

Youth homelessness among care-experienced people in England and Wales

1 in 4

homeless people have
been in care

x2

Rough sleeping has
almost doubled across
England and Wales
since 2010

1 in 3

young people leaving care
will become homeless in
two years (that is over 3,300
care leavers in England and
230 care leavers in Wales)

Comparing homelessness policies for care-experienced young people across England and Wales

Care-experienced young people are more likely than their peers to end up homeless or living in vulnerable housing. The scale of the problem is not reflected in figures alone. Many young people are 'hidden homeless' – sofa surfing, sleeping in out of sight squats, and staying in abusive relationships with no alternative to housing. We have compared the approach to preventing and responding to youth homelessness in both countries, to call on actions for change across England and Wales.

Corporate parents need to ask themselves whether their approach to homelessness would be good enough for their own children. At present, support packages for care leavers are inconsistent across local authorities, and outcomes differ dramatically. Every care-experienced young person should have access to sustainable, long-term accommodation. They need the safety net that exists for their peers, many of whom turn to their own parent(s) for help during the transition to living independently.

Summary

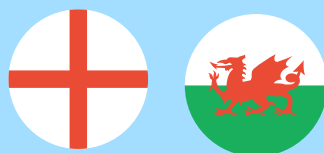
Homelessness is approached differently in England and Wales, but the challenges faced by homeless young people in both countries are very similar and very real. Every young person deserves quick and effective support when they are at risk of homelessness, and care-experienced young people need to be seen as a priority in both England and Wales beyond their 21st birthday.

Every young person deserves a safe and loving home. Both the UK and Welsh Government need to learn from each other and ensure that there is effective support for young people in relation to homelessness on both sides of the border.

Policy	England	Wales
Priority need for care-experienced young people under 21	Y	Y
Priority need for those at risk of financial and sexual exploitation under 21	N	Y
Priority need for care-experienced young people under 25	N	N
Priority need for 'vulnerable' groups over the age of 21—including those that are vulnerable as a result of their care experience	Y	N
Priority need for 'vulnerable' groups over the age of 21—where there is a specific reason for their vulnerability	N	Y
Young people under 18 cannot be classed as intentionally homeless	N	Y
Care-experienced young people under the age of 25 cannot be classed as intentionally homeless	N	Y
The intentionality test is abandoned where the applicant is under 18 or care-experienced and under 21	N	Y
Main duty to secure housing where there is a priority need and the applicant is unintentionally homeless.	Y	Y
Main duty to secure housing where one element of the test is failed or discarded (i.e nonpriority group or intentionally homeless)	N	P*
Duty to assist applicant find housing where one element of the test is failed (i.e nonpriority group/intentionally homeless)	Y	Y

KEY
Y = YES
N = NO
P = Partial

* If the applicant is under 18, or under 25 and care-experienced, then although the intentionality test is discarded there will still be a main duty if priority need is satisfied. ** In Wales, those aged under 25 can access advocacy where they are still by supported by Children’s Social Services and where they were looked after by a local authority for a specified period of time.



We are calling on the UK and Welsh Governments to end youth homelessness.

NYAS is a socio-legal charity that campaigns for the rights of care-experienced young people across England and Wales, championing their voices to be heard in the decisions made about them. NYAS is committed to tackling youth homelessness, advocating against many of its root causes, including mental health, exploitation, and the criminalisation of care-experienced young people. NYAS Cymru are partners in the End Youth Homelessness Campaign for Care Experienced Young People with other key organisations in Wales.

Across the Border Briefings are a series of NYAS reports that draw on our experience of working within the different national systems of England and Wales. They aim to highlight best practice, and where improvements need to be made to ensure the rights of young people are protected in line with the UNCRC. Care-experienced children and young people must receive the most effective support no matter where they live. This is the first briefing in the #Across the Border series.



This report was written by
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national youth
 advocacy service

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