



# Help us to move on!

Practical policy solutions to  
problems facing young people  
in Hampshire

Southern Policy Centre report  
for the Blagrove Trust

April 2019



# Southern Policy Centre



## About the Southern Policy Centre

The Southern Policy Centre was established in 2014 as the only independent think-tank for the region of central southern England. We specialise in improving public policy-making by conducting research into the social challenges facing society: these include poverty and social exclusion, devolution, and the implications of an ageing population. The SPC uses Open Data to inform its research and is the host to the ODI Hampshire node, part of the Open Data Institute's worldwide network.

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## About the Blaggrave Trust

The Blaggrave Trust works in partnership with approximately 60 organisations per year in the south of England. Most of our work is focused on the 16-24 age group and has the overall aim of supporting a successful transition to adulthood, particularly for those facing disadvantage. Many of our funded partners support employability and skills development, or offer housing support, advice, information and guidance for this age group. They all have a deep commitment to amplifying young people's voices, and listening and responding to what they have to say.

Blaggrave commissioned this research because we wanted to better understand the issues, as young people experience them, in our region of focus as a funder. We also want to know more about how we, our partner organisations and other stakeholders can work alongside young people to address those issues.

[www.blagravetrust.org](http://www.blagravetrust.org)

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## Executive summary

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People aged 16 to 25 have done most of their growing up in the shadow of the 2008 financial crisis, austerity, and (at the time of writing) nearly three years of Brexit uncertainty. This report into the problems facing young people in Hampshire was commissioned by the Blagrove Trust and carried out by the Southern Policy Centre team, working with a group of local young people as 'peer researchers' with direct and recent experience of the issues their contemporaries face. The ethos behind this entire piece of work is that it has been informed, led and shaped by young people's experiences throughout. In this we believe it is a valuable piece of research throughout which the 'voice' of the young people resonates.

This study focuses on Hampshire because it is the 3rd-most populous county in England (at c. 1.84m)<sup>1</sup>, and covers both urban and rural areas. Our initial scoping showed that it has a myriad of public and voluntary organisations engaging with young people. Our aim was to gain a detailed understanding of a complex system in one area rather than to conduct a superficial analysis of a wider area. We are confident that the findings of this research are applicable to the broader geographic area covered by the Blagrove Trust. All mentions of 'Hampshire' or the 'region' in this report, therefore, refer to the geographic area covered by Hampshire County Council and the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth. Many of those we interviewed had experienced some form of crisis that required them to turn to statutory or voluntary agencies. However, our wider surveys also revealed significant numbers experiencing similar problems to a greater or lesser extent. We estimate that in the Hampshire region alone, a minimum of 40,000 young people are affected in some way by the issues we cover - and that number may be considerably higher.<sup>2</sup> The 40,000 alone represents over 21% of the total Hampshire region's 16- to 25-year-old population.<sup>3</sup>

The research team went to homeless hostels, mentoring centres, care leavers' groups, colleges, housing estates and community centres across Hampshire, from Southampton to Aldershot, interviewing young people. The two interview questions were, very simply: What problems have you already faced? What problems do you expect to face as you try to get to where you want to be in the next five years?

It emerged almost instantly that there were two themes that young people felt overwhelmingly strongly about: education, training and employment (ETE), and housing. We found that those who have housing problems often also have problems with ETE, and vice-versa. The second stage of the research therefore focused specifically on these two areas, using further surveys (including a housing survey with 459 respondents), interviews and focus groups. Additionally, an overarching and recurrent theme throughout the research was that young people do not feel listened to.

In housing, the key issues are around homelessness, quality and quantity of provision, and affordability. Homelessness among young people is on the increase: in Southampton, homelessness rates among the 16-24 age group increased by 35% between 2016 and 2017. 16- and 17-year-olds who should be given care assessments under the 'Southwark judgement' are frequently not getting them. Young people who are living in homeless hostels encounter a wide variety of problems and often become 'trapped' and disincentivised to work. 73% of respondents to our housing survey aged between 21 and 25, most of whom are still living in their family home, felt 'stuck' and unable to move on. Many young people will have to share accommodation but don't know how to go about doing that in a way that works for them, preferably with likeminded people. Our proposed policy recommendations

include a trial of a 'Housing First' model targeted specifically at homeless young people, and the setting up of a 'sharing agency' which is tailored to the needs of young people who are not studying full-time but would nevertheless be happy to share with others.

In ETE the key drivers of the issues facing young people are low wages and insecure employment, including 'zero-hours'-type contracts, which then feed back into a vicious cycle of making it difficult to secure appropriate accommodation. One-third of those answering our survey in full time employment aged 18-25 are on non-permanent contracts such as zero-hours, and 81% of survey respondents who are in full-time employment are earning less than £10 an hour. Many of the young people we spoke to had negative experiences at school. Education and training provision is not sufficiently broad, with too much of a focus on 'academic' qualifications. Young people are being forced to repeatedly re-sit Maths and English GCSEs, while there is inadequate focus on the teaching of Functional Skills, and an insufficient supply of work-based training and apprenticeships. Proposed policy recommendations include the expansion of provision of 'informal college' places where young people who have failed to thrive in traditional school or college settings are supported through a different approach to learning in acquiring the skills and qualifications they need, often while working at the same time.

Young people do not feel listened to - and even when they are, they express frustration that nothing seems to come of it and so they feel they are not being heard. One key practical policy recommendation here is for council providers of services - and by this we mean the lead functional officers in areas such as Housing and ETE - to adopt the standards for listening to and working with young people which are set out in the National Youth Agency Commissioning Guidelines. We firmly believe that solutions to the problems set out in this report will be better if young people are directly involved in formulating and implementing them.

Our advocacy strategy for starting to address some of the issues raised in this report proposes concrete changes and ways in which the journey towards achieving them can begin. It seeks to 'practice what it preaches' by involving young people directly in the processes of lobbying, cajoling and persuading policy-makers to do things differently. It seeks to ensure that young people's voices remain at the forefront of the work. Real change is possible where there is goodwill and a willingness to genuinely listen, engage and deliver it.

The full list of 15 policy recommendations is set out at the end of the report. The detailed advocacy strategy for delivering them is set out as an Appendix.

## Foreword

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We are a group of young people aged 16-25 who have been working with the Southern Policy Centre to research problems facing young people in the Hampshire region. We are at different stages in our lives. Some of us are living close to homelessness, while others among us have lived in mother and baby units or been unaccompanied asylum seekers. Those of us who have come through different struggles want to help others who are still in crisis. Below are some of our stories.

'I am currently living in the main youth homeless hostel in Southampton. Since moving into the hostel, I have lost some hope. I want to get a job but I keep getting turned down. I will have to move out of the hostel soon and I don't know where to go to. Most private landlords won't take claimants or, if they do, the rooms are really poor quality and insecure. I see people I know who left the hostel now living on the streets.'

'My real housing experience started when I was 17. Due to falling pregnant at a young age and having no structured or reliable support network, I moved into a mother and baby unit. But there were negative experiences I had within supported accommodation, like the staff allowing a mixture of different people from different backgrounds to live in the same environment as me and my child - for example, young people who suffer with substance misuse. This then caused me to become isolated within my own home as I did not feel safe. Eventually I got my own council flat. Now I am full-time at college training to be a nurse. I worry that in the last couple of years some of the support I got has ended. I wanted to be involved in this project so that young people can feel empowered to feel independent, meet new people and succeed in life.'

'I am an asylum seeker. I used to be a looked after child. I can say I was lucky when my foster carers were willing to keep me in their home as a lodger after I turned 18. However, they will be moving to another city this summer and that means I have to move out which entails some issues. Firstly, I want to stay in the Southampton area to continue my studies but the waiting list for council housing is very long. Secondly, if I still don't have a place to live when my carers move, I will be transferred to temporary accommodation while waiting for a new place. I really don't want that scenario to happen.'

'I am currently in private accommodation, but it is not stable long-term. While I wholeheartedly understand that there are not a lot of council places available, I am not fussed about the size or location, I am just hoping I can secure a place for me and my daughter relatively soon so I can look to trying to secure a place for my daughter's primary school and my University in September. I am hoping this report will help landlords (especially private ones) understand that their fees are not one that fit universal circumstances. Furthermore, I hope it also leads to opportunities and possibilities of more council homes.'

'After my child was born at 21 I had to live with my father for a year, but I did eventually get offered a council flat. I was unemployed and I didn't really have much direction in my life. I got into arrears. Because I had support I am now able to see my own potential. I'm now able to manage my own money and to live a fulfilling life. Some of the young people in hostels, because of the way they are, the way they have been treated, they feel they've got no way out. "You've got problems so you're always going to be a problem." If people focused on helping the young people instead of saying "you can't be responsible because you're too young" they'd be able to go further in their lives than they think they can. But people shut us off.'

All of us are looking for achievable, mainly local solutions that will make things easier for our age group. Our main conclusion is that people in power are not listening to what we are saying about how bad things are, even though we think there are some practical things they could do to make things better. In two particular areas that matter a lot to us - education, training and employment ('ETE'), and housing - we are asking them to listen to us and to help us move on.



# Introduction

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*Note on geography: throughout this report the term 'Hampshire region' or 'region' refers to the wider area covered by Hampshire County Council, Southampton, and Portsmouth.*

***'It's a bit dead end and has no real light at the end of the tunnel.'***

James, aged 19, Havant, living at home, working full-time as a supervisor on a 4-hour minimum wage contract.

***'They don't move on or improve. They just take drugs and go crazy with boredom...it's like a youth prison.'***

Mia, aged 17, Southampton, on her co-residents in a youth homeless hostel.

***'There might be a memo sent up the chain, you know, someone might hear a little thing about us or how we're feeling. Here we actually get a chance, you know, someone could listen.'***

Tom, 25, Portsmouth, care leaver and advice centre volunteer.

***'It's not nice to beg to sleep at various houses continually. Next stop, the streets.'***

Anon, respondent to online housing survey.

People aged 16 to 25 have done most of their growing up in the shadow of the 2008 financial crisis, austerity, and (at the time of writing) nearly three years of Brexit uncertainty. This report into the problems facing young people in Hampshire was commissioned by the Blagrove Trust and carried out by the Southern Policy Centre team, working with a group of local young people as 'peer researchers' who have direct and recent experience of the issues their contemporaries face. The Blagrove Trust funds charities and advice centres in Hampshire and wanted the research to be led by young people, whose voices are so often not heard. The Appendices to the report include a detailed advocacy strategy which sets out the changes which are required, the people who can make those changes, and how they can be reached and persuaded.

The report investigates the problems of two overlapping groups of young people who, altogether, account for a (conservatively) estimated 40,000 Hampshire residents. The first group often have no family support whatsoever and their lives can be considered to be 'in crisis'. The second group may retain some family support but come from a background of poverty: they cannot take full advantage of opportunities available and feel their lives are on hold. Even when these young people make concerted efforts to escape chaotic home lives and/or poverty, they often face insurmountable obstacles. Some of these obstacles stem from the very people and systems which should be helping them.

## Research methodology

The ethos behind this entire piece of work is that it has been informed, led and shaped by young people's experiences throughout. The initial approach was to explore the perspectives of young people who are experiencing serious - and usually interconnected - problems with (among others) homelessness, unemployment, poor mental health or substance misuse. In the first stage of research, after reviewing documented evidence we went 'beyond the statistics' to understand lived experience.

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We conducted in-depth interviews with 32 young people aged 16 to 25. Some of the young people we interviewed went on to become peer researchers and a group of them met nearly every week for five months. We could not have carried out this research without them.

We went to homeless hostels, mentoring centres and care leavers' groups across Hampshire, from Southampton to Aldershot. We interviewed young people for up to an hour, sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, asking two open questions: (1) What problems have you already faced? (2) What problems do you expect to face as you try to get to where you want to be in the next five years?

We also went to colleges, housing estates and community centres to interview a broader group of young people, who might have supportive families and still be living at home, but no financial backing.

It emerged almost instantly that there were two themes that young people felt overwhelmingly strongly about: education, training and employment (ETE), and housing. We found that those who have housing problems often also have problems with ETE, and vice-versa.

The second stage of the research therefore focused specifically on these two areas. We consulted people who provide services to young people, or who make policy locally. We conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews and group discussions with 45 people from various organisations and sectors in Hampshire, including Further Education (FE) college principals, local council housing officers, and local politicians holding relevant portfolios. We also conducted a further survey of 45 young people being educated at Enham College, an 'informal' education setting.

The peer researchers helped to shape the language used in publicity materials and consent forms and in the phrasing of questions to make them more accessible to the target audience. They conducted a number of the initial scoping interviews.

They also helped design and publicise a housing survey, which was then completed by 459 young people, many of whom who would otherwise have been very difficult to reach. The survey was conducted both online and via a print version; it included several places for respondents to answer questions more fully in a 'freeform' style. This helped drive out a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the issues.

The peer researchers analysed the survey and helped develop the proposals which it led to. They helped us conduct a focus group with students at Enham College, which included some young people who missed out on getting any qualifications at age 16. They worked with two young filmmakers from Solent Productions to make a film,<sup>4</sup> which included more interviews conducted with young people on the streets. Peer researchers also met with the Southampton city councillor responsible for housing to explore opportunities to progress some of the recommendations. They will present some of the findings of the work at the launch.

Fifteen key recommendations came out of this work. Some of the main ones are highlighted in the main body of the report, and there is a complete list of them towards the end. The detailed advocacy strategy for delivering them is set out as an Appendix.

## Housing: context

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The Hampshire region is characterised by a contrast between rich and poor areas. Market towns like Winchester and rural villages like Alresford are some of the wealthiest in England.<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan areas to the south such as Southampton and Portsmouth include both rich suburbs but also areas of poverty. Southampton experienced the seventh-largest percentage point increase in deprivation in England between 2010 and 2015.<sup>6</sup> Nearly one-third of its children are currently living in poverty.<sup>7</sup>

The national housing shortage has affected the region, making it one of the most unaffordable for housing in the UK: average monthly rentals for one-bedroom properties are £645 in Portsmouth, £646 in Southampton and £686 in Hampshire as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

Local Housing Allowances (LHAs), which determine how much housing benefit people will receive, have been frozen for years and are at a lower level for under-35s, who are expected to share. The Hampshire County Council area under-35 Local Housing Allowance (LHA), for instance, is £69.04 per week. Young childless people are unlikely to get social housing. We monitored the cheapest private renting websites over a three-month period and found that many say 'no claimants' or 'no tenants under 20/21', with very few rooms available at LHA rates.<sup>9</sup>

The national rise in homelessness is affecting young people disproportionately and is at crisis levels across the Hampshire region. Southampton experienced a 35% rise in homeless 16-24 year olds in just one year between 2016 and 2017.<sup>10</sup> Our survey (branded 'Hope 4 Housing') of 459 young people found 39 of them (9%) either on the streets, in homeless prevention hostels, or sofa-surfing. While this statistic can't necessarily be considered sufficiently statistically robust to fully extrapolate from, it is nonetheless indicative of a real problem - our survey was distributed through a large number of different channels and represents a wide cross-section of young people. We estimate that thousands of young people are experiencing similar problems across the region.<sup>11</sup>

In a recent report Southampton City Council states that it believes half the causes of homelessness are 'personal', such as mental health or substance abuse, and half are 'structural', such as lack of affordability.<sup>12</sup> Youth homelessness has a human cost leading to poor health and sometimes criminality. Young homeless people are far more likely to be not in education, training or employment, or in official jargon, 'NEET'.<sup>13</sup>

However, councils are prioritising housing for young professionals and families rather than young single people on low incomes. Many young people answering our survey wanted provision 'of more housing for young people who are not students'. There are no local councils in the Hampshire region that currently have plans to increase the supply of social housing for single non-students on low incomes.



Most strikingly, 84% of young people answering our survey said it was either 'extremely' or 'very' important to sort out the housing problems facing young people.

### **'A roof over my head': problems with housing**

The New Policy Institute recently found that nationally, 30% of people aged 14 to 24 were living in poverty.<sup>14</sup> Beyond those in crisis, a broader group of young people are not getting the chance

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to become independent that previous generations had. The overwhelming sense we got from our survey was of lives being lived 'on hold', and an overall lack of hope.

### ***On hold - James's story***

In Eastleigh, James, aged 19, still lives at home. Since he was a teenager he has cared for a family member. He is used to being responsible. Since leaving school he has worked at a fast-food outlet and is now a supervisor. He gets paid just above the minimum wage rate but, even though he has a lot of responsibility as a supervisor and always works a full week, he is on a zero-hours-style contract.

At some point, he and his girlfriend would like to move out of their family homes to find a flat. James says he wants to be independent but it will be hard to save for a deposit, and then most of their salaries will go on what will probably be a poor-quality private rental. He says when he looks at his life 'it's a bit dead end' and he does not 'see much light at the end of the tunnel'.

## **Unaffordable rents**

Young childless people are finding it harder to leave the family home. Dissatisfaction with living arrangements is high. Our survey found that 73% of 21 to 25-year-olds not renting yet - mainly still living in the family home - want to move on because they 'want to be more independent'. The closer to the age of 25 young renters get, the more they express unhappiness with their situation:

***'I'm doing everything right and working hard. Why can I still not even afford a bedsit?'***

***'I'm 22 and live at home with my parents. I earn a decent living wage working 40 hours a week but yet I still can't afford a one-bedroom flat, bills, food, and any other expenditures that could suddenly arise.'***

***'Wages compared to the price of paying all of this means we are working to live, and living like this is not comfortable.'***

***'I'd love to have a place on my own and living with my family is really hard right now.'***

In the online survey we asked non-renters aged 21 to 25, 'What are the main barriers preventing you from getting a more permanent place independently, such as renting?' The biggest barriers<sup>15</sup> were:

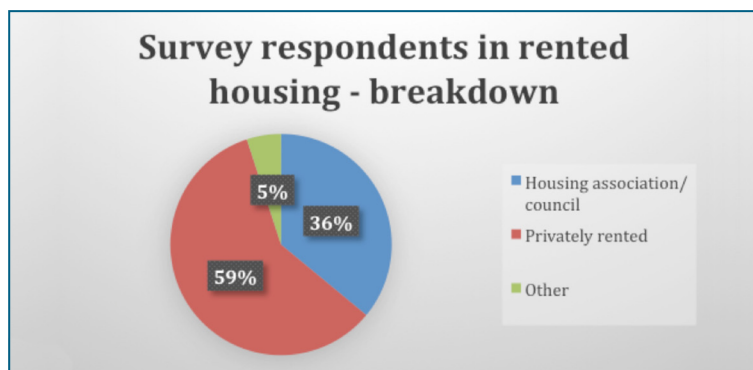
- **I cannot afford a deposit - 51%**
- **I do not earn enough in my job - 35%**
- **Not enough available council or housing association places - 33%**

As one respondent put it, the barrier is simply 'lack of housing that is affordable, especially for those on the minimum wage'.

Young people who do rent often have to accept poor-quality private housing. In our survey, 37% of current private renters were (net) unsatisfied with where they were living at the moment, compared with only 19% of social renters. Those renting said they had the problems set out in the table below:

	SOCIAL RENTERS	PRIVATE
Overcrowding	10%	6%
Poor quality	29%	49%
Rent is too high	29%	46%
Problems with neighbours	43%	11%
Arrears	19%	11%
Problems with flatmates	10%	11%
Other	0	6%
None	24%	20%

A majority of survey respondents who live in rented accommodation are in private housing, as the chart inset illustrates.



Across the Hampshire region as a whole, the rented housing stock splits 50/50 between 'social' and 'private'. Young people who rent, therefore, are being disproportionately affected by the quality and cost issues associated with private housing identified in our survey.

***'You can't find anything in Southampton for one person less than £700 a month that's bigger than a studio, doesn't have a kitchen in the bedroom or a bathroom big enough to move in.'***

***'I live in a room. It fits only a single bed and one side has a kitchen. The whole room is 9ft if that. The disrepair is poor but I'm non-priority because I don't have kids.'***

In order to be able to afford better-quality private rented sector accommodation young people may have to share. However, many had either had bad experiences with sharing or know others who have.

## Housing benefit paid directly to tenants

### A's story

'Once I moved into my property, due to having problems myself I struggled with the rent. Having the housing benefit sent to me rather than directly to the council was not a good idea - it was giving me responsibility I couldn't deal with at the time. I got into arrears which I am paying off now but it makes life a struggle.'

For benefit claimants who rent, an additional problem is that the default position is that they get paid the rent component of their benefits and are directly responsible for passing this on to their landlords. 12% of the respondents to our survey who were in rented accommodation raised this as a problem which can lead to rent arrears. They would prefer an 'alternative payment arrangement' (APA), where rent goes directly to the landlord, but the DWP rarely grants these. Local landlords' associations told us that the system is one factor that discourages them from renting to young claimants.<sup>16</sup> DWP practice in granting alternative payment arrangements varies. Hampshire County Council officers have developed a relationship with the DWP locally which means they get more APAs accepted than other parts of the wider Hampshire region, but this is not replicated in other councils.

## **Problems with current services for the homeless**

At present the main approach councils have to tackling youth homelessness is to commission voluntary sector organisations to provide supported accommodation, often in the form of hostels. But our research shows these are of varying quality and often do not solve the underlying problems or help people move on into independent living.

## **Problems with supported accommodation**

One survey respondent who is a hostel resident expressed a dominant theme when she said:

***'Help is needed for those who are 16 to 25 who are in housing [organisations] like Chapter 1, Two Saints and the YMCA. Once you enter the system it is so hard to leave and you can't save up money. Before you know it your tenancy has expired and you're back living rough again.'***

We could not find public records for move-on rates out of supported accommodation to sustainable independent living, but the anecdotal evidence suggests that they are very low. Some hostel residents told us that engagement activities that would help them to move out had been cut due to lack of funding. They did not know how to access help to borrow deposits, or to find rent guarantors.

Hostel managers and local advice centres also report problems in finding landlords prepared to rent to hostel residents. Funding they used to receive to support residents after they moved out into private tenancies has been cut. As a result, some young people are trapped in a vicious cycle of sleeping rough or sofa-surfing, followed by periods in hostels. Their chances of surviving without experiencing health problems or getting into crime are low.

## **The benefits trap**

People in full-time work in hostels often feel like they are in a benefits 'trap' and also find it hard to save to move on. Pete, aged 25, works full-time in a shop. He became homeless in Aldershot after relatives asked him to leave overnight. He got a place in the homeless hostel but has to pay £800 rent a month.

***'I need to buy some more shoes for work, I need to probably get a new pair of trousers as well because I've got a slight hole coming in them.'***

Pete might be entitled to a benefits top-up, which would mean technically he was not worse off from working. But it is hard for working hostel residents to stay in full-time work when they are hardly better-off than those around them who are not working.



Some providers of supported accommodation said they often had to stress to a young person that a job, particularly if zero-hours, would 'mess up their benefits' so much they should not take it. Universal credit compounds the problem by only telling young people a couple of days in advance what they are entitled to that month, which can often lead to hardship if they calculated differently.

## Vulnerable 16- and 17-year-olds in hostels

***'In crisis'*** - Richard in Southampton explains what happened when he turned 16.

***'I left my Dad's, like he didn't want me there...So I went to my Mum's and she had no room, like she's got a small house and she's got loads of kids as well, so she was like, I want you to stay here but I obviously can't let you.'***

His uncle found him a retail job and lodgings with his friend who had a spare room to rent. Richard coped with working and renting for a while until he got the sack for not phoning in when sick; his landlord then sold up to move abroad. Richard got a place in the local homeless hostel and is now 17. It took him months in the hostel to get replacement ID because he had lost all his documents.

***'I feel pretty bored really. I just want to get out and do something ... I don't want it handed to me on a plate ... So it's been annoying - I've applied for numerous jobs and I didn't have a bank account for my wages to be put in and ID to prove who I am ... so that's let me down pretty much every job I've applied for.'***

Richard then got accepted on a traineeship with a free bus pass attached. But he stayed in his room, because he didn't want to mix with the other hostel residents, or as he put it 'get into the wrong crowd'. He stopped getting up in the morning and did not pay his service charge. The last we heard of Richard, the hostel had evicted him for arrears.

Many of the residents told us of other friends who had been evicted from hostels, either for behavioural reasons or, as in his case, getting into arrears on the service charge. We could not find public records of hostels' eviction rates. Many young people are unaware that incurring £3,000 in rent arrears has long-term consequences: for example, people with such arrears may be barred from applying for social housing.<sup>17</sup> It seems particularly harsh that a 16- or 17-year-old caught up in a chaotic situation who then does not manage their money might make a mistake which could affect them for a lifetime.

Josh, from Portsmouth, a college student aged 17, came into a homeless hostel after being forced to leave his family home due to domestic violence and family pressure to deal drugs. He says, 'Well I'd mentally prepared myself to stay on the streets and stuff but I was like, no, I'm not doing that. I'm not doing that'. Placing Josh in a homeless hostel rather than in care means that he remains in danger of coming under pressure to deal drugs.

Under the 'Southwark judgement' on the 1989 Children Act, 16- and 17-year-olds like Josh and Richard who are homeless should be assessed by children's services and asked if they will agree to go into care, where they will get more appropriate lodgings. However, in some councils, the wait for a social care assessment is longer than for a homeless one and the young person almost invariably will opt for the latter. Southampton-based advice centre No Limits reported that 16- and 17-year-olds are 'routinely' directed to Homelessness Prevention Units rather than social care and that 'social services

are often very blunt in saying they don't have accommodation'. No Limits cited a recent example of having to pressurise social care staff into housing a vulnerable 17-year-old girl for whom they had supposedly already accepted responsibility.

No Limits point out that Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act requires each local council to have 'in place a joint working protocol' between the homelessness and social care departments so that young people in crisis do not get 'pinged' back and forth. There should be 'a clear and open framework for the assessment of homeless 16/17 year olds'. In some councils we could find no evidence of this framework in operation.

Young people also reported that the quality of homeless prevention provision varies across the region. Southampton City Council explicitly recognises it lacks knowledge about which outcomes to measure to assess the success of the service.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it is clear that councils do not always listen to younger residents when commissioning service providers to run the hostels. Southampton City Council's engagement approach when procuring housing-related support includes a questionnaire completed by service users of adult services, but only 'events' for young people, in which it is not possible to give feedback in confidence.<sup>19</sup> Closer consultation with young people while commissioning would help service providers to improve their offer and give them a clearer idea of how to measure success.

## **Key recommendations: housing**

Given the ongoing constraints on councils' social housing budgets, we propose two key initiatives to help alleviate some of the problems young people face locally in housing. The first is to evaluate and potentially trial a 'Housing First' model aimed at reducing the numbers of childless young people who are currently either homeless, on the streets or in supported accommodation. The second is to carry out research into the possibility of setting up a sharing agency which utilises private rented housing stock specifically targeted at housing young people who, through not being students in full-time higher education, have not traditionally been the 'target market' for landlords in this sector. (Note: a full numbered list of recommendations can be found towards the end of this report.)

### **Recommendation 2(a)**

*Local councils in the region should explore whether they can increase the supply of housing to homeless, single, childless 21-25-year-olds (including those in supported accommodation) through 'Housing First'.*

Homeless Link describe Housing First as 'An internationally evidence-based approach, which uses independent, stable housing as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness.'<sup>20</sup> There are currently around 30 such schemes operating in England. A Housing First initiative could be effective in tackling some of the issues facing some of our region's most vulnerable young people.

### **Recommendation 2(b)**

*Research should be funded to develop a model for a sharing agency, initially in Southampton where engagement has been highest, to increase the supply of low-cost, decent-quality shared housing to single non-students. If successful then this model should be rolled out to other areas with similar student/non-student demographics.*

Young people on low incomes or benefits could potentially get access to better-quality private



housing if they were to share. Our survey suggested young people in the region have a greater willingness to share with friends or even similarly-aged strangers than might have been anticipated. We asked 16-25-year-olds who are not yet renting but considering it who they would be likely to be doing it with. Approximately half of them said either with friends or others their age, rather than as sole tenants or with a partner.

When we explored what would encourage non-renters aged 16 to 25 to share with friends or people they did not know beforehand, they chose the following:

- **'An agency that matched like-minded tenants together' - 30%**
- **'An agency that sorted out any problems once tenancy started' - 27%**
- **'An agency that lent the deposit interest-free and helped provide guarantors' - 26%<sup>21</sup>**

Young people are more likely to consider sharing if they are confident there is an agency that can genuinely help them through the process. Many of them do not know much about the logistics of sharing at the moment (for example, many survey respondents assumed sharing would mean paying rent as a group and becoming liable for voids or others' arrears, which does not have to be the case). We were struck by how many wanted more information on sharing or on their legal rights as tenants more generally.

Schemes such as this have been trialled in other places<sup>22</sup> based on three key principles:

- **Rooms rented in each shared house at LHA rates, both to claimants and to people in employment**
- **Good-quality accommodation**
- **Prospective tenants need to be either employed or engaged with education, and to have undertaken pre-tenancy training.**

One scheme involved a sharing agency which prepared young people for tenancy, matched tenants with landlords and with one another, identified and trained a peer landlord for each house to be the main point of contact with the agency, collected rent using 'stringent but sensitive' property management techniques, and dealt with cleanliness, damage, and any breakdown in relations.

City Lets in Winchester currently operates a scheme where private landlords supply housing at LHA rents in return for security and peace of mind because the council-funded agency manages all aspects of the property. So far Winchester has only let to families, but we could draw on their expertise. Private landlords we have consulted are keen to explore this option further; a spokesperson from Southampton-based landlords' association iHowz said 'As long as we can find the economic spot, the strike point where the costs of higher arrears [due to the youth of tenants] might be offset against economics, it might work'. Local councils have also shown an interest in piloting such a scheme.

## ETE: context

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*'With low pay, it's all well and good saying like, oh the young people, they're going to college, they don't need all the pay, or oh, it's so the older people can have more pay. But sod it, we need more opportunities for young people, otherwise the next generation is going to end up pretty economically crippled.'* Jason, 20, retail worker, zero-hours contract, minimum wage.

Problems in education, training and employment chiefly stem from low wages, insecure employment and difficulties in accessing training to move on to more skilled work.

Joe, aged 23, works full-time in refuse collection for £7.50 an hour. His wage is so low that he is depressed and feels that he is failing his partner and child because they cannot make ends meet and he cannot afford to take her out:

*'I get my wages at the end of the month and I pay the bills and everything like that, do the food, like the food shopping and pay everything that I need to pay and then I've basically got nothing left...I can't treat my partner...even if her Mum babysits for one night like on a Friday I can't take my partner out for a meal or to the cinema or anything like that. So that's why I feel like I'm failing them.'*

Average hourly earnings for full-time workers (excluding overtime) are £13.40 in Southampton and £12.96 in Portsmouth, both significantly below both South East and British averages.<sup>23</sup> The Office for National Statistics finds that average earnings for 18-21 year olds tend to be around half those for 40-49 year olds.<sup>24</sup>

Low earnings for the young in our region are reflected in our survey: 81% of those aged 21-25 in full-time work answering our survey were paid less than £10.00 an hour. Eight of the young people we interviewed were full-time workers over the age of 18. None of those eight people were earning more than the minimum wage.

Over one-third of those answering our survey in full-time employment aged 18-25 were on non-permanent contracts such as zero-hours. As well as making young people feel insecure, zero-hours contracts make it harder to rent a property.

### **'You can be out in the real world, getting a job': problems with current ETE provision**

National policies are intended to increase skills in young people and their level of employment. In 2015/16 the government 'raised the participation age' (RPA), keeping young people in education or training until they are 18. While youth unemployment is lower than it has been in the past, it is still higher than for older people. Officially 2,000 16/17 year olds in the region are NEET<sup>25</sup> (in theory the figure should be zero as they should all be in college or work-based training) while unemployment for 16-24 year olds as a whole in the Hampshire region is 9.7%.<sup>26</sup>

## Forced into a college environment

### George's story

George became NEET rather than attend college. He says, 'It's just like an extra two years or something in school when you can be out in the real world, getting a job'. He did not want an apprenticeship either, because it still would have meant time in college. Instead, when he left school at 16 he says he would have liked 'Something like working at a warehouse would be all right for me, some small job ... to start me off until I get more keen on working and keeping on time and ... getting myself organised and my confidence building and stuff.'

At 19 now, and after three years of inactivity, he says, 'I'm not that confident ... that's why I stay indoors most days'.

Many young people we interviewed had had negative experiences of school. Carly: 'Instead of helping people, schools just expel you and then don't even give you a chance to better yourself'. Mainstream education is becoming less inclusive, with increasing numbers of pupils fully or partly excluded on behavioural grounds, and funding for alternative provision being cut. In 2016-2017 a total of 81 students were permanently excluded from state-funded secondary schools across the Hampshire region<sup>27</sup> and the number of children 'missing from education' is a concern.<sup>28</sup>

Joe, now 23, said he didn't think the school 'wanted the responsibility of having to try' to deal with his ADHD and the fact that he was easily provoked by others. After he was expelled he became agoraphobic and did not work for several years, rarely leaving the house. Tom (now 25), also expelled for reasons of behaviour, describes the effect of going from top sets and entry for several GCSEs to a pupil referral unit where there was little subject-based expertise among teachers: 'It's just, put a book in front of you, turn to this page, write that out.' In our survey of 45 young people who are now studying in a more 'informal' college environment<sup>29</sup> post-16, none had English and Mathematics at GCSE level 4 or above. Six had no qualifications at all, and at 18 or 19 they are preparing to sit the first formal exams of their lives.

Most of the Hampshire region's councils do slightly better in encouraging provision of work-based training in their areas than the average for England as a whole. Nonetheless, the great majority of the region's 16- and 17-year-olds - in excess of 80% - are enrolled in post-16 colleges rather than in work-based training.<sup>30</sup> Many young people say the pressure the system now puts on them to attend college to get more qualifications does not help them when they go out to get a job. Owen, aged 20 and working: 'And when it comes to jobs, don't lie to us, don't say that this qualification will help you get this job. The job I applied for did not give a damn about my science GCSE, my religious studies GCSE. It didn't care about any of them. They want experience. Get kids doing work experience earlier on.' But most 16- and 17-year-olds are not getting work-based experience.

The lack of work-based training is in part due to national government inflexibility. Many employers find the new apprenticeship rules off-putting. But local councils themselves (i.e. as employers) do not have a good record of offering apprenticeships and traineeships to young people. Hampshire County Council currently employ 150 apprentices out of a total workforce of 27,272 (0.6%). None of the councils publish how many of their already small number of apprenticeships are young people.

Locally, only 7.2% of 16- and 17-year-olds in Southampton, 6.7% in Portsmouth and 8.6% in the rest of Hampshire are doing apprenticeships.<sup>31</sup> National research shows that smaller employers in particular find the requirement for 20% of apprentices' time to be spent in off-site training challenging.<sup>32</sup>

For young people with few qualifications, more intermediate rather than advanced apprenticeships are needed, along with more traineeships. The Learning and Work Institute defines traineeships as 'Designed to help young people get the experience they need to go onto an apprenticeship or job'.

The Learning and Work Institute argue that traineeships should be seen as 'pre-apprenticeships', as ideally after about six months trainees would progress to a full apprenticeship. Barnardos echo this in their evidence to the Education Select Committee report (2018):

*'We [Barnados] believe that traineeships might be rebranded 'pre-apprenticeships'. Employers would be urged to take on vulnerable young people to these posts with additional support from agencies such as ourselves, on the condition that upon successful completion they would be guaranteed an apprenticeship. This would have the advantage of ensuring traineeships were better understood in the wider context of apprenticeships, whilst minimising the potential for young people to become disillusioned by transitioning from one short-term unpaid post to another.'*

Local providers tell us there are different models of traineeships operating in the field. One model is college-based, but other successful models are work-based. As they are often funded from non-Skills Agency/Department for Education sources there is sometimes flexibility so that literacy and numeracy can be delivered in a 'Functional Skills' style and even on the worksite, perhaps by a visiting tutor. These alternative sources of funding also allow bursaries for traineeships and bonuses for attendance which have a positive effect on engagement.

Being forced into college can lead to damaging starts to young people's working lives, undermining their confidence and self-respect. Carly says, 'It's easier to learn in the workplace than behind a desk'. Some survey respondents described being 'kicked out' of college and one recounted that the rest of the class simply went 'too fast' for him. A majority of young people we interviewed in hostels who were enrolled in college were not attending regularly.

Young people attending post-16 college with GCSE English and Maths below grade 4 are forced to re-sit repeatedly. Roughly 40% of the Hampshire region's 16-year-olds are affected by this rule.<sup>33</sup> FE colleges also resent losing funding if they do not obey the rule. Some would prefer to teach students Functional Skills which is more 'embedded' in real life contexts and, for many, is a more constructive route than GCSE re-sits, because students can start at entry-level and work their way up. The principal of one local FE college we interviewed said that before the GCSE re-sit policy was introduced, their college taught Functional Skills more widely and that achievement rates were higher.

## **Barriers to taking up apprenticeships and traineeships**

For those on low incomes there are additional barriers to taking up apprenticeships or traineeships. Often travel costs are not included<sup>34</sup> and parents who are entitled to child benefit, a gateway to substantial related benefits, will lose it if their child becomes an apprentice, although not if their child goes to college. The Audit Commission estimates changing this rule nationally would cost £100 million.<sup>35</sup>

Second, a young person may not be able to afford to do a traineeship or apprenticeship because the financial incentives are so low. For those under 18, an apprenticeship is a commitment in both work and related college activity, yet the apprenticeship pay rate is low. Those over 18 may find the low pay rate even more of a barrier because they have alternatives of higher-paid work. Some local providers and advisers told us they thought the apprenticeship rate should be raised and eventually phased

out. Ring-fencing some Apprenticeship Levy money to help those from low income/disadvantaged backgrounds, and ensuring that as much of that money as possible goes in direct incentives to them, could be one way to bridge the current gap between apprenticeship pay and the minimum wage.

## **Key recommendation: ETE**

### **Recommendation 3(e)**

*Local councils and Further Education providers should collaborate to deliver an increase in the numbers of 'informal' education and training places, such as Enham College, including work-based traineeships available to 16- and 17-year-olds with few or no qualifications. Initial high-level analysis suggests that an appropriate target could be the doubling of the number of such places (to c. 950 across the Hampshire region) in order to meet demand. More young people should be encouraged to focus on achieving the revised 'Functional Skills' standards which come into force in September 2019.*

In ETE some very good local practice exists in the shape of what are colloquially known as 'informal' college environments such as the Enham Trust. 73% of Enham's students, often starting with no school-age qualifications at all, go on into work, apprenticeships or further study. Enham Trust can be more flexible, offering bursaries for attendance and Functional Skills instead of GCSE re-sits, because they are funded by the European Social Fund, which is more flexible than the Education Skills and Funding Agency.

Enham students we talked to said they had been helped to achieve qualifications and acquire valuable skills for reasons such as 'It's explained in a more easier form' and 'It's not like normal college and it's a lot easier to be around less people'.

Young people who do a work-based traineeship, even for six months, are often given the confidence to go on into a college environment or apprenticeship. Wider use of such alternatives might prevent the rise in disengagement that often happens at age 17.<sup>36</sup>

# Hearing the voices of young people

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***'All they can ever do is try to understand it. But the thing is that people can look into our eyes and know that we understand it and know that we're good at it. You know, we truly know what we're talking about and how these things feel - they've just sort of read a report about a paragraph but are trying to judge a whole person's life.'*** Tom, 25, care leaver

Throughout this research young people have been striving to make their voices heard. We hope that this report has achieved that goal. This, however, is just the start of a long journey.

Our underlying principle is that employers, landlords, policy-makers and providers of services will make better policy and provide better services if they listen closely to what young people say and act on it. In order to listen effectively, service funders and providers must first consult users of services in a way that protects their anonymity and preferably uses both quantitative and qualitative elements. Examples such as the one cited earlier - where young people in homeless hostels are effectively discriminated against by having their voices muted alongside adult users of the same services - need to end. The results of consultations should be publicly available and there should be transparency about how they inform the commissioning process.

Tokenistic consultation is not sufficient. Young care leavers in particular highlighted superficial styles of consultation: regarding the care leavers' council, one of them said, 'Because every council has to have one ... it's like they're doing as little as they can to have it, but as long as they've got it and they can say, "look we've got one", that's fine'.

Many young people in crisis situations, who have grown up in care, offended or become homeless, said they thought the services designed to help them would improve if the services employed 'more people like us' who had got through the crisis. Spencer, aged 16 and having relocated to the south from a young offenders' institution, respects his carer because he himself used to be in care:

***'He was the same as me, he was in care, had a bad upbringing and then he started boxing and then that's what changed his life. He relates to me, you know what I mean? He's been there, he's done it all before and then he understands what I'm going through. It's all right saying, okay, I'm your carer and da-di-da but listen - mate, if you was in care at this age being taken away from your mum and dad and your brothers and sisters ... and being taken away from your childhood ... you don't understand that at all mate.'***

To genuinely take this work forward, therefore, young people need to be fully involved in the improvement journey.

## **Key recommendations: hearing the voices of young people**

### **Recommendation 1(a):**

***Council providers of services should adopt the standards for listening to and working with young people which are set out in the National Youth Agency Commissioning Guidelines. Adopting these standards will lead to more effective consultation with young people and will result in better and more cost-effective services.***

Housing, social care and ETE council lead officers (and members) should undertake training in the broader National Youth Agency 'Hear By Right' participation toolkit. This would be a concrete start to a process of ensuring the Hampshire region becomes one that genuinely listens to and works with its young people. It is particularly important that officers in these functional areas should undertake the training, rather than 'youth' or 'participation' leads. The functional lead officers wield more power, set policy directly, and are more empowered to deliver real change.

### **Recommendation 2(f)**

***Voluntary sector organisations do not currently monitor how many people they employ from backgrounds similar to those they are trying to help. Young people have told us they would like more of the people who help them to come from such backgrounds because they understand them better and act as role models. Voluntary sector organisations helping young people should strive to provide more employment to people from backgrounds similar to those they are trying to help.***

Initial research should be commissioned into current practices in monitoring employee backgrounds in the youth voluntary sector, how an appropriate measure for 'similar backgrounds' could be developed, and what recruitment practices could be practically implemented to increase employment of these young people. These statistics should be monitored and publicised to act as a spur within the voluntary sector as well as (potentially over time) within other sectors.



## Recommendations: key principles

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The recommendations are based on four overarching principles. These emerged very early on during the research. They clearly reflect the voices and concerns of all the young people who took part. They are:

### **(1) *Policy-makers should listen to and act on what young people say***

Employers, landlords, service providers and politicians all need to listen more closely to what young people themselves are saying, and act on what they hear. This will lead to policies and services which are better aligned to the needs of young people. A key principle behind all the recommendations is that young people need to be involved in leading and shaping them.

### **(2) *Supply and quality need to be increased, in both housing and in ETE. Achieving this will give more young people the opportunity to live and work independently***

Previous generations could generally assume that there would come a point in their lives when they could live independently. This is no longer true. Changes are needed which will increase the availability of affordable housing, and which will deliver better education, training and employment opportunities. These changes could have a huge impact on young people's life chances. Even in a climate of continued economic constraints, there are ways in which some of these changes could be delivered now.

### **(3) *Services which are intended to help young people need to be more appropriate to their needs. In addition, 'signposting' to these services needs to be improved***

Services which are available for young people need to be more directly focused on their actual needs. The quality of services across the region needs to be more consistent. Both young people and the agencies with which they interact need to be more aware of the different services which are available.

### **(4) *National change should also be sought***

In some instances local change can be effected, often by acting to interpret existing rules more flexibly. In other instances, national change is required. There needs to be a focus on both - the final recommendations set out areas where key national policies which disadvantage young people need to be changed.

## Full list of recommendations

### **(1) *Policy-makers should listen to and act on what young people say***

#### **Recommendation 1(a):**

Council providers of services should adopt the standards for listening to and working with young people which are set out in the National Youth Agency Commissioning Guidelines. Adopting these standards will lead to more effective consultation with young people and will result in better and more cost-effective services.

#### **Recommendation 1(b):**

Council and voluntary sector providers in the region should subsequently work together towards adopting a broader, region-wide standard of 'listening to and working with young people' when making policy and commissioning services. This should be branded as the 'Hampshire Region's Young



People's Charter' (or similar) and established as a desirable badge of 'best practice' in the region. This is a longer-term change than recommendation 1(a) above and will require a higher level of buy-in.

***(2) Supply and quality need to be increased, in both housing and in ETE. Achieving this will give more young people the opportunity to live and work independently***

**Recommendation 2(a)**

Local councils in the region should explore whether they can increase the supply of housing to homeless, single, childless 21-25 year-olds (including those in supported accommodation) through 'Housing First'.

**Recommendation 2(b)**

Research should be funded to develop a model for a sharing agency, initially in Southampton where engagement has been highest, to increase the supply of low-cost, decent-quality shared housing to single non-students. If successful then this model should be rolled out to other areas with similar student/non-student demographics.

**Recommendation 2(c)**

Local employers should improve employment conditions, pay National Living Wage rates for young people and sign up to a kitemark 'to make Hampshire a great place to work'.

**Recommendation 2(d)**

As part of making Hampshire a great place to work, local councils and public employers like the NHS should publish the number of their apprentices and trainees who are aged 16/17 and 18-25. Second, as they strive to meet the government target of 2.3% of public sector employees being apprentices by 2021, they should ensure an increasing proportion are from across the 16 to 25 age groups. We suggest that the proportion of 16- to 17-year-olds in apprenticeships and traineeships across Hampshire should be targeted to increase to 15% by 2021 from its current (estimated) level of c. 7%.

**Recommendation 2(e)**

As part of making Hampshire a great place to work, local employers should publish the number of their apprentices and trainees who are aged 16/17 and 18-25. They should also work to ensure that the number of traineeships and apprenticeships to 16/17 year olds and 18-25 year olds increases year-on-year.

**Recommendation 2(f)**

Voluntary sector organisations do not currently monitor how many people they employ from backgrounds similar to those they are trying to help. Young people told us they would like more of the people who help them to come from such backgrounds because they understand them better and act as role models. Voluntary sector organisations helping young people should provide more employment to people from backgrounds similar to those they are trying to help.

***(3) Services which are intended to help young people need to be more appropriate to their needs. In addition, 'signposting' to these services needs to be improved***

**Recommendation 3(a)**

Some local authorities in Hampshire currently do not offer 16- and 17-year-olds genuine care options and are not implementing the 'Southwark judgement'.<sup>37</sup> Local councils should fulfil their statutory duty by offering to take homeless 16- and 17-year-olds into care.

### **Recommendation 3(b)**

Some employed young people who become homeless and go into supported accommodation such as hostels do not feel that working full-time makes them better off and find it hard to save for a deposit so that they can move out into rented accommodation. Funders and providers of supported accommodation should remove the 'benefits trap' which currently discourages hostel residents from working.

### **Recommendation 3(c)**

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officers need to be encouraged to be more flexible in their interpretation of national rules on Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) in order to make it less likely that young tenants will get in to arrears.

### **Recommendation 3(d)**

Many young people told us they felt unprepared for post-16 choices and that what was on offer was confusing. Part of the reason for this is that funding for some projects is so short-term that advisers themselves are not sure what is available. Local authorities and statutory and voluntary sector providers of post-16 education and training and schools should offer better-quality and more up-to-date information about what education training and employment options are available post-16.

### **Recommendation 3(e)**

Local councils and Further Education providers should collaborate to deliver an increase in the numbers of 'informal' education and training places, such as Enham College, including work-based traineeships available to 16- and 17-year-olds with few or no qualifications. Initial high-level analysis suggests that an appropriate target could be the doubling of the number of such places (to c. 950 across the Hampshire region) in order to meet demand. More young people should be encouraged to focus on achieving the revised 'Functional Skills' standards which come into force in September 2019.

## ***(4) National change should also be sought***

### **Recommendation 4(a)**

Local authorities, voluntary sector providers and private landlords should all lend weight to campaigns at the national level which aim to make it easier for young people up to the age of 25 claiming housing benefit to opt in to alternative payment arrangements.

### **Recommendation 4(b)**

Local authorities, post-16 ETE providers and employers should support national campaigns for greater flexibility in the funding arrangements for provision of literacy and numeracy post-16, including greater recognition of the value of Functional Skills.

### **Recommendation 4(c)**

Local authorities, post-16 ETE providers and employers should support national campaigns for a change in child benefit rules so that parents are as equally incentivised for their child to pursue a post-16 apprenticeship as they are for a college course.

## Conclusion

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There are many issues which face young people in their transition to adulthood. When this work began in the summer of 2018 there was an assumption that we would encounter - and need to tackle - themes around mental health, family break-up, issues around sexual orientation and gender, and others. These themes are clearly present in young people's lives. But the way in which the issues of housing and ETE came to the fore so quickly and powerfully suggests that they can be considered as crucial elements of the bedrock on which so much else is built. They are fundamentals. By listening - properly - to young people's concerns, and involving them directly in addressing them, real beneficial change is possible.

However, despite progress in some services and a lot of lip-service to the idea of consultation, policy-makers and providers of services are still not, on the whole, listening to young people in a meaningful way. Young people themselves often expressed frustration that having been 'listened to' nothing seems to come of what they are saying.

Commissioners such as local authorities certainly do not listen enough - residents of homeless hostels should at the very least be given the opportunity to take part in an anonymous survey about their experiences. These failures to listen result not just in a human cost to young people, but also in economic cost because they lead to policies and services which are badly-designed and which waste public money.

Unless we act on what young people are telling us then the issues highlighted in the report will only become more entrenched. Acting on the recommendations in this report is an opportunity not only to make the transition to adulthood more manageable for today's young people, but also for all those that come after them. This can only be achieved by working alongside them.

***'Because I had support I am now able to see my own potential. I'm now able to manage my own money and to live a fulfilling life. If people focused on helping the young people instead of saying "you can't be responsible because you're too young" they'd be able to go further in their lives than they think they can. But people shut us off.'***

Listening to young people, then, isn't just a laudable goal. It's also a practical, pragmatic thing for service providers to do routinely, instinctively, in order to deliver cost-effective, targeted services which achieve their objectives.

Our advocacy strategy for starting to address some of the issues raised in this report proposes concrete changes and ways in which the journey towards achieving them can begin. It seeks to 'practice what it preaches' by involving young people directly in the processes of lobbying, cajoling and persuading policy-makers to do things differently. It seeks to ensure that young people's voices remain at the forefront of the work. Real change is possible where there is goodwill and a willingness to genuinely listen, engage and deliver change.

This 'conclusion', then, should be seen as merely a start.

Help us move on. Listen, and act on what you hear.

# List of acknowledgements

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**YMCA**, Southampton

**Youth Options**, Romsey and Southampton

**Special thank you to Rachael Hancock, youth worker, Southampton, and to Alexandru Solca and Yohan Samuel of Solent Productions**

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## Appendix 1: surveys

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### Hope4Housing Survey





## Welcome to our Hope4Housing Survey

We are a group of young people from Southampton who have all had problems with housing.

We are working with the Southern Policy Centre to get as many people as possible aged 16-25 in Hampshire, including Southampton and Portsmouth, to complete this survey.

We need your experiences and ideas to make local politicians and landlords sit up and listen!

Please answer and share our survey - it is anonymous and only takes five minutes.

Help us help you!

### 1. Do you live mainly in

- Southampton area
- Portsmouth area
- Other part of Hampshire
- Somewhere else (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

### 2. How old are you?

- 16-17
- 18-20
- 21-25
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_





3. How would you describe yourself?

- Female  
 Male  
 Some other way \_\_\_\_\_

4. On average in each month how much money do you take home?  
 Please include money from any jobs you do and any benefits including housing benefit.

£ \_\_\_\_\_ per month

5. Are you

Please tick one

- Full-time in a job which is not an apprenticeship  
 An apprentice  
 A trainee  
 Full-time at college  
 Full-time at university  
 Part-time employed with some benefits  
 On benefits with no paid employment  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. If employed full-time are you

- On a zero hours or four hours type contract  
 On a permanent contract  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. If full-time employed how much do you usually get paid for each hour?

£ \_\_\_\_\_ per hour



**8. Which best describes how you live?**

- I rent a room, flat or house
- I live in my family home
- I live with friends or extended family on their floor or sofa
- I live in care
- I live in a homeless prevention place like a hostel or supported lodgings
- I am sleeping rough
- I live in student accommodation
- Other (please specify) :

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**9. How satisfied are you with where you live at the moment?**

- Extremely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Not so satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

**10. Do you want to move on from where you live?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please give reasons for your answer

WRITE IN

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**11.** How important do you think it is to try to reduce the housing problems facing young people in Hampshire, including Southampton and Portsmouth?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not so important
- Not at all important

**12.** What do you think local politicians and landlords should do to improve housing for young people?

WRITE IN

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IF YOU **RENT** A ROOM FLAT OR HOUSE AT THE MOMENT PLEASE GO STRAIGHT TO QUESTION 17

**13.** If you are still living in your family home, sofa surfing, in care, a homeless prevention place or sleeping rough, what are the main barriers preventing you from getting a more permanent place independently, such as renting?

Please tick the **THREE** biggest barriers

- I do not want to live independently
  - I cannot afford a deposit
  - I do not have people who will be my guarantors
  - I do not earn enough in my job
  - I do not think I would manage my money well enough to rent
  - I am on benefits therefore I could not afford the rent
  - I am in college therefore I could not afford the rent
  - I could only afford to move out if I shared and I do not want to share
  - Not enough available council or housing association places
  - Other (please specify)
- 
- 

**14.** If you are not renting now, is it likely you would be looking to rent as

- A sole tenant
  - Sharing with other people, not necessary that I know them
  - Sharing with my partner
  - Sharing with friends
  - Sharing with other people, not necessary that I know them well beforehand
  - I do not know
  - I will not be looking to rent
-



**15.** Shared accommodation with friends or people you did not know beforehand tends to be cheaper. Which of the following would encourage you to share? You can tick as many as you want.

- I would not consider sharing under any circumstances
- An agency that matched like-minded tenants together
- An agency that sorted out any problems once the tenancy started
- An agency that lent the deposit interest free and helped provide guarantors
- None of these

Do you have any other suggestions for what would encourage you to go into shared accommodation?

WRITE IN

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**16.** We expect to meet local politicians and landlords to tell them the results of this survey. What questions would you like us to ask them?

WRITE IN

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Thank you for completing this survey.

We will now use it to propose solutions to local politicians and landlords in our March 2019 report to improve housing options for the under 25s in Hampshire.



**PLEASE ONLY COMPLETE THIS FINAL SECTION IF YOU ARE ALREADY RENTING**

17. As a current tenant, do you rent

- A housing association or council place
- A privately rented place
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

18. Are you renting a place

- On your own
- With your partner and child/children
- With just your partner
- With friends or other adults
- With your child/children
- Other (please specify) : \_\_\_\_\_

19. How much rent do you usually pay each week?

£ \_\_\_\_\_ per week

20. As a tenant, what problems, if any, do you have? Tick as many as you want.

Please tick all that apply

- None
- Arrears
- Overcrowding
- Poor quality
- Rent is too high
- Housing benefit gets paid direct to you when you would prefer it to go straight to landlord
- Problems with flatmates
- Problems with neighbours



Would you like to say more about why you have these problems?

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**21.** We expect to meet local politicians and landlords to tell them the results of this survey. What questions would you like us to ask them?  
**WRITE IN**

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## Hope4Housing

Thank you for completing this survey.

We will now use it to propose solutions to local politicians and landlords in our March 2019 report to improve housing options for the under 25s in Hampshire.

From the Southern Policy Centre housing team  
Please return completed survey to the person who gave it to you.

If you do not know where else to take it you can drop it into  
No Limits Advice Centre  
13-14 High St  
Southampton  
SO14 2DF  
Or email us at [info@southernpolicycentre.co.uk](mailto:info@southernpolicycentre.co.uk)

# **Education and Employment Survey**



## Questions education and employment

1. Thinking back to before you were 16 and your time in secondary school, how much did you enjoy your lessons?

Please tick one

- Loved them
- Liked them
- They were okay
- Didn't like them
- Hated them

Please give reasons for your answer

2. What qualification did you get in English at school?

Please tick one

- GCSE A\*, B, C
- GCSE D, E, F, G
- GCSE 1,2,3
- GCSE 4,5,6,7,8,9
- Level 1 functional skills
- Level 2 functional skills
- Don't know
- If no qualification please give reasons

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3. What qualification did you get in Maths at school?

Please tick one

- GCSE A\*, B, C
- GCSE D, E, F, G
- GCSE 1,2,3
- GCSE 4,5,6,7,8,9
- Level 1 functional skills
- Level 2 functional skills
- Don't know
- If no qualification please give reasons

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4. If you did not get GCSE 1-3 or A\*-C, or Level 2 functional skills in both English and Maths before the age of 16, do you want to study them to improve your grades now?

- Yes
- No

Please give reasons for your answer

5. If you were to get a job, apprenticeship or traineeship and were required to improve your English and Maths would you rather do it

- In the workplace
- In college

Please give reasons for your answer

6. Please describe the last two colleges you went to since you left school:

College where I am now, or, if no longer in a college, the last one I went to:

Name of

course \_\_\_\_\_

On average my attendance is/was 80%, 60%, 40%, 20% (please circle)

I completed the course/did not complete the course/am still there (please circle)

Do/did you enjoy the course? Please give reasons for your answer

Did the course help you get a job or do you think it will? Please give reasons for your answer

Any other previous post 16 college I went to:

Name of

course \_\_\_\_\_

On average my attendance was 80%, 60%, 40%, 20% (please circle)

I completed the course/did not complete the course (please circle)

Did you enjoy the course? Please give reasons for your answer

Did the course help you get a job? Please give reasons for your answer

Is there anything else you want to say about housing and education, employment and training?

## Appendix 2: Advocacy strategy for achieving change

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This section of the report sets out the advocacy which will be needed in order to start to bring about the changes we have identified. It starts with the key principles which underpin the strategy, moves on to provide more detail on how each of the 15 key recommendations could be delivered, and finishes with the section 'Potential ways forward' which sets out suggestions for an overarching approach to continuing the work.

### Key principles

The recommendations and the strategy for delivering them are based on four overarching principles. These emerged very early on during the research. They clearly reflect the voices and concerns of all the young people who took part. They are:

**(1) *Policy-makers should listen to and act on what young people say.***

Employers, landlords, service providers and politicians all need to listen more closely to what young people themselves are saying, and act on what they hear. This will lead to policies and services which are better aligned to the needs of young people. A key principle behind all the recommendations is that young people need to be involved in leading and shaping them.

**(2) *Supply and quality need to be increased, in both housing and in ETE. Achieving this will give more young people the opportunity to live and work independently.***

Previous generations could generally assume that there would come a point in their lives when they could live independently. This is no longer true. Changes are needed which will increase the availability of affordable housing, and which will deliver better education, training and employment opportunities. These changes could have a huge impact on young people's life chances. Even in a climate of continued economic constraints, there are ways in which some of these changes could be delivered now.

**(3) *Services which are intended to help young people need to be more appropriate to their needs. In addition, 'signposting' to these services needs to be improved.***

Services which are available for young people need to be more directly focused on their actual needs. The quality of services across the region needs to be more consistent. Both young people and the agencies with which they interact need to be more aware of the different services which are available.

**(4) *National change should also be sought.***

In some instances local change can be effected, often by acting to interpret existing rules more flexibly. In other instances, national change is required. There needs to be a focus on both - the final recommendations set out areas where key national policies which disadvantage young people need to be changed.

## Key headings

Each recommendation within the advocacy strategy is set out under specific headings. These are:

- The practical changes which are required
- The key people who need to agree to make the changes
- The people and organisations who can influence these change-makers, and the ways in which the influencers can be reached.

In total there are 15 recommendations. In some cases, we have been able to very clear with regards to who should own and drive the recommendation. In others, more work is needed in order to get to this level of clarity. We have attempted to set out what this work is. Above all, the advocacy strategy should be considered as a 'live' document which will need to be changed and adapted as work on it progresses.

### **(1) Policy-makers should listen to and act on what young people say**

#### **Recommendation 1(a) - [p. 22]**

Council providers of services should adopt the standards for listening to and working with young people which are set out in the National Youth Agency Commissioning Guidelines. Adopting these standards will lead to more effective consultation with young people and will result in better and more cost-effective services.

#### **Practical changes required**

- Housing, social care and ETE council lead officers across the region should adopt the National Youth Agency (NYA) commissioning guidelines, due to be updated in late spring 2019, which require them to listen closely to young people who use their services when determining:
  - What outcomes successful services should be trying to achieve
  - How well current service providers are achieving those outcomes
  - Which providers to commission
- Housing, social care and ETE council lead officers and service managers should undertake training in the broader National Youth Agency 'Hear By Right' participation toolkit. This would be a concrete start to a process of ensuring Hampshire becomes a region that genuinely listens to and works with its young people. It is important that it should be the officers in these functional areas who undertake the training, rather than 'youth' or 'participation' officers. The functional lead officers wield more power, set policy directly, and are more empowered to deliver real change.

#### **Key people who need to agree to make the change**

- Council leaders and chief executives
- Council lead members and functional lead officers in both Housing and ETE

#### **Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached**

- Council leaders and chief executives can be influenced both directly and by their lead members and senior officers. Where a change of this nature is being sought it is often an engaged lead member who can be the single biggest catalyst for achieving it.

- A short, clear and simple document, setting out the evidence base of the benefits of both the NYA commissioning guidelines and the 'Hear By Right' toolkit, needs to be produced. This can then be used as a springboard to meet with and persuade the decision-makers to support adopting the guidelines and ensuring key officers undertake the necessary training. This role could be the work of a single individual for a period of c. 2-3 months. Additional support from the NYA itself should be sought (also see 1(b), below).
- Councils should be lobbied directly, through the use of deputations at council meetings and by asking individual elected members to 'sign up' to adopting the guidelines. Cross-party commitment should be obtained. Lead members and their shadow counterparts should be requested to make commitment to adoption of the guidelines one of their political party's manifesto pledges to young people in the region.

### **Recommendation 1(b) - [p. 22]**

Council and voluntary sector providers in the region should subsequently work together towards adopting a broader, region-wide standard of 'listening to and working with young people' when making policy and commissioning services. This should be branded as the 'Hampshire Region's Young People's Charter' (or similar) and established as a desirable badge of 'best practice' in the region. This is a longer-term change than recommendation 1(a) above and will require a higher level of buy-in.

### ***Practical changes required***

- A project will need to be established in which housing, social care and ETE council lead officers consult with voluntary sector organisations and other parts of their council organisations to determine which specific elements of the 'Hear By Right' Toolkit should be adopted on which to base the Charter. A project of this type is probably best delivered by appointing a lead council to drive it. A similar approach has recently been successful in establishing the regional adoption agency 'Adopt South': the project was spearheaded by Hampshire County Council, but also includes Southampton and Portsmouth City Councils along with Isle of Wight Council.
- Objective and consistently-measurable assessment criteria will need to be developed in order to determine which organisations adhere to the Charter.
- Council lead members, lead officers and chief executives will then need to commit to embedding the Charter standard throughout the region. One way in which this can be achieved is by setting a deadline, whereby voluntary organisations which do not meet the Charter criteria will no longer be commissioned to provide services beyond a specific date.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- As with recommendation 1(a) above, political and organisational will is required from senior members and officers. In addition, heads of voluntary sector organisations will need to support the establishment of the Charter. Commissioning rules will play a key role in delivering this buy-in.

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- Change will in part be influenced by successes delivered from 1(a) whereby adopting the NYA commissioning guidelines starts to deliver more cost-effective and better-tailored young people's services. This should engender 'organic' support from within local authorities which helps make the establishment of a more formal Charter a natural evolutionary development.
- The National Youth Agency already has evidence from councils who have benefited from adopting its 'Hear By Right' toolkit. One option for consideration is to formally engage with the National Youth Agency in supporting the delivery of both recommendations 1(a) and 1(b).

### ***(2) Supply and quality need to be increased, in both housing and in ETE. Achieving this will give more young people the opportunity to live and work independently.***

#### **Recommendation 2(a) - [pp. 14-15]**

Local councils in the region should explore whether they can increase the supply of housing to homeless, single, childless 21-25 year-olds (including those in supported accommodation) through 'Housing First'.

### ***Practical changes required***

- In the first instance work is required to develop a business case which will help determine whether adopting a Housing First approach to homeless young people in our region will deliver better outcomes for this group than current approaches. The business case should ideally deliver two main objectives: evidence that such an initiative is likely to be economically viable (through cost prevention) and also in terms of measurably beneficial social outcomes. The organisation Homeless Link provide support for doing this, and should be asked to do so.
- Existing Housing First schemes in the UK are generally commissioned by a local authority, with funding additionally supplied in some cases from Public Health England, local Clinical Commissioning Groups, and from Police and Crime Commissioners. Assuming that the business case is positive, then funding should be sought from some or all of these bodies for a local trial of Housing First.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- Senior housing officers and lead members for housing. The business case would need to be disseminated among all of these in order to persuade them that a trial scheme would be worth pursuing.

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- The key influencer is the business case itself. The nature and availability of local housing stock suitable for single people is one of the key determinants as to whether a scheme is likely to be successful. Once the business case is established then it can be targeted towards the relevant decision-makers in a local authority most suitable for a trial.



Options for different ways in which this work (and many of the other recommendations) could be taken forward are set out under the heading 'Potential ways forward', below.

### **Recommendation 2(b) - [pp. 12-13]**

Research should be funded to develop a model for a sharing agency, initially in Southampton where engagement has been highest, to increase the supply of low-cost, decent-quality shared housing to single non-students. If successful then this model should be rolled out to other areas with similar student/non-student demographics.

#### ***Practical changes required***

- Private landlords in Southampton have traditionally preferred renting out their housing to students who share. However, with increasing amounts of purpose-built student accommodation in the city, landlords are becoming more amenable to the non-student shared market.
- Two potential approaches need to be explored: the first is a 'minimal' sharing agency which gives advice and acts as property manager for private landlords, and the second a more 'maximal' one which offers more support in order to help sustain tenancies, but is more expensive.
- In the first instance, research should be commissioned in collaboration with a local landlord association such as iHowz to develop a model for a sharing agency. The efficacy of Winchester's 'City Lets' model should also be evaluated. The cost and scope of this research is the next thing which needs to be determined.
- iHowz and others should then establish a trial of a model in Southampton with direct support from Southampton City Council.

#### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

iHowz and the Southampton City council housing lead already support the proposal in principle.

#### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- The influence and progress thus far have emanated directly from the research project. The resource necessary to drive it forward from here needs to be identified - see 'Potential ways forward', below.

### **Recommendation 2(c) - [p. 18]**

Local employers should improve employment conditions, reduce numbers on non-permanent and zero-hours contracts, pay National Living Wage rates for young people, and sign up to a Kitemark 'to make Hampshire a great place for young people to work'.

#### ***Practical changes required***

- The region's councils and employers' organisations should develop a Kitemark for employers who offer the National Living Wage, along with a high percentage of permanent contracts and traineeships and apprenticeships (see below). Further research will be required to understand the full detail of 'what good looks like' in this area.

- They should use their communications channels to make the public aware of the Kitemark.
- The percentage of 16-25 year olds earning an hourly rate above the minimum should increase and the percentage employed on non-permanent contracts decrease.
- This change needs to be the start of a process which raises awareness among employers, unions and the wider public of the importance of effecting meaningful change in improving young people's pay and employment terms.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- Employers' and employees' organisations - Business South People's Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, Wessex Federation of Small Businesses, and others
- Trade unions
- ETE lead officers of local authorities
- ETE lead members of local authorities

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- A number of Business South members, along with some unions, are already in agreement on this and should be encouraged to influence the wider employers' organisations and ETE lead officers (several ETE lead members are also already open to the proposal).
- Participants in this research can also reach influencers by being facilitated to attend employers' organisation meetings.
- See 'Potential ways forward', below.

#### **Recommendation 2(d) - [pp. 19-20]**

As part of making Hampshire a great place for young people to work, local councils and public employers like the NHS should publish the number of their apprentices and trainees who are aged 16/17 and 18-25. Second, as they strive to meet the government target of 2.3% of public sector employees being apprentices by 2021, they should ensure an increasing proportion are from across the 16 to 25 age groups. We suggest that the proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds in apprenticeships and traineeships across Hampshire should be targeted to increase to 15% by 2021 from its current (estimated) level of c. 7.0%

### ***Practical changes required***

- Local authorities publish the number of apprenticeships they offer, but it is low (0.6% in Hampshire County Council, 0.8% in Southampton City Council and 1.3% at Portsmouth City Council.) No local authorities currently publish details of how many of the apprentices they take on are aged 16-25. The regions' council leads and senior NHS managers should agree to publish apprenticeship and traineeship numbers by age.
- Council ETE leads and officers should encourage employers to do the same (see below).
- Council ETE leads and officers should ensure that increasing the number of young trainees and apprentices is seen as an integral part of making Hampshire a 'great place to for young people to work'.

### **Key people who need to agree to make the change**

- Council leaders and chief executives; senior NHS managers.

### **Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached**

- Council lead members and lead officers in both ETE and health.
- Participants in this research can reach influencers by being facilitated to attend one of the Solent apprenticeship hub meetings.
- See 'Potential ways forward', below.

#### **Recommendation 2(e) - [pp. 19-20]**

As part of making Hampshire a great place for young people to work, local employers should publish the number of their apprentices and trainees who are aged 16/17 and 18-25. They should also work to ensure that the number of traineeships and apprenticeships to 16/17 year olds and 18-25 year olds increases year-on-year.

### **Practical changes required**

- Local employers should start to publish their apprenticeship statistics, including the age range of their apprentice cohorts. Publishing this information should also be a key criterion for being awarded the Kitemark.
- Employers should seek local authority advice, such as from the Solent Apprenticeship Hub, about how to use Apprenticeship Levy funds to pay for 'floating' support to help recruit and keep young apprentices engaged.
- Solent Apprenticeship Hub and those making decisions about Levy funds should explore linking support from those funds to employers meeting the criteria of 'making Hampshire a great place for young people to work'.
- Local employers' organisations participating in 'Making Hampshire a great place for young people to work' should publish the figures for how many young apprentices they employ and increase the number each year.

### **Key people who need to agree to make the change**

- Employers, and employers' and employees' organisations - e.g. Business South People's Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, Wessex Federation of Small Businesses and trade unions.

### **Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached**

- Council ETE officers can influence some employers through Solent Apprenticeship Hub meetings and by controlling access to Levy funds.
- There is also a need to reach employers directly and through employers' organisations. Participants in this research can potentially influence employers' organisations by being facilitated to attend some of their meetings.

- A business case needs to be made which makes a case for specifically targeting NEET young people as part of workforce development (for example, in the way Barclays Bank has done<sup>1</sup>). One route forward from here would be to work with the National Apprenticeship Service to develop this business case.
- 'Early adopter champions' for this, and for other aspects of the Kitemark, need to be sought. Enlisting one or more 'champions' will make it more likely that the Kitemark will gain the traction necessary to succeed.

### **Recommendation 2(f) - [p. 22]**

Voluntary sector organisations do not currently monitor how many people they employ from backgrounds similar to those they are trying to help. Young people told us they would like more of the people who help them to come from such backgrounds because they understand them better and act as role models. Voluntary sector organisations helping young people should provide more employment to people from backgrounds similar to those they are trying to help.

### ***Practical changes required***

- Initial research should be commissioned into current practices in monitoring employee backgrounds in the youth voluntary sector, how an appropriate measure for 'similar backgrounds' could be developed, and what recruitment practices could be practically implemented to increase employment of these young people.
- These statistics should be monitored and publicised to act as a spur within the voluntary sector as well as (potentially over time) within other sectors.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- The chief executives of voluntary sector organisations.

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- They can be influenced directly and via their HR heads and through trades unions.
- The Blgrave Trust could potentially take a lead role in implementing this recommendation, by engaging with other funding organisations in order to develop a concerted approach on this issue

***(3) Services which are intended to help young people need to be more appropriate to their needs. In addition, 'signposting' to these services needs to be improved.***

### **Recommendation 3(a) - [pp. 15-16]**

Some local authorities in Hampshire currently do not offer 16 and 17-year-olds genuine care options and are not implementing the 'Southwark judgement'. Local councils should fulfil their statutory duty by offering to take homeless 16- and 17-year-olds into care.

### ***Practical changes required***

- Lead officers in the councils concerned need to change their practices. When local advice centres report accounts of the Southwark judgement not being implemented, council homelessness prevention and social care officers need to investigate them.
- Council leads, children's services lead members and chief executives in the councils concerned need to agree funding for sufficient numbers of staff to conduct the necessary care assessments.
- Councils need to focus on developing social care solutions for 16- and 17-year-olds which are not simply placements in homeless hostels.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- Council officers, particularly homelessness and social care leads, need to acknowledge there is a problem.
- Council leaders, children's services lead members and chief executives in the councils concerned need to drive change from the top down.

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- Local advice centres hold evidence of many cases of 16 and 17-year-olds who failed to have the Southwark judgement applied to them, and how their available options were presented to them. This evidence needs to be marshalled and presented to the relevant local authority staff and to elected members. There is a culture of denial of the problem which needs to be addressed.
- 'Best practice' in the region should be identified and shared among non-compliant local authorities in order to make it more widespread.
- This is a complex and particularly sensitive policy area and will require a high degree of diplomacy to address. While not desirable, the option of seeking a judicial review on behalf of a client should not be ruled out.

#### **Recommendation 3(b) - [pp. 14-15]**

Some employed young people who become homeless and go into supported accommodation such as hostels do not feel that working full-time makes them better off and find it hard to save for a deposit so that they can move out into rented accommodation. Funders and providers of supported accommodation should remove the 'benefits trap' which currently discourages hostel residents from working.

### ***Practical changes required***

- This is a complex issue that requires more research. Research should be commissioned via Centrepoint and Homeless Link gathering evidence about any schemes which have been introduced elsewhere, including where savings have been achieved as a result of successfully moving young people out of supported accommodation.
- This recommendation should also be directly linked both to a trial of Housing First (recommendation 2(a) and to recommendation 2(b)), the establishment of a shared housing agency for non-students. The cohort of young people currently 'trapped' in supported accommodation are most likely to be those who can benefit from one or other of these new approaches.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change/Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- This will need to be established during the research. Locally, both Step by Step and YMCA Southampton have said they are interested in progressing this. The resource needed to coordinate the research efforts is yet to be determined.

#### **Recommendation 3(c) - [pp. 13-14]**

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officers need to be encouraged to be more flexible in their interpretation of national rules on Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) in order to make it less likely that young tenants will get in to arrears.

### ***Practical changes required***

- The national rules say all recipients of housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit (UC) should be given it directly as the default position, with responsibility to pass it onto the landlord. Young people can apply for APAs so the money goes direct to landlords, but the DWP grant more of these in some parts of the region than others. We would like them all to grant more.
- Hampshire County Council homelessness officers, who have the best record in achieving DWP acceptance of APA requests, should share best practice in encouraging all councils' homelessness officers to establish relationships with local DWP officers to ensure the acceptance rate for alternative payment arrangements requests on behalf of young claimant tenants increases.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has already made it clear (in January 2019) there should be more flexibility.
- In the first instance local council homelessness officers need to agree to approach the DWP
- Local DWP officers need to agree to interpret the national rules more consistently across the region.

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- Hampshire's homelessness officers, in conjunction with the group set up to take this work forward (see 'Potential ways forward', below) should take the lead on this.

#### **Recommendation 3(d) - [pp. 19-20]**

Many young people told us they felt unprepared for post-16 choices and that what was on offer was confusing. Part of the reason for this is that funding for some projects is so short-term that advisers themselves are not sure what is available.

Local authorities and statutory and voluntary sector providers of post-16 education and training and schools should offer better-quality and more up-to-date information about what education training and employment options are available post-16.

### ***Practical changes required***

- Council ETE officers need to keep websites like 'Hampshire Futures' fully up to date
- Council ETE officers should work to strengthen existing region-wide networks of Further Education (FE) providers so that the providers themselves have a better knowledge of what is on offer across different institutions
- Strengthened networks and clearer information about what is available should drive up attendance FE rates and reduce the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- Council ETE officers and post-16 ETE providers.

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- There is already a degree of buy-in to this recommendation from ETE officers and FE colleges who have taken part in our research.
- Further work is required to (1) set out what best practice in post-16 information websites looks like (Hampshire Futures currently leads the way) and to lobby individual council ETE officers to sign up to delivering this, and (2) to encourage FE providers to improve information-sharing among themselves. Resource will need to be identified to carry out these two pieces of work.

#### **Recommendation 3(e) - [p. 20]**

Local councils and Further Education providers should collaborate to deliver an increase in the numbers of 'informal' education and training places, such as Enham College, including work-based traineeships available to 16- and 17-year-olds with few or no qualifications. Initial high-level analysis suggests that an appropriate target could be the doubling of the number of such places (to c. 950 across the Hampshire region) in order to meet demand. More young people should be encouraged to focus on achieving the revised 'Functional Skills' standards which come into force in September 2019.

### ***Practical changes required***

- Council ETE leads and chief executives should prioritise finding funding both for informal college provision and work-based traineeships, particularly after funding from the European Social Fund comes to an end (the exact date of this will depend on the terms under which the UK exits the EU). Planning for what happens after the UK ceases to be a member of the EU (which at time of writing is still the most likely scenario) is something that needs to be happening immediately.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- Further Education colleges, other FE providers, and employers all need to focus on how this provision can be delivered.
- Council ETE lead officers and lead members for education should also prioritise this.



### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- Further analysis is required to understand the 'true' level of demand. In the first instance, working with colleges like Enham could help provide this insight and build a more detailed picture of how this type of provision can more effectively complement the existing FE offer in the region.
- As with other aspects of this strategy, a systematic approach is required, as set out in 'Potential ways forward', below.

### **(4) National change should also be sought**

#### **Recommendation 4(a) - [pp. 13-14]**

Local authorities, voluntary sector providers and private landlords should all lend weight to campaigns at the national level which aim to make it easier for young people up to the age of 25 claiming housing benefit to opt in to alternative payment arrangements.

### ***Practical changes required***

- Local support should be given to national campaigns by the National Landlords' Association, Shelter, Homeless Link and Centrepoin to press the Department for Work and Pensions to change the national regulations.

### ***Key people who need to agree to make the change***

- The Secretary of State at the DWP

### ***Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached***

- Local MPs can be asked to exert influence by writing to the Secretary of State at the DWP.
- Council housing leads, voluntary sector housing chief executives and local landlords' associations can lobby their local Members of Parliament for support, as well as lobbying directly.
- Resolutions passed by individual councils, based on deputations where young people and landlords work together, could act as a powerful spur towards achieving this.

#### **Recommendation 4(b) - [pp. 20-21]**

Local authorities, post-16 ETE providers and employers should support national campaigns for greater flexibility in the funding arrangements for provision of literacy and numeracy post-16, including greater recognition of the value of Functional Skills.

### ***Practical changes required***

- The Department for Education needs to relax its current regulations which attach FE funding to the requirement to enter all those with Grade 2 or above at GCSE Maths or English for repeated re-sits, so that a larger number of students can study Functional Skills, leading to greater engagement with education and training post 16.



### **Key people who need to agree to make the change**

- The Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills, and the Secretary of State for Education

### **Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached**

- Local MPs can be asked to exert influence by writing to the relevant ministers.
- Council ETE leads influence can ask council leaders to reach out to local MPs.

#### **Recommendation 4(c) - [p. 20]**

Local authorities, post-16 ETE providers and employers should support national campaigns for a change in child benefit rules so that parents are as equally incentivised for their child to pursue a post-16 apprenticeship as they are for a college course.

### **Key people who need to agree to make the change**

- Parliamentary legislation would be required to be passed before the DWP implements the change.

### **Who influences these change-makers, and how they can be reached**

- The Secretary of State at DWP needs to agree.
- The 2018 Education Select Committee members and Conservative MPs who have previously advocated this change in Private Members' Bills should influence the Secretary of State, including citing the Audit Commission evidence estimate that such a change would cost £100 million.
- Local MPs should be lobbied to influence relevant ministers in both this and future Parliaments

## **Potential ways forward**

There is a number of clear and recurrent themes in most, if not all, of the policy recommendations set out above:

- More research is required: this ranges from development of specific business cases to further documenting and collating the experiences of young people
- There is a need to structure and organise the advocacy work itself (contacting key people, making the case etc.)
- Continuing to listen to young people, regardless of levels of support for any specific policy point, is vital; equally vital is making sure there is a direct role for young people in the actual 'nuts and bolts' processes of achieving policy change
- There are also very clearly some 'key players' whose support will be important to enlist in order to effect changes. These are (among others) council leaders, lead officers and members for ETE and housing, heads of FE institutions, leaders of large employers and of employers' organisations, and trades unions.
- In practice, it will be most effective to seek to engage with these key individuals and introduce a coherent 'whole agenda' for change, rather than adopt a piecemeal approach.

**To deliver the strategy, therefore, there are two broad approaches which could be adopted:**

The first would be to establish a group to take forward all the proposals in the report. This would mean seeking funding for a single coordinating/delivery organisation for all the work, and working with youth agencies, including (although not exclusively) current Blagrave partners.

The second would be to advance different proposals separately. In practice this would mean some or all of the housing-related proposals, and some or all of the ETE ones. This could be achieved by seeking funding for leads in each area. This could potentially be a new group, or taken forward by an existing organisation.

Either approach would see the implementing group(s) seeking to meet with the 'key' people to introduce the whole agenda for change, with perhaps with the hope of them nominating themselves or other colleagues to take a lead (or at least be a future point of contact).

There is also an additional case for forming a specific coalition of groups to push on with the 'listening to young people' aspects of the work, irrespective of which of the two options above is adopted.

The Southern Policy Centre and our peer researchers believe that this project has identified practical deliverable changes that would respond to many of the key problems identified and experienced by young people. We hope that those supporting young people can find ways to take forward the recommendations in this report, by continuing to work with young people themselves.

## **Note to the Appendix**

1. [https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NEET\\_Case-Studies-Final-Version.pdf](https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NEET_Case-Studies-Final-Version.pdf)

