty (1/3)

1. Affordability of housing

- reliance on supply of substantially sub-market housing
- reliance on Housing Benefit exemptions doesn't help young people escape poverty by finding work

“It’s risky to work” (Client, supported housing - wanted to find work, but had previously quit a job because he could not afford the rent on his wages)

Case studies: challenges in tackling poverty (2/3)

2. Risk of 'over-supporting' young people

- very low rent giving little incentive to move on
- high rent and high quality services giving little incentive to find work or move on
- paying apprentices more than the 'going rate'
- schemes blocking direct communication with landlords (re: maintenance)
- reliance on specialist services – no integration with wider society

Case studies: challenges in tackling poverty (3/3)

- 3. Engaging young people to attend pre-tenancy training courses and other kinds of group work**
 - experimenting with making courses 'compulsory' for certain groups or moving on
 - young people not always keen to be in groups
 - need to find ways of coping with fluctuating attendance
 - timing courses appropriately for moving on
- 4. Meeting the needs of the online world (lack of WiFi in shared housing)**
- 5. Coordinating with wider education and training provision**
 - Housing Associations not as well linked into this sector as they need to be
 - clashing styles of engagement

Can we transfer good ideas to other areas? (1/2)

The role of housing providers

- often well-placed to initiate and deliver support to young people at risk of poverty
- not well-placed to deliver a nationwide co-ordinated service – schemes are therefore often ad hoc, and localised
- not strategic in terms of where they are set up
- transferability therefore depends on there being a suitable organisation to spearhead a new programme in their local area

Can we transfer good ideas to other areas? (2/2)

Local economies and policy differences

- some schemes rely on availability of low(ish) rent housing, affordable to young people on low wages and/or housing benefit
- wage levels vary less than rents – high rent areas have worst affordability, but also the best employment opportunities
 - study in low rent areas, then move for a job?
- policy context is different in Scotland and Wales – ‘Supporting People’ funding provides services not easily funded in England

Key conclusions (1/2)

- **Lack of understanding amongst young people of causes of poverty**
 - incomes and expenditures
- **Sustainability of schemes**
 - cost effectiveness – what is the cost per client?
 - is the scheme providing good incentives to train or work?
 - potential for shared housing to provide genuinely low rents?
 - Is it providing the right financial incentives to encourage young people to move on at the right time?

Key conclusions (2/2)

- **Engaging young people**
 - styles of working that are 'not like school'
 - value of increasing confidence and interpersonal skills
- **Importance of timing and co-ordination**
 - of employment, housing and wider support

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