

Meeting hosted by New Horizon Youth Centre: Only day centre exclusively for young people

Main challenges:

- Lack of accommodation available
- Cuts to services
- Prices of private renting

The main priority is to support young people to return home, as it is very difficult to find appropriate accommodation.

How is homelessness linked to gangs and youth violence?

Young people become homeless because of violence, not the other way round.

- Fleeing violence
- Need to leave a gang
- Want to continue in gangs, but acknowledge they need some support
- Referred
- Sometimes it's better to be in prison than homeless; especially in winter

One of the examples discussed at the meeting:

Young leader who saved a young person from being hurt during an attack at their youth club by locking them in an office. They are now scared to leave house and go back to youth club. Want to move to a different area.

Discussing attacks in youth centres:

Working with the police: in the end of the day it's them who you will ultimately call for protection. Ask to come in plain clothes and keep a low profile. Push back when they ask to speak to the young people right away. Be careful with assumptions as girls are often straightaway seen as victims – it's important to remember that they are also sometimes involved in violence.

Hidden homelessness: 'Sofa-surfing'

Presents a particular challenge, as these young people are not officially recognised as homeless as they are not on the streets. How can you manage a child protection concern when social services say there is no risk from the parents? What should be done when parents need to be supported?

<http://www.channel4.com/news/sofa-surfing-hidden-homeless-britain-youth-benefits>

Housing support

Accommodation available:

- [Centrepoint](#) – challenges: limited space, can accept very few referrals, mostly through LA's pathways
- [YMCA](#) – challenges: low support centres, if young people find work they need to pay rent (£200/week)
- Housing organisations
- Hostels
- Private rental schemes
- Foyers

Accommodation is very scarce and it is difficult to find housing. Some tips to support a young person's case:

- Employment and training – tick boxes for hostels
- Honesty: get the young person to write a letter explaining their story
- Send referral and then follow up with a call to explain the context and how the young person is now engaging in positive activities
- Show that the young person is supported

Sometimes, returning home is the best option for a young person. It is important to make them understand what to expect if they move into supported housing:

- There will be rules that will be equally strict to your parents', if not more
- Break down myths: there will be key workers with them all the time and there are strict curfews

Looking at other areas for more agencies that can offer housing support to young people

- Addictions:
 - [Kairos Community](#)
Kairos offers supported abstinence-based accommodation to people who have completed detox and rehab. Kairos has 28 post-rehab Move-On houses with 162 beds located in the London Boroughs of Brent, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth. Residents are supported in their continuing recovery and steps towards life in the wider community
 - [Spitalfields Crypt Trust](#) provides a friendly, safe and reliable place where support, recovery and healing can take place for men with addictions
- Rough sleeping: [StreetLink](#) enables the public to alert local authorities in England about people sleeping rough in their area. This service offers the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and is the first step someone can take to ensure rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them
- Mental Health:
 - [Look Ahead](#) provide support, care and accommodation to people with a variety of needs in London and the South East
 - [Community Housing and Therapy](#) is a registered charity that runs therapeutic communities which help people who are experiencing severe mental ill health gain a foothold in the world by positioning themselves in relationship to the other and to language, and finding stabilisation in relation to the community rather than to their symptoms
 - [Together](#) is a national charity working alongside people with mental health issues on their journey towards independent and fulfilling lives

Young people's rights

A young person in custody under the age of 18 is a 'looked after child' and the local authority has a duty of care.

- [Just for Kids Law](#)
Just for Kids Law provides advocacy, support and assistance to young people in difficulty; particularly those in trouble with the law, looked after children and those at risk of exclusion from school. We combine specialist legal representation (often pro bono) with individualized packages of support to address the multiple and complex issues that our young people face and that prevents them fully engaging within society. Once their lives are stabilized they work with our opportunities program to get into positive activities including work, education or training. **It's best if the young person rings them themselves – support young people to know their rights and provide legal support**
- [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#)
This overview provides a summary of the homelessness legislation and the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities and others towards people who are homeless or at risk of

homelessness. This overview does not form part of the statutory code of guidance and is not a legal commentary

- [Advocacy](#)

The child's right to be heard in matters affecting them is enshrined in **Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child** which also stipulates that 'the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body'

Organisations and projects mentioned at the meeting

[London Fairness Commission](#)

Rosie Ferguson, Chief Executive at London Youth, is one of the commissioners. The commission are planning an event in September-October and are currently looking for stories around housing in preparation for the event. If you have a story you would like to share or for more information, please contact jim.minton@londonyouth.org.uk

[London Youth Gateway](#)

Offers a collaborative and innovative single pathway approach to young people from every borough to prevent youth homelessness. It provides young people from protected characteristic groups access to the services they need to secure accommodation and sustain tenancies. Funded by London Councils, the London Youth Gateway is a partnership between New Horizon Youth Centre, Alone in London, Depaul UK and Stonewall Housing, each established providers of services to young homeless people.

[Safe and Secure](#)

Safe & Secure is a unique programme that helps young people who are at high risk of becoming victims of gang violence, change their lives. We provide the participants with intensive advice and support and work with partners to re-locate them to different parts of London where we help them set up new lives free from harm.

[Alone in London](#)

Alone in London's information service can provide you with initial advice and information on what to do if you are homeless or about to become homeless and direct you to services in your area.

[Street Doctors](#)

We change the lives of high risk young people by giving them the skills they need to deliver life-saving first aid. But as well as saving lives we use first aid as a tool to educate and empower these young people, giving them confidence and a sense of responsibility for their actions, helping to change their attitude towards violence.

[One Mile Away](#)

Penny Woolcock's award-winning documentary charts the attempts by two warring gangs, the Burger Bar Boys (B21) and the Johnson Crew (B6), to bring peace to their neighbourhood in Birmingham.

Can be watched online at: <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/one-mile-away/on-demand/52750-001>

[Commonweal Housing](#)

Commonweal Housing is a registered charity seeking to make bold experiments in housing. Using social investment from our principal benefactor and other like-minded, forward-thinking organisations, we work to develop innovative housing projects.

Peer Landlord Project:

<http://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/our-projects/peer-landlord-london>

The Peer Landlord project seeks to test a model of shared housing provision where more advanced clients are able to provide informal, positive, role model peer-support to other clients in a structured, supportive accommodation arrangement.

[Railway Children](#)

Street Level

We meet the immediate needs of children on the streets. Our outreach workers go out on the streets to find vulnerable children before an abuser can.

Communities

We change the perceptions of local communities. We make children on the streets visible to their communities and aid understanding of how they came to be there.

Government

We use research, expertise and strong relationships with key individuals and departments to influence policy makers and leverage government support.

Railway children project in partnership with New Horizon Youth Centre:

<https://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/news/2014/09/new-pilot-project-launches-in-london-stations/>

[FEANTSA](#)

FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, was established in 1989 as a European non-governmental organisation to prevent and alleviate the poverty and social exclusion of people threatened by or living in homelessness. It is the only major European network that focuses exclusively on homelessness.

European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: Supporting pathways out of homelessness:

<http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article2801&lang=en>

Other useful organisations and websites

[Depaul UK](#)

Depaul UK helps young people who are homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged.

[Stonewall Housing](#)

Stonewall Housing is the specialist lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) housing advice and support provider in England.

[Homeless in London](#)

Homeless London is the leading source of information about advice, support, hostels and accommodation services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness in London.

[Apply for sheltered and supported housing](#)

To apply for sheltered and supported housing you first need to identify the appropriate local authority. Online portal to support search of services in England.

[No second night out](#)

No Second Night Out (NSNO) focuses on helping those who find themselves rough sleeping on the streets of London for the first time. We will ensure there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers, and will provide an offer that means they do not have to sleep out for a second night.

[Turning Point](#)

Their project Housing Link supports people with mental health needs, substance misuse issues and those with a learning disability to successfully maintain their housing tenancies.

[Shelter](#)

The housing and homelessness charity.

[Emergency Housing Advice](#)

[Housing Advice Helpline](#)

[Homeless UK](#)

Information on over 9,000 services - hostels, day centres and other advice and support services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

[Crisis](#)

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people.

[The Advocate's Gateway](#)

The Advocate's Gateway gives free access to practical, evidence-based guidance on vulnerable witnesses and defendants, including children and young people aged 16-17.