



# HOW CAN WE SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION?

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- Continuation of 2017 youth homelessness Welsh Assembly project
- Explore some of the issues young people experience while living in supported accommodation
- Examine the impact and challenges of living with these barriers
- Propose suitable approaches to tackle these barriers and create social change



# Today....

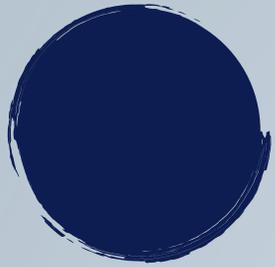
# What is supported accommodation?

- Supported accommodation projects aim to alleviate homelessness by providing temporary housing and support to those at risk of homelessness
- Young people living in supported housing are able to access one-to-one support alongside their tenancy, enabling them to achieve stability and develop emotional and practical skills. Young people may be offered support with mental health, budgeting skills, living and social skills, drug and alcohol use and accessing and preparing for employment and education.
- Each young person is designated a key worker, who will support the young person both formally and informally to address their needs and issues
- Supported accommodation projects are frequently subjected to funding constraints, which can impact their staffing and services they are able to offer

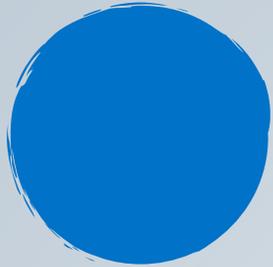


# Activity one

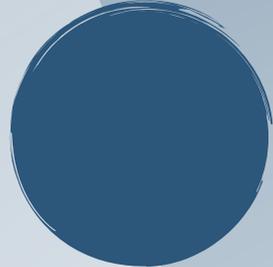
- What do you think are the most significant barriers homeless young people experience? Why?
- Why are **you** attending the workshop here today?



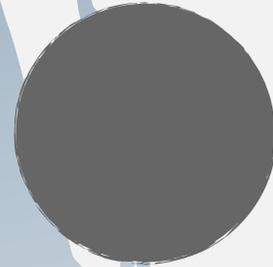
Mental Health



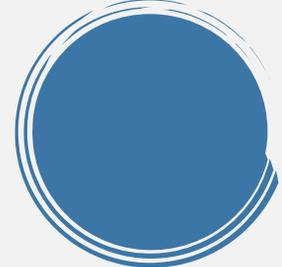
Stigma



Nutrition



Education



Employment

# Why is it important?

Around 150,000 young people require assistance with homelessness in the UK each year. Of this number, around 7,000 are in Wales

There are around 35,000 young people in homeless accommodation at any one time across the UK

According to Llamau, 90% of the young people who experience homelessness have a mental health condition, compared to 32% of their housed counterparts

Young homeless people are significantly less likely to be in employment or education than their housed peers

A disrupted education is a common effect of youth homelessness. Participants in one study showed young homeless people were over two times more likely to have left school with no qualifications compared to national figures for their age group

In one study, over 70% of homeless youth had inadequate intakes of vitamins A, C, D<sub>3</sub> and E, as well as calcium and magnesium

# Activity Two – 15 minutes

- Each group has been allocated a board game and a specific amount of money.
- Use your money (and time) wisely to negotiate how you should spend it to improve the experiences of young people living in supported accommodation
- You have one 'free' square to use as you please.



# The Problem?

## Mental Health

- Access to six free counselling sessions while living in the hostel has been cut due to funding constraints, meaning many young people have to rely on staff to fulfil their mental health needs.
- The young people are often told by mental health services that staff members should be responsible for supporting their needs. However, hostel staff are not trained mental health workers.
- Homeless hostels are often under-staffed, which makes it difficult for staff to manage the mental health needs of the young people. Some of the young people found it difficult to approach staff in the office during times of crisis, if the staff looked busy, or if there were too many individuals in the office at the time.
- There is insufficient research and awareness of autism and youth homelessness. Hostels are rarely autism-friendly and can be distressing for an autistic young person as there are many sensory challenges and frequent changes to routine
- Child & Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS) not effective or helpful

## Real Stories

One young person with mental health issues was advised by her secondary school once she turned 18, that if she continued to present herself in hospital at times of crisis, she would be excluded as she would be considered **'too high risk'** to remain a student. This meant the young person was forced to choose between accessing emergency mental health assistance and continuing with her education.

After a suicide attempt, one young person met with a mental health worker who refused to assist any further because the young person confided they sometimes abused substances.

As counselling was no longer available through the hostel, one young person asked his GP for support through the NHS. Despite being deemed **'high priority'** by his GP, he was 79<sup>th</sup> on the list to receive free counselling

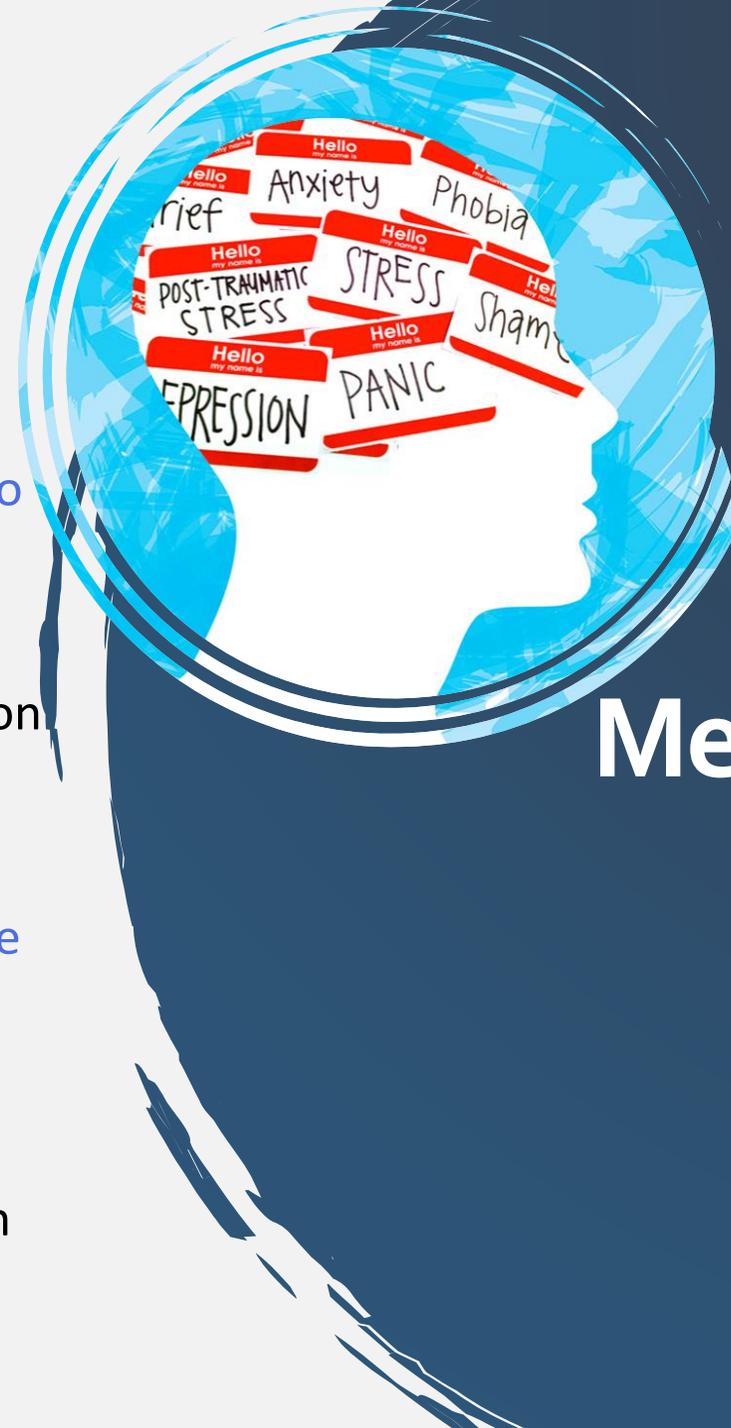
The stories on the previous page are just some examples of young people being failed by the system and by services. How can we expect young people experiencing homelessness to trust support services when they are letting them down at crucial times?

Not effectively managing mental health issues can lead to long-term consequences for young people

Ongoing mental health issues makes it harder to transition to and remain in independent living

Mental health issues can make it harder for young people experiencing homelessness to maintain employment, education and relationships

As little is known about the implications of having autism in homeless hostels, it may mean autistic people are not receiving adequate support while homeless



# Mental Health

## The Implications

# The Problem? Stigma

**“There was a real sense of community coming together and supporting one another”**

**“This would be situated next to a doctors surgery, a church and a children’s playpark, we don’t feel it would be right”**

**“ We’re bitterly disappointed, especially as it seems to have been swayed by a number of councillors from outside the area who obviously don’t understand the tourism industry”**

**“I strongly protest against this development and will do for any hostel in this village, it is not wanted by local residents... and will run the village further into the ground”**

# The Problem? Stigma

Landlords unwilling to rent to young people who have experienced homelessness

Judgmental attitudes towards young people who are living in supported accommodation

Stigma from friends

# Stigma – The Implications

- Hurtful
- Isolating
- Can lead to social exclusion
- Limited support from friends due to their misconceptions surrounding homelessness
- Can damage social relationships
- Limits social opportunities
- Limits access to housing
- Stigma can act as a barrier to seeking support
- Takes the enjoyment out of social activities
- Diminishes self-esteem

# The Problem? Nutrition

Young people living in supported accommodation rarely have the financial means to eat a well balanced diet

Benefit sanctions are too easily imposed, and can lead to young people having no money to purchase food

Food banks can only be used for a limited time and rarely offer nutritious food

Young homeless people often lack the education and resources to prepare healthy meals on a strict budget.

# Nutrition – The Implications

- Depression
- Fatigue
- Poor cognitive function
- Lack of motivation
- Weakened immune system
  
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Several types of Cancer

**COFFEE BREAK – 15  
MINUTES**





# Real Stories

**A young person worked part-time in a fast-food outlet while living in the hostel. At the end of one shift, his manager requested he remain an extra 20 minutes to cover a busy period, as were other staff members. For this additional time, he earned almost £3 which impacted his Housing Benefit entitlement. It was several frustrating weeks before his claim was reinstated.**

**One young person was forced to turn down a promotion as it would mean he would earn slightly too much to claim Housing Benefit**

# Employment – The Implications

- Penalised for working
- A large gap on CV covering up to a two year period
- Unable to gain valuable work experience
- Boredom
- Frustration
- Negative implications on mental health
- Reduces independence
- Disempowerment
- Weakens ties to the community
- Perpetuates stigma
- Traps people in homelessness



# The Problem?

## Education

- The level of awareness and understanding of teachers in schools is not sufficient. Young people experiencing homelessness who remain in education **are not receiving adequate support.**
- Access to resources and Wi-Fi while living in the hostel is poor, which impacts studying and completing assignments on time.
- Living in the hostel can be distracting when you have to be up early for school, or are trying to complete coursework and revise for exams.
- Residents who remain in education feel excluded and isolated from their peers, as they are unable to afford school trips or other educational supplies.

# Education - The Implications

- Remaining in education enables young people to remain integrated in their peer groups and wider society, increasing stability
- Not completing A-levels makes it harder to attend higher education and gain qualifications
- Greater dependency on benefits
- Higher rates of unemployment and lower-paid opportunities
- Decrease in confidence and motivation
- Disempowerment

# ACTIVITY FOUR

## Group Discussion

Were you previously aware of the issues discussed today?

Propose **at least one** method to tackle each of the barriers discussed today



# Our Solutions

## Mental Health

- Improving approaches to manage dual-diagnosis
- Less reliance from outside services on staff members
- More research focusing on the experiences of young people with autism in supported accommodation is required
- Yellow card
- No single-manned hostel



## Stigma

- More outreach work in schools led by young homeless people to increase awareness and challenge misconceptions
- More community projects in North Wales



## Nutrition

- Weekly delivery of fresh fruit and vegetables to homeless hostels
- Regular cooking workshops, teaching young people how to prepare meals on a budget
- Weekly Shop and Cook sessions to educate and ensure young people can access one good quality meal each week

# Our Solutions

## Education

- Educating teachers is key to achieving better support for young people experiencing homelessness
- We propose that a 'supporting homelessness' module/workshop be incorporated into teacher training and into the ongoing professional development of teachers to raise awareness and equip individuals with the tools required to successfully support young people and children experiencing homelessness.
- One-to-one support sessions for students who are experiencing homelessness

## Employment

- Many young people living in hostels still have support needs other than housing. If a young person secures employment but still requires support, they should only be liable for the actual rent element of their rental costs. This fair and flexible approach would be beneficial for young people, as they would still be able to access vital support and prepare for independent living through the hostel, while maintaining their employment.
- Provide employers with education relating to **why** young homeless people can face challenges in employment and **how** they can support them more effectively

# Positive experiences of living in supported housing

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Own space

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Encouragement

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Access to support

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Stepping stone to independent living

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Good opportunities to develop skills

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Meet new friends

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Decreases loneliness

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Can build a good relationship with staff

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Constant staff presence

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Can create stability and a sense of home

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# Summary and Key Learning Points

- Young people experiencing homelessness should not have to choose between shelter and their education, employment and mental health
- Alongside prevention methods, there is an urgent need to address the barriers young people are experiencing while homeless.
- The barriers, challenges and structural difficulties young people experience in supported accommodation are mostly due to external factors
- Financial constraints can exacerbate challenges and issues in supported accommodation, particularly with under-staffing
- There are some benefits to living in supported accommodation projects while experiencing homelessness and therefore, these project still have a key role to play in housing young homeless people.

# THANK YOU

## QUESTIONS?

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# References

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