



Targeted youth support and housing practitioners – working together to tackle youth homelessness

This leaflet is aimed at housing practitioners, providing them with information about what targeted youth support is, how they can engage with and the benefits it brings.



department for
children, schools and families



Communities
and Local Government

Targeted youth support – helping to prevent youth homelessness

The targeted youth support reforms bring together local services and create a common approach to identifying vulnerable young people, assessing their needs and providing integrated support. Services are helped to identify emerging difficulties in young people's lives and respond to them quickly and effectively so fewer young people experience serious problems.

Targeted youth support gives housing departments a significant vehicle through which they can work with different agencies to prevent young people from becoming homeless or help those who are homeless to get their lives back on track.

The reforms are led by children's trusts, working closely with partners such as housing authorities, health services, schools, colleges and the voluntary sector, to realise cross-cutting objectives. Putting the needs of families, children and young people first is central to achieving this, in step with the Children's Plan's vision for high-quality, integrated services working across traditional institutional and professional boundaries.

As housing practitioners from both local authority and voluntary organisations, you have a unique perspective on, and sometimes unparalleled access to, vulnerable young people, their families and their homes. Without your input into the multi-agency teams that work to support vulnerable young people, there is a risk that their needs will remain unidentified and unmet.

These new arrangements can help you to work with partners to put in place measures to tackle and prevent youth homelessness, including the commitment that, by 2010, no 16-17 year-olds should be placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation by a local authority under the homelessness legislation, except in an emergency.

The benefits of engaging with targeted youth support

“Stability, a safe environment and a secure home are crucial to ensuring the five Every Child Matters outcomes are met for all young people. By working with other agencies, we can tackle issues early on that can lead to youth homelessness and together improve outcomes for young people.”

Tim Clements, Housing-Related Support Officer, Leicester.

Under the Children’s Act 2004 and the Homelessness Act 2004, housing and children’s services are expected to work in partnership to improve the well-being of all young people, including those at risk of homelessness. This Government expectation applies across two-tier local authorities as well as unitaries.

Targeted youth support contributes to improved well-being for young people by providing a holistic assessment of their needs and a coordinated support response by a number of agencies that form a team around the child.

This effective, multi-agency working is key to tackling issues such as substance misuse and providing vulnerable young people, such as

teenage parents, with housing support. It is central to the aim of reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to the 2015 target of ensuring 90 per cent of all 17 year-olds are participating in education.

In addition, extended schools and children’s centres have an important role to play in developing young people’s personal financial management skills and providing information on the support available, such as housing benefit, to help tackle one of the main causes of homelessness – debt.

Given that youth homelessness can result from, and lead to, other problems – such as disrupted education, becoming NEET, family breakdown and poor mental health – engaging with targeted youth support gives housing staff the opportunity to address these interconnected problems in the round.

Housing staff bring a better understanding of homelessness risk factors to these multi-agency teams. Being part of the team enables them to identify vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness who might otherwise have been missed, and to refer on those whose first contact with services was about a housing/homelessness issue.

Benefits of a joined-up approach in Hull

“When a young person comes to our attention as being at risk of becoming homeless, our first priority is to understand the full story of what life is like for them. Nine times out of 10, facing homelessness is just one of a number of challenges in the young person’s life.

“Our fully integrated approach has been designed, and has evolved, to be able to offer a full range of support and advice to a young person. It is only through responding to the needs of the ‘whole child’ that life chances can genuinely be enhanced.”

Nigel Richardson, Director of Children’s Services, Hull.

isolation. YPSS advisers assist with health, employment and training advice and referrals, counselling and befriending, family mediation, crisis loans and food parcels. Young people can also be referred to Connexions and adult services from the YPSS hub.

Hull’s Director of Housing, John Hocking, said: “The hub provides support to all young people on a variety of issues rather than just those just on the point of leaving care or experiencing a crisis. This approach makes it far more of a preventative service, as it helps young people avoid homelessness by helping them plan for their housing needs and develop independent living skills.”

In Hull, the housing department works in partnership with the area’s Young Person’s Support Service (YPSS), which provides help, advice and support to 13- to 21 year olds who are leaving care, homeless or in need.

While the highest demand among young people using the service is for accommodation and financial advice, these issues are not dealt with in

How to get involved in targeted youth support

As housing practitioners it is important to work with schools to raise awareness and increase understanding of youth homelessness and how to prevent it. With teaching staff, you can help challenge myths about homelessness, develop a shared understanding of the underlying causes and help schools and vulnerable pupils get swift and easy access to support to prevent homelessness.

You can also use the multi-agency structures that targeted youth support is putting in place to ensure homeless young people get the help they need to move on with their lives, find the right education, training or employment opportunities and sustain a permanent home.

If you are not already involved in targeted youth support, seek out your local authority lead and discuss with them how you can engage in the process and ensure that youth homelessness/homelessness prevention is part of the agenda. If you are not sure who to approach, the contact for your area is listed on the back of this leaflet.

Also contact your regional centre of excellence. The centres have been set up by the National Youth Homelessness Scheme to work with individual councils to promote innovation and encourage improvement to prevent and tackle youth homelessness. Follow the web-link on the back page for more details.



Practical support/guidance on targeted youth support is available from government offices (GOs) and local authorities, in partnership with the Training and Development Agency for Schools. To find out more or to get in touch with your local contact, email your GO lead:

East of England

julie.odowd@goeast.gsi.gov.uk

East Midlands

kanchan.jadeja@goem.gsi.gov.uk

London

clive.senior@gol.gsi.gov.uk

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South West

nita.murphy@gosw.gsi.gov.uk

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Yorkshire & Humberside

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Resources

Targeted youth support emerging practice case studies are available at: www.ecm.gov.uk/deliveringservices/tysemergingpractice

Targeted youth support – a guide (reference: TDA0478) and delivery toolkit interactive CD-ROM (reference: 0368/08.07/EHS) are available.

Tel. 0845 6060 323 or email publications@tda.gov.uk

The guide is also available online at: www.ecm.gov.uk/IG00206

For further information and case studies on extended schools, including guidance on swift and easy access, visit: www.tda.gov.uk/extendedschools

For more information about the National Youth Homelessness Scheme, including its regional centres of excellence, visit:

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness

For more information on improving outcomes for teenage parents, read Teenage Parents Next Steps: guidance for local authorities and primary care trusts, available online at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/health/teenagepregnancy