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Homelessness among young people in Hackney

Problems and solutions

A report to Hackney Borough Council

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Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Table of Contents

Executive summary	3
1 Introduction and Methodology	6
1.1 Introduction	6
1.1.1 The Project	7
1.2 Methodology	8
2 Context	10
2.1 Hackney Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26	10
2.1.1 Theme Four: Addressing Homelessness Amongst Young People in Hackney	10
2.2 Support needs in Hackney	11
2.3 Hackney Housing Register Bands	12
3 Our Case Study: Why Hackney?	13
3.1 Hackney and the Housing Crisis	13
3.2 Why Young People?	13
4 Themes from the Case Study	14
4.1 Breakdown in the host relationship	14
4.2 Managing Expectations	15
4.3 Impact of the Housing Crisis	16
4.4 Importance of two or more adult professionals to turn to	17
4.5 The Potential of Social Media and Similar Campaigns	18
4.6 Life/Soft Skills	18
4.7 Challenges of Employment	19
5 Young Hackney, New Horizon and Fat Macy's	21
5.1 Young Hackney	21
5.2 New Horizon	22
5.3 Fat Macy's	23
6. Conclusions and Recommendations	24
6.1 Recommendations	25
6.1 One-Stop Shops across the borough.....	25
6.2 Invest in Prevention that is Already in Place.....	26
6.3 Provide Greater Access to Mediation and Counselling Services.....	26
6.4 Floating Support while waiting for housing	26
6.5 Council Support for young people wanting to Move Out of London	27
6.6 Relax restrictions on Local Housing Allowance	27
6.7 Targeted transport subsidies	27

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Appendices.....	28
Appendix A: Hackney's proposal for youth homelessness and employment project	28
Appendix B: Statement of Consent	32
Appendix C: Interview details	33
Appendix D: Glossary - Housing Benefit guidance for supported housing claims.....	34
Appendix E: Hackney Social Housing Bands	36
Appendix F: Examples of Questions used in Interviews.....	38

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Executive summary

Context

Hackney is a local authority with one of the largest homelessness problems in the country, twenty percent of which is concentrated among young people.

Over the years Hackney has become an extremely popular location for workers in central London. Even so, many employed people find it too expensive and have to move further out. This inherently means that lower income households and individuals can only remain in the area if they already have security of tenure or other form of support.

The borough has an atypical housing tenure structure with 40% of dwellings in the social rented sector. Those already living there have no reason to move so turnover is particularly low and people on the waiting list may wait years or even decades before getting an offer.

Another 30% plus of the stock is in the private rented sector where lettings generally go to the highest bidder, leaving few opportunities for those with limited resources which will mainly be in the form of lodgings.

Responsibilities

Local authorities have a responsibility to accommodate anyone who is accepted as homeless in the borough. Hackney's objective must therefore be to find and pay for suitable accommodation which ideally will be within the borough although in practice around one third are currently accommodated elsewhere. Equally as government subsidies are restricted it is important to keep costs as low as possible.

Young people

Given the large proportion of households living in social housing one of the pressures facing the borough is how the next generation can expect to be accommodated separately from their immediate families, given the extremely slow turnover rate. It is not surprising therefore that there are particularly high levels of homelessness among young people forced to leave the family home. More generally some 20% of those who are accepted as homeless (around 800 per annum) are aged between 18 and 25. Many are relatively poorly equipped to find work or access training let alone be able to afford accommodation.

Importantly a significant proportion of those who come forward have considerable support needs including, in particular, mental health problems – so the problem is rarely just about finding accommodation.

In addition, a rather different issue sometimes arises, especially among those who have lived in social housing with their family. They tend to feel entitled to be allocated a council home and do not recognise that, even though they may be on the list and are bidding for properties that are advertised, they may wait many years before they are accommodated.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Hackney's Approach

Hackney clearly has a major incentive to try to limit the costs to the borough of homeless young people as well as a clear objective to support them in obtaining training and entering the workforce.

Hackney's starting point is Young Hackney which aims to help young people with any problems they bring forward. While it is rather general it does provide a way into assistance for younger people. Hackney also undertakes a large number of initiatives to deal with a range of specific issues.

Perhaps the most successful stream has been that for those who come into the system from care. The receiving local authority has the responsibility to find them suitable accommodation which is often as a lodger with sympathetic families. This provides the security to help them undertake more education and training and with financial and other assistance to find accommodation and get on with their lives. There are lessons from this group that could be applied more generally. Even so, if they are not self-supporting by the end of that time there are major issues about how they cope in hostels that provide few additional services.

An important initiative that the Hackney Homelessness Prevention team has introduced is a mediation service which aims to bring the homeless young person together with their family to find acceptable support and accommodation. Both sides have suggested that this is usually too little too late. However, the potential benefits are so large it would be worth revisiting this approach, probably taking into account more extended members of the family.

A rather different issue is how to provide young people with practical skills which they need to get on but which are no longer taught in schools or provided by immediate family. These include how to obtain and maintain a job – and how to manage the money they receive. Young people can effectively learn from one another, but the lessons need to be correct. Some of those interviewed argued that social media could be used more effectively to maintain contact and provide information. They also suggested that it was immensely useful to be able to contact a named individual when they needed information or support.

Working with charities to support young people

Hackney has effectively partnered with a number of charities which provide education and training to help young people gain experience in the labour market as well as access to accommodation which is affordable for a period while they find their feet. However, the number that can be assisted is very limited and it is extremely difficult for them to move on.

All too often the financial assistance towards accommodation cannot be taken up because there is nothing available in the price range. This suggests that the initiatives should be reviewed and adjusted. It is a fundamental issue about whether young people can expect to obtain market accommodation. Very few options exist within the borough except in some contexts for lodgers.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

The research looked in particular at the roles played by New Horizon and Fat Macy's. Both are successful examples of providing education and support as well as in the New Horizon case some accommodation. There are other examples across London, but the numbers helped are very limited. Ultimately the responsibility comes back to the local authority.

Recommendations

The review identified a number of possibilities that might help to make the system more effective – although the fundamental issues around the lack of housing will remain.

These include:

1. Restructuring as a one stop shop using the Croydon approach as an example;
2. Investing more in prevention, probably via Young Hackney;
3. Increasing access to mediation and counselling;
4. Access to floating support covering education, training and employment, while the young person is waiting to be re-housed;
5. Targeted transport and other support to help ensure young people can benefit from available college resources;
6. Provide help in finding accommodation outside the borough and outside London.

Conclusion

While the results are not as formalised as it was hoped for in the beginning, the report puts forward a number of evidence-based suggestions which we hope can help the Council to provide more effectively for younger homeless people.

However, the fundamental issue remains: there is no way that Hackney can provide adequate accommodation for around 800 additional young homeless households each year. Most must leave the borough if they are going to obtain secure accommodation. On the other hand, most need additional support, which is unlikely to be readily available elsewhere. The problems are not new - just larger than they were.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

For much of the twentieth century Hackney was considered to be one of London's poorest boroughs and with high levels of deprivation, not a particularly desirable place to live. During the interwar slum clearance programme and the post-war reconstruction large numbers of estates of social housing were constructed providing secure tenancies for many of the borough's residents. But in the 1970s and 80s many of the industries which had provided apparently secure employment – such as the garment making and furniture making industries and other light industrial processes started to go under or move further out of London, leaving employees having to travel further to find employment or to move out of London themselves.

At the same time some of the cohort of young artists known collectively as 'The Young British Artists' started to move into Hackney to establish studios in the old industrial premises which offered relatively cheap space. First time buyers and young families were discovering the proximity of Hackney to the City together with a good supply of attractive Victorian houses which were still affordable compared to adjacent boroughs such as Islington. In 2009, Vogue Italia declared Dalston to be the trendiest, coolest, most *caldissimo neighbourhood* in London, Hackney was beginning to be regarded as edgy and cool, a place to be seen. As a result, over the last twenty years house prices in Hackney have increased by 407% - the highest rate of increase in the UK.

Now, the artists have moved out and, in their place, developers have viewed the old industrial space as ripe for the development of blocks of largely one or two bed flats with very little in the way of affordable options. The 2021 census showed that the population of Hackney had increased since the previous census in 2011 and had passed a quarter of a million at 259,100. Despite the rate of population growth being slower than London as a whole and that of England, the density of Hackney's population increased so that the 2021 census showed that Hackney was the third most densely populated local authority area in England (after Tower Hamlets and Islington). Hackney's population is also relatively young with the under 25s accounting for 30.6% of the total population in 2021.¹

The Office for National Statistics² also found that in 2021 Hackney had the highest percentage of social rented dwellings in England at 40% and it also had the lowest proportion of owner - occupied dwellings at 28%. Hackney also stood out as being one of only three boroughs where there was a higher proportion of private rented dwellings (32%) than owner occupied.

Addressing these issues, the Council noted that 'The housing crisis is severe in Hackney, as house prices and private rents are some of the highest in London and across the country, resulting in an extreme lack of affordable housing for local residents. Average incomes in Hackney are relatively low, and residents are increasingly finding themselves homeless or at

¹ ONS 'How life has changed in Hackney: Census 2021 (January 2023)

² Subnational estimates of dwellings and households by tenure, England: 2021

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

risk of homelessness. This insecurity leads to a plethora of issues that impact childhood development, physical and mental wellbeing, and places acute pressure on households.'

Moreover, while the proportion of social housing remains comparatively high, since 1980 the number of social housing properties has fallen significantly through Right-to-Buy and demolition. This has massively reduced the flow of mainstream but lower income households into the social sector.

A particular issue is that young people asked to move out from their parents' often by now overcrowded social housing struggle to find anywhere affordable to live within the borough. In 2022-23, 40% of all people in Hackney who presented as homeless had been evicted by family or friends, so it is no surprise that 1 in 5 people who present to the Council as homeless are aged between 18 and 25 and there is little or no suitable council accommodation available into which they can be rehoused.

It is in this context that the London Borough of Hackney developed their [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26 which set out seven key themes:](#)

- Maximising access to short and long-term affordable housing.
- Tackling rough sleeping.
- Supporting homeless residents with complex needs.
- Addressing homelessness amongst young people in Hackney.
- Inequality and the Cost-of-Living crisis.
- Advice and assistance for those with no recourse to public funds.
- Managing the Pace of Change in the Homelessness Environment.

Initially the fourth theme was intended to address the problem of young people being evicted from social housing but also the extent to which homelessness was linked to the difficulties of obtaining employment. The theme was modified to include other sources of youth homelessness especially those exiting the care system; those who needed individual support as well as a home; and those unable to find market accommodation.

1.1.1 The Project

It was this fourth theme that LSE London was asked to address in a short (initially three month) project. They were expected also to address the issues around complex needs and the economic environment (ie the third and fifth themes).

Questions to be addressed included:

- What advice do we need to give to young people living in overcrowded social housing in Hackney?
- What are their perceptions of social housing and their chance of being housed?
- More widely, what does the data tell us about the causes of homelessness among young people who approach the Council?
- To what extent could employment support and advice help prevent homelessness?

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

- What does best practice look like and who could the Council partner with within Hackney to develop effective policies to address both unemployment and homelessness among young people?

1.2 Methodology

The research approach was to examine the evidence available about the nature of the problems facing young people who come forward to the Council as homeless; how these problems are addressed by those whose role is to help this group both in the Council and in other organisations involved in finding employment, housing, and other support; and the extent to which problems are effectively addressed.

The methods employed included:

- Analysis of secondary data from published literature and statistics including government data and research reports.
- Analysis of primary data collected directly from Hackney's Benefits and Homeless Prevention team.
- Attending multi-agency meetings convened with accommodation and support providers.
- Interviews with officers, managers, and assessors from the key employment, young people, and homeless prevention offices at Hackney Council (eight interviews with eleven people), and additional informal interviews with staff on project visits (three).
- Shadowing homelessness intake assessments at the Hackney Service Centre.
- Semi-structured, group interviews with 5 young people currently living in hostels and supported temporary accommodation across two hostels and temporary accommodation sites.
- A roundtable to discuss these issues in a broader context and present initial findings from the qualitative research with 8 professionals working in the field from the following organisations:
 - Causeway Irish Housing Association
 - Commonweal Housing
 - Depaul Charity
 - London Borough of Hackney
 - LSE Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion
 - LSE Housing & Communities
 - New Horizon Youth Centre
 - YMCA London

Researchers from LSE London were embedded alongside Hackney's Homelessness Prevention Service with access to data, policy, processes, and staff. The initial aim of the research was concentrated on testing Hackney's hypotheses on the causes of homelessness for the cohort of young people (YPs) aged 16-25 who have been through the homelessness process and the role of Hackney Council Homelessness officers who have a designated focus on assisting young homeless people. In the event, the empirical research excluded those under eighteen, who are treated as children in need, and explored the causes

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

of homelessness among young people (YPs) aged 18-25. A rather different but important issue concerned those who had been through the care system and required accommodation on leaving that system. A recent change to Hackney's Lettings/ Allocations Policy means that Care Leavers are eligible to join the Housing register as they leave the care system and are assigned to Band B.

The researchers examined the data available within the Council on young people approaching the Council as homeless, looking into their employment and education, the reason for their approach, their finances, and outcomes. The research explored linking ETE (education training employment) together with finding and keeping tenancies to try to come up with a best practice model that could help young people have the resources and confidence to find PRS accommodation. This was conducted in parallel to speaking with officers from Hackney Council and community organisations that could be possible partners in providing employment and training. The aim was to understand the potential for assisting young people coming forward as homeless with grants for deposits and helping them to find possible employment placements. ([Hackney's proposal for youth homelessness and employment project](#)) The researchers also worked with members of Hackney Council's employment service to understand their offer and how it could work for this group.

The project was limited in length and scale. It consisted of the analysis of feedback and suggestions from officers in Benefits and Homeless Prevention in Hackney, community organisations, and young people in TA. The findings of the qualitative research were helpful in understanding young peoples' experiences of interacting with Hackney services and living in temporary accommodation. They also helped clarify officers' experiences of working in these services. The sample of young people was small and diverse. It included a range of young people in contact with the Council, not just those who had been living in overcrowded social housing, but also those coming from other tenures, care leavers and refugees. Interviews and focus groups with clients were conducted to gain a better understanding of the experience of young people interacting with Hackney services and to give them space to speak about their experiences.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

2 Context

This section explores information and statistics on homelessness and rough sleeping in Hackney. It clarifies the particular nature of Hackney as a case study in an environment where rough sleeping and homelessness, particularly for young people and people with complex needs, are rising in the borough as they are across London (Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26).

2.1 Hackney Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26

As noted above, Hackney's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26 highlights the importance of addressing homelessness amongst young people in the borough in theme four of its seven theme strategy document. Other objectives include supporting young people into employment, so they are better able to support themselves

2.1.1 Theme Four: Addressing Homelessness Amongst Young People in Hackney

Young people are seen as a challenging cohort to support in part because, unless they are rough sleeping, many do not consider themselves to be experiencing homelessness. Moreover, it is generally only after they are already in a housing crisis that young people approach the Council for housing assistance. Further, young people often tend to use less visible locations when they are rough sleeping.

The tables below show the numbers of young people approaching Hackney as homeless and those accepted as in need of assistance. The number of approaches amongst the over 21s increased until 2020 since when growth has slowed down. Approaches amongst the under 21s only became important from 2021 and remain very low amongst 17–18-year-olds (although this may in part reflect under-reporting)

Homeless Approaches from 17 - 24-year-olds										Total approaches
	Age									
Year	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
2018	0	0	0	0	0	11	28	38	42	119
2019	0	0	0	0	14	47	49	49	52	211
2020	0	0	0	4	47	71	91	74	96	383
2021	0	0	11	54	56	84	85	86	83	459
2022	2	5	40	50	63	96	91	90	95	532

Table 1. Sourced from the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26](#)

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Age at Case Creation	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024* q1	Total
17	7	8	4	0	19
18	58	37	61	12	168
19	63	47	42	11	163
20	78	76	92	26	272
21	93	85	74	22	274
22	77	90	77	19	263
23	84	88	95	23	290
24	86	91	86	27	290
Total	546	522	531	140	1739

*First quarter 2024

Table 2. Homeless Approaches Accepted from 17–24-year-olds. Data supplied by LB Hackney.

The data show that the largest numbers of approaches where the cases have been accepted (NB not the same as approaches) are by young people aged twenty and upwards. Other data provided by Hackney showed that the male/ female split in approaches is broadly equal in each of the last three years.

What we were not able to clarify was the proportion of young people coming forward who were living in social housing before they became homeless. It is inherently a large proportion as social housing accounts for 40% of the housing stock but Hackney also has over 30% private renting which brings a different type of insecurity.

2.2 Support needs in Hackney

In general support needs for homeless people in Hackney are significantly higher than in London as a whole. Specialist supported accommodation is required by many young people in the borough but there are little data specifically by age. It is generally understood that young people are one of many groups experiencing homelessness and also in need of supported accommodation. The majority of these support requirements tend to be for personal reasons, although some have other specific needs.

CHAIN data show that Hackney has high levels of support needs for those who were rough sleeping in the borough, although there is a lack of available data specifically on young people. The most common need was support for mental health. In the CHAIN 2022/23 Report the proportions were 56% for Hackney compared to 51% for London. The greatest gap between areas was for drug related support needs, which was 43% in Hackney as compared to 32% for London. There was also a large gap in those needing a combination of support needs between Hackney and London, at 44% and 35% respectively. People aged 25 or under accounted for 9% of those identified as sleeping rough in the borough in 2022/23.

Around 20% of single people with support needs who approach the borough for help are aged 18-24. These numbers are likely to increase in the future. In the year 2022-2023, out of 2,320 people owed a homelessness duty in Hackney, 50% were single people of whom perhaps 20% were young people. Importantly, Hackney has far fewer spaces in supported accommodation, including hostels, than neighbouring boroughs.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Due to the lack of suitable accommodation, some people with care or mental health needs are accommodated in inadequate hostel settings. Drug use and mental health are prevalent support needs and are frequently experienced in parallel, along with additional physical health issues. The high number of single homeless people living in unsupported temporary accommodation is concerning for their wellbeing, health, and prospects of the move-on process. To make matters worse, there are often barriers to accessing mental health assessments or Care Act support as well as inadequate safeguarding measures ([Headlines Hackney support and accommodation research_080124](#)). Further, the turnover in spaces in hostels and supported temporary accommodation is very slow.

2.3 Hackney Housing Register Bands

Hackney has a clearcut priority system in their Housing register with respect to the allocation of properties that become vacant as set out below (see Appendix E for more detail). Turnover rates are very low. The majority of young people without special needs who are placed on the register will be allocated to B which gives them very little chance of being allocated a council home unless they have children. Even then the wait may be some years.

Band A

- Highest priority band.
- Only a very small number of people are allocated to this band on an annual basis.
- People and households in band A do not bid for property in the usual way – instead they're made a direct offer of property.

Band B

- Most people who qualify to join the register are allocated to this band.
- You can bid for properties.
- If you're living in temporary accommodation, you might also be made direct offers of property.

Band C

- Mainly for households that need a specific type of accommodation such as Older Persons' Housing.
- You can usually bid for a limited number of properties that are appropriate to your specific needs.

(<https://hackney.gov.uk/housing-register>)

3 Our Case Study: Why Hackney?

Hackney has nearly 3,300 households in TA with around a third of them accommodated outside the borough. Both nationally, and locally in the London Borough of Hackney, there has been an increase in single people (without dependents) presenting to local authorities as homeless after the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 (HRA) which widened the range of people who could come forward. Hackney observed a high rate of people approaching with support needs, specifically mental health problems or with multiple or complex needs.

3.1 Hackney and the Housing Crisis

Although the Housing Crisis is happening across the United Kingdom, Hackney is feeling the effects particularly severely. House prices in Hackney have increased by over 400% over the last 20 years, the highest increase in the UK. The maximum benefit someone can receive towards rent from the Local Housing Allowance has been frozen for the last 10 years, meaning maximum benefit only covers 60% of an average rent. Not only has this made many people in Hackney homeless, but it has also created an unmanageable strain on council services and resources. Importantly one in thirty children in Hackney are homeless and accommodating homeless families has to be high on the agenda. Moreover, as the research found this situation is only getting worse.

3.2 Why Young People?

The Cost of Living Crisis in parallel with the Covid-19 pandemic has been exceptionally difficult on young people in Hackney ([Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-26](#)).

In the borough, around 20% of people who present to the Council as homeless are aged between 18 and 25, averaging over 800 young people each year. Accordingly, one of the seven key themes in Hackney's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2026 is to address homelessness amongst young people in Hackney.

While the starting point for the research was the large proportions of younger people who were being pushed out of overcrowded social housing, the actual research addressed all young people aged 18 – 25. It included people who came from care who were often given some priority; a significant proportion coming from the family home; and those with special needs; and others with Hackney connections who could not find accommodation for themselves. Hackney's own data on Young People approaching the Council as homeless since 2021 shows the variety of reasons and the very difficult situations many young people find themselves in. A significant proportion of those asked to leave the family home were pregnant or already had one or more small children in the family accommodation that was already overcrowded. Others are fleeing domestic violence either from a partner or sometimes a parent.

This project focuses on single young people and the opportunities to help them through employment and other means to secure accommodation in the private sector. But it is clear that there are other groups of young people who could benefit from similar programmes and the difficulty for the Council is in addressing and prioritising different needs.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

4 Themes from the Case Study

This section discusses themes that emerged during interviews, roundtable, and focus group discussions. The table below shows the number of interviews in which these themes were discussed, remembering that the total number of interviews was of necessity small.

Theme	Breakdown in host relationship	Managing expectations	Impact of housing crisis	Importance of two+ adult	Potential of social media campaigns	Life/Soft Skills	Challenges of ETE
COUNT (out of 13)	5	4	8	2	4	8	5

Table 3. Number of Interviews

4.1 Breakdown in the host relationship

First and not surprisingly there appears to be a correlation between being asked to leave the home and a souring of the relationship between the young person and their family. This may well be in part because of changes in their circumstances - e.g., the young person has a new partner, or their drug habit is getting worse – or it may just be the impact of overcrowding over a long period.

The Hackney Homeless Prevention team recognises the importance of this reason and, in response, has created a mediation offering. When someone approaches Hackney Service Centre as homeless as a result of being asked to leave the family home, as part of the homeless assessment, housing officers are encouraged to complete a form to request mediation if there is evidence of arguments or poor relationships. A member of the Hackney Homeless Prevention team then reviews those forms and reaches out to the family host and the homeless person to offer mediation.

Unfortunately to date not many hosts or young people have agreed to the offer of mediation, the usual reason being that it is too late, and they do not believe much can be done. For example, parents have long term disagreements with the young person over religious beliefs, sexuality, or gender. Young people are also hesitant to move forward with mediation in fear of further hurting tenuous relationships with their parents.

One of the young people participating in one of the focus groups described falling out with his mother prior to being kicked out of the home. Shortly after having a child the young person's mother asked him to leave. The young person said he had been asked to leave before and had lived with an aunt and spent some time in the care system.

4.2 Managing Expectations

The need to manage the expectations of young people seeking assistance as homelessness was one of the earliest and strongest topics to come through during the fieldwork. Some of the expectations held by young people have been unrealistic with respect to the accommodation they might be offered; about the jobs they might be supported into; and, more generally; how the Council helps people presenting as homeless.

Findings of the research corroborated that there is an assumption among young people that they will be able to acquire social housing once they present as homeless to the Council. This assumption came up in multiple interviews with officers, as well as the roundtable discussion and draws attention to the wide discrepancy between the perception of provision and actual availability.

Housing officers and service providers described the difficulties in managing young people's expectations that they would be able to move into a studio or one bedroom self-contained flat relatively quickly. Importantly two of the five young people in the focus groups were adamant that their next move would be into such a flat provided by the Council. The issue also came up in many other contexts.

While this research was not focused specifically on care leavers, the care leaver experience informs the expectations of other young people. Young people in care will normally be in a foster care placement until the age of 18 and that foster care accommodation is typically a family home or possibly supported accommodation or a "children's home". From 18 to 21 while the council still has a duty of care, young people may choose to make their own arrangements. The majority however are placed in supported accommodation which is often shared and has floating support. Most expect some choice in where they are accommodated. A housing officer described the care accommodation up to 21 as quite nice and said:

"So when it comes time for them to move on as they turn 21 and we offer them a hostel place, we have to really prepare them to manage their expectations. They simply do not want or expect the type of accommodation that we offer because it is small, because they have to share facilities".

Non-care leavers learn from care leavers and tend to expect at least the same treatment at 18.

Another housing officer suggested housing is perceived by young people as an incentive for cooperating with social services. Speaking of some of the young people she works with, she said:

"They come into adulthood with this thing in mind - everyone's got a duty of care to them, and they're entitled to housing. And then we have to spend a lot of time with young people who have disengaged from us because they think we are stopping them from accessing social housing. They see it being used as a carrot within under-19 services - If you behave and do what we say, and

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

you toe the line you can get social housing."

This housing officer pointed to the experiences of peers and friends as informing some of these young peoples' expectations. Young people see the experience some of their peers have accessing housing services, but do not necessarily understand the variety of factors that are considered when councils evaluate someone's individual needs, including in particular care leaver status. The peer experience also informs expectations around dwelling type (studio vs. shared) and location (proximity to Hackney) of the accommodation offered.

For some, the expectation that the Council will provide a home is informed by family experiences. During the homelessness assessment shadowing at Hackney Service Centre, one housing officer highlighted that it is common for people being asked to leave council housing by family to expect the council will easily be able to move them into another council home. For these people presenting as homeless, their expectation is that the Council will provide them with a home because that is how their parents secured their own tenancies.

When young people think about working, expectations are also often unrealistically high. Many think immediately in terms of a career rather than getting some work experience. One housing officer cited career progression as being a focus of the young people she works with. This housing officer pointed to social media as a contributing factor;

"Everywhere on social media is about entrepreneurship and living your best life. [I]t's like it's all about making your dreams come true...you can't make your dreams come true if you haven't got anywhere to live or to put your head down".

4.3 Impact of the Housing Crisis

Several aspects of London's housing crisis were stressed as important throughout the research. First was the need for young people to understand that the social housing stock in Hackney is just not available for everyone who wants to live there. As one housing officer described it, "the housing register is very long, it has become unrealistic to bid".

The cost of rent and associated fees in the PRS has been increasing and many landlords want guarantors and considerable payments in advance – neither of which can be provided by most young homeless people. The financial incentive element in the Education Training and Employment programmes is no longer enough to cover the costs it was designed for. In the interview with those running the ETE programme, the grant participants received upon completing the training programme was designed to cover the cost of a PRS deposit. However, the programme currently has a cohort of twelve people who have completed the programme but have not yet been able to make use of the grant because they are unable to find a PRS tenancy where the grant would cover the full deposit. To put that to scale, the programme has helped ten people move on since it was started in 2016.

It is difficult to imagine a scenario where employment and tenancy support can get young people into and able to retain a PRS tenancy in Hackney when we take into consideration how many experienced professionals struggle to afford such housing. According to one

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

service provider, “there’s minimal connection between employability and the housing difficulties in this borough...The bottom line is that housing in Hackney is not very available. What is available is very expensive.” One housing officer stated, “we sit there in our team meetings going, well we can’t afford it...not even our directors can afford it”. Another housing officer uses her experience of feeling forced to move out of London due to the unaffordability of local housing to show young customers “it is not the end of the world...there is a life outside of London.”

This view is supported by data provided by Hackney Council for the destinations of young people accommodated as a result of prevention and relief from 2021 to the first quarter of 2024. In both cases the majority of young people were accommodated in temporary accommodation in Hackney - 485 out of a total across the four years of 625 for relief and 182 out of a total of 233 across the four years for prevention. In both cases that represents 78% being housed within the borough although in both cases the numbers decreased in 2023 as the housing crisis intensified.

That still left 22% housed through prevention and relief who were accommodated outside Hackney. Most were accommodated in adjacent boroughs such as Haringey, Islington, and Waltham Forest but in each year small numbers were being rehoused in outer London boroughs such as Enfield, Brent, Redbridge, and Croydon and a few even farther beyond. This situation was expected to worsen.

4.4 Importance of two or more adult professionals to turn to

There seems to be a correlation between a young person having the support of two or more key workers (e.g., case worker, personal advocate) and their success in staying engaged, both in housing services and employment programmes.

The person interviewed regarding the ETE programme found that working with people living in homeless hostels also brings the benefit of key workers already working with the young person. The ETE programme officer said,

“So, when somebody goes AWOL, well we can give them a call and say, hey, where’s John? And they can go knock on John’s door and find out what’s going on. And we do find that it’s a more successful approach”.

Similarly, the strategy has been helpful in the housing space. One housing officer uses three-way calls with young people and the adult they are close to, whether that is an advocate or, if they are close, with a parent. This housing officer says:

“So they have me, I’m trying to build trust, and someone they actually do trust or have a stronger relationship with to also hear what I’m saying, to be able to advise when I’m not in a conversation with them”.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

4.5 The Potential of Social Media and Similar Campaigns

There appears to be significant potential for social media to raise awareness of council resources as well as highlighting the reality of certain circumstances.

During one interview, the housing officer mentioned possibly promoting mediation services through the leafleting that happens in relation to council tax. However, this seemed unlikely to impact on young people in housing difficulties. Given this research's target audience of young people, social media is a platform that could be more successful in reaching the end user. Another housing officer said of social media;

"I really do think that would be really good because that hits them from a completely different angle and it's an angle that they are constantly experiencing...they don't know what's coming from the housing offices, but the housing office is like giving you advice on TikTok now."

Social media could also help in managing expectations. While providers reported fighting the highlight reel of social media when interacting with young people, it could be used to show the reality of adults and professionals searching for a rental in the PRS or balancing a budget in London. To counteract the prevalence of "5-minute millionaire" trends on TikTok, a housing officer said:

"We need to start our own TikTok channel and be like, get a job, live your life now, have somewhere to wash your clothes and wash your dishes."

4.6 Life/Soft Skills

In addition to support around finding a job and tenancy, young people need - and are interested in - support around life- and soft- skills. These skills include budgeting, banking, and communication.

The first time a young person lives on their own is often the first time they are faced with budgeting. It is easy for young people to spend any money they earn on discretionary costs, such as clothes and shoes. One housing officer interviewed discussed how some young people she works with are coming to her regularly saying they do not have enough money for food or have not eaten for days. These are young people in temporary accommodation and with some part-time work. When she queries where their money is going, they report buying clothes and shoes. She said:

"They don't see food as an expense they have to budget for". This housing officer even said she had a client who had a £3,000 bicycle while living in temporary accommodation. She recalled the conversation she had with this young person who had rent arrears, having to explain to them, "pay your rent and then think what you've got left over to save towards getting a decent bike".

Budgeting is not the only financial issue that young people need guidance with. New Horizon

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

often provides guidance around setting up a bank account and understanding payslips. The New Horizon staff member interviewed mentioned these skills are not really covered in school anymore and might not be skills passed on to young people by their parents.

Young people can benefit from a whole range of information and support in their employment and housing journeys. One example is communication, which was mentioned in a focus group as a skill they would like to see more widely supported. The young person who particularly wanted support with communication felt they were not taken seriously on phone calls or when speaking with resource providers because of their age. This young person became independent at the age of 16 and felt as if *"people don't take 16-year-olds seriously"*, especially when it came to them trying to find a place to live.

A related issue that providers cited was that many of the young people they come in contact with lack self-esteem. An employment officer saw a lack of confidence in the people they worked with, saying "their self-esteem is low because they've never done (anything like this) before". The ETE officer interviewed commented on confidence being one of the areas they see the most growth in amongst participants:

"Building up their confidence communicating with the team community. I think that's the key. It's getting people confident with their colleagues so when they go through that door (starting a new job) and are on the restaurant floor, they need to be at ease with the people that they are working with, and they feel safe with, and they feel confident asking for help from".

4.7 Challenges of Employment

When considering both employment and housing tenancies together, it is important that timing is considered. One employment officer we interviewed described it as a chicken and egg situation suggesting for example that the Department of Work and Pensions Job Centres do not expect a customer with complex needs including homelessness to be seriously looking for a job because they think that work is not really the priority when they are homeless. In this situation, securing housing is seen as taking priority over employment.

For young people, there are additional layers to the employment conundrum. As the New Horizon officer pointed out, the national minimum wage varies with age. While the national minimum wage is £11.44 for anyone over the age of 21, it is only £8.60 for those 18 to 20, and even lower for those under 18 at £6.40 (<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>). These rates may not make it worthwhile for younger people to accept work.

Employment also affects social benefits and even the price of certain types of accommodation. The New Horizon officer explained how when young people start working, their benefits go down:

"So, it becomes that young people get quite stuck in supported accommodation because it actually makes no financial sense to work because the moment you start working, your [Universal Credit] goes down

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

and you'll be expected to contribute to rent even if it's only a tiny amount. And it's also a minefield with housing benefits to try and figure all of that out because it's so responsive to what your payslips are doing. It's quite hard to keep on top of that."

One young person interviewed in a focus group experienced this when they first moved into supported accommodation. This young person had worked previously but had not worked much prior to moving into the supported accommodation because she was attending college. She decided to work a lot during her first month living in supported accommodation but did not realise that the supported accommodation rent is calculated on how much the tenant earns. Consequently, she was surprised when the cost of rent was higher the next month. It initially put her into debt, but she was competent enough to be able to work with the management of the supported accommodation to fix the issue.

5 Young Hackney, New Horizon and Fat Macy's

Three organisations were particularly mentioned as supporting young people in Hackney in different ways, although we were aware that there was involvement with other organisations providing support. Young Hackney is the Council's single easy access service for young people aged 6 – 19. Including any housing issues they bring forward. New Horizon is a charitable organisation with the main objective of helping young Londoners aged 16 – 24 who are homeless or otherwise in unsafe conditions. Both aim to help young people to improve their housing conditions and address their housing problems. New Horizon also provides some accommodation. Fat Macy's has a rather different role - to enable young people to obtain work experience and to move on to more secure employment.

Given the precarious state of housing in Hackney, and London in general, combined with an evident need for support around soft and life skills, the services offered by Young Hackney, New Horizon and Fat Macy's can be looked on as useful exemplification of more widespread housing support that works well.

5.1 Young Hackney

Young Hackney is Hackney Council's one stop shop to assist with anything someone from the ages of 6 to 19, and up to 25 with special needs, might require. The upper threshold applies to safeguarding matters that Children's Social Care would respond to, but at 19 or below the service is available to anyone asking for help with anything regardless of theme. Service themes include physical health, emotional well-being and mental health, crime and youth justice, and inclusion in education. Young Hackney's broad combination of services operate through universal youth services, targeting early help for children and families, and specific niche interventions. Young Hackney staff across all tiers of service work to a youth work approach and methodology. The multidisciplinary teams include trained youth workers, former teachers, former social workers, and former police officers, all using the youth work approach.

In the context of housing Young Hackney receives referrals where young people are living in overcrowded accommodation, although that might not be what is identified as the reason for referral. The reason for referral in these situations where overcrowding is an underlying, aggravating factor is more likely to be one of the following: poor mental health, difficulties in school with behaviour, concentration, or other problems with friends or following instructions in school. Young Hackney works to alleviate the problems of overcrowding in a wide range of ways. It does not directly get involved in rehousing.

A Young Hackney staff member described the process by which they assisted a young person living in overcrowded conditions:

"So, are there things that we can support around how to manage difficult circumstances as well as we can, as long as they're going to last? So are there things about the kind of family environment that, with some help, could be organised a bit differently? Compartmentalised a bit differently? Thinking about the upkeep of the home. Storage. The way living space is kind of

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

configured. So, there are options there to help with some of it. But more commonly it's thinking about how the conditions impact on those children and then working with the impact. So, how can we offer young people a sort of respite from those living environments? Have they got a quiet space to do homework? Could that [space] be cleared? If not, are there alternatives to that [space] that could be brokered with the school, in our youth hubs, in our playgrounds? How you kind of create time and space outside of more pressurised living arrangements and I guess begin to help them be more equipped to manage that kind of from a psychological point of view."

Of the challenges young people face living in overcrowded housing, the Young Hackney interviewee said:

"How do you stay healthy, well, safe, achieving academically in spite of the overcrowded home environment. And so, it is working with young people to develop their ability to communicate their needs, have someone to talk to express their feelings, develop relationships with peers and trusted adults. And then develop their kind of resilience coping strategies to navigate all of this. Thinking about support networks available to them. The kind of respite and relief that might come from other settings - school, college, university. Our own youth hubs, playground - places where there's a bit of time out, thinking about how you can supplement learning, create learning spaces."

5.2 New Horizon

The New Horizon Youth Centre helps young people aged 16 – 24 who are homeless or unsafe in London. Their website describes the work as "supporting young Londoners get the skills they need for the life they want" (<https://nhyouthcentre.org.uk/what-we-do/life-skills/>). The New Horizon officer described it as work to support independent living. They described it as,

"really trying to help young people understand renting, and to understand budgeting, understand how to manage utilities, understand how to shop effectively and cheaply, how to try and help sustain tenancies or sustain college or employment as well; giving young people that support because not all young people have those skills."

The support New Horizon provides around budgeting has already been described in section 4.6 Life/Soft Skills. More generally New Horizon plays a range of roles including referring people to shelters and emergency accommodation; helping people look for accommodation in the privately rented sector; providing a wide range of support for those facing difficulties in their current home; and providing accommodation in several semi-independent accommodation projects in partnership with housing associations and other charities.

5.3 Fat Macy's

Fat Macy's is rather different kind of restaurant in that it puts more emphasis on enabling young people to gain work experience at the same time as providing accommodation and a range of support services. Its aim is to get young people out of hostels and into their own home mainly by enabling employment. The senior person who we interviewed had seen many changes in how Fat Macy's operates. He suggested that:

"Now most of those who join come via their support officer. When people join, they come in and meet the team, have a one-to-one session with our programme lead. He introduces himself, answers questions, and manages expectations about what is involved. They get a taste of the support they would receive. Then if they are interested, they do their level 2 good hygiene qualification, because they cannot work in a restaurant without that basic qualification.

When someone has come into Fat Macy's, met the team and completed their food hygiene, they start training in the restaurant. They do 3 initial trial sessions. It is a 2-way trial for us to see whether the programme is right for them, but also whether they are ready for it. The young person also has to decide whether Fat Macy's is the place for them. They do 3 sessions in the restaurant to see if the programme is right for them and then join the main programme that is 200 hours of workplace training in one of the restaurants and the outside catering business, Alongside, they get one to one support from the frontline team.

The team also helps the trainee obtain accommodation and provides financial support to enable them to find appropriate accommodation. This element has proved most difficult to implement because of the lack of affordable housing and often involves other charities. Because Fat Macy's is a business, they can only manage a small number of trainees at one time, but this allows them to provide more concentrated assistance".

Fat Macy's is atypical in the extent of help that they provide across both employment and housing. Even so, when a member of our team attended a Department of Work and Pensions presentation they saw a range of examples of support.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The starting point for this research was the Council's question: Can we reduce the number of young people who become homeless through family evictions from overcrowded social housing, by supporting these young people into secure employment and tenancies? Thus, the issue was seen to be how homelessness for this specific group could be prevented. In the project specification however, the emphasis was placed more widely on young adults (18–24) who had already been made homeless and how they, as well as those threatened with homelessness, could be supported into suitable accommodation and employment.

The fundamental issue with respect to youth homelessness in Hackney is that there are no simple solutions. People of all ages and household types who do not already have long term accommodation whatever their income levels are finding it hard and often impossible to find accommodation in the borough that they can afford. Hackney is relatively well provided with social and affordable housing as compared to many other boroughs, but the number of social and affordable homes has been decreasing for years and turnover is incredibly slow.

The basic question is therefore who should be given priority for the few homes that do become available and is there any way that Hackney can increase the pool of available homes. While in the past, with 40% of the housing stock owned by the social sector and mainly by the Council it was a matter of a long waiting list based on need; now it is more a matter of meeting legal requirements. Among young people those who come out of care initially have priority but for most young people only if they are accepted as homeless by the borough will they have a legal right to accommodation. It is therefore not surprising that the Council saw the starting point for this project as the numbers of young people being evicted by their parents living in overcrowded social housing.

While it is always important for any authority to be as positive as possible, it is also a fundamental responsibility to keep the costs they have to bear down. In practice that means that in the context of young people the first priority must be to keep them out of homelessness to the extent that is possible. The Council already provides a range of services that aim to limit the numbers of younger people who have to be accommodated, notably by mediation between the person evicted and family members. Unhappily, the young people and their families currently tend to see the intervention as too little too late. Earlier involvement would clearly help – but involving other members of the extended family and possibly offering incentives to take the young person on are likely to be more positive ways forward. However, these approaches need to reflect the specifics of each individual as different communities respond in different ways.

The Council's other major general initiative lies in Young Hackney, the one stop shop that is run by the Council to help alleviate problems among those aged 6–19 and sometimes to aged 24. This covers a wide range of services and initiatives and increasingly involves helping people become more capable of finding employment. The biggest issue then becomes that there is almost nowhere in the private rented sector in Hackney that someone on the (age related) minimum wage can afford even if they share. But equally many of the young people need help to enable them to take what opportunities there are.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

To address this but only for a small number of young people, Hackney has effectively partnered with two charities which both provide education and training to help young people gain experience in the labour market as well as access to accommodation which is affordable for a period while they find their feet. However, the number that can be assisted is very limited and it is extremely difficult for them to move on.

Overall, while increasing employment related skills helps young people who leave the family home or various types of temporary accommodation there is still no way that they can readily enter the private rental market in the local area. They might be able to sustain a PRS rental in another area, but Hackney is simply too expensive.

One question this raises is whether the charities who offer financial support, which is often not taken up because no Hackney accommodation is available at the right price, should rethink their approach. For instance, do the charities who provide financial support allow the young people to take the deposit amount outside the Hackney area or are they (and indeed the young people) committed to accommodation in Hackney or nearby? As affordable private accommodation in Hackney is almost impossible to find for young people, do the charities need to rethink their financial offering or does Hackney need to partner with charities outside central London?

Partnerships with local colleges are one source of help in providing the soft/life skills and some work experience which can set the young person up for longer term employment. But this approach is limited. One question this raises is whether there are lessons to be learned from how those leaving care are treated. There is a Supported lodging scheme by which care leavers are accommodated as lodgers with families who are prepared to provide some support although many want to live independently. Even so, this appears to be a potentially affordable way in which those being kicked out by their own families might find suitable accommodation. While the landlord would have to be paid it would at least move people on towards longer term stability. Hackney already has some experience of this type of approach which could form the basis for a larger initiative.

It is obvious that the most cost-effective approach is to try to solve the emerging problem as soon as possible. One way forward is to improve mediation by discussing with the young applicant in detail the exact nature of their relationship with their extended family and identifying possibilities based on the young person's understanding; and then talking and offering incentives to parents and other family members. An example suggested was that parents might be prepared to help find a family-based approach if the young person was prepared to undertake something positive such as further education.

6.1 Recommendations

The majority of recommendations included here would have to be implemented by Hackney Council or charities that work with the Council. Others would have to be addressed at the national level.

6.1 One-Stop Shops across the borough

A number of officers and young people noted that young people being helped already have

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

too many appointments and that it is difficult to find the right information when speaking to so many offices. The research suggests that providing a “one-stop shop” model for young people would make it easier to find information, speak to the right people, and save them effort, time, and money in travel. An employee at New Horizon suggested that this model could be set up at a university or college where there are already good communications. These centres could be similar to the DWP Job Centre that our researchers observed and should include officers, providers, and employers.

During the roundtable discussion, the Croydon Turnaround centre was highlighted as an example of a successful hub. The Centre is operated by Croydon Council with support from expert agencies. The services available include youth workers, the police, educational welfare officers, voluntary services, social workers and health advice, and leaving care services (<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/find-support/support-directory/turnaround-centre>). It is also where young people, children, and families can access early help services, including addressing domestic violence, living with drug and alcohol misuse, mental ill health, low level neglect, school exclusion and access to a GP. Support is given through the Early Help Family Solutions service. There are also three locality hubs in North, Central, and South Croydon.

6.2 Invest in Prevention that is Already in Place

Another theme that emerged from the research was that more could be done in terms of prevention. This would be mainly the responsibility of Young Hackney. Their goal is to help Hackney’s young people enjoy their youth and become independent and successful adults. The research suggests that using the prevention measures already in place and investing more resources into them would be more beneficial than counteractive measures. Unhappily rather than expand Young Hackney is having to make far-reaching savings.

Services that Young Hackney currently provides include universal services such as the youth work offer, play offer, community sports and PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) offer to schools, as well as targeted early help, including individual and family-support services. They also offer more specialist interventions such as youth justice matters, young people who are young carers, substance misuse interventions, etc. Participation services are specifically focused on young people.

6.3 Provide Greater Access to Mediation and Counselling Services

As we have noted above, investing in making mediation and counselling services more accessible for residents has considerable potential. It could effectively cover a wider range of family members and possible ways forward. Many interviewees pointed to a breakdown of host relationships as being the reason for many young people’s homelessness, often related to mental health issues. Interviews with officers suggested that Hackney Council would like to do more with mediation services as a preventative measure.

6.4 Floating Support while waiting for housing

A suggestion from New Horizon Youth Centre was for local authorities to offer floating support regarding, Education, Training and Employment while people are waiting for housing. Housing teams could put support in place and give young people say three months

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

of intensive casework to help get them into work. During this time, caseworkers might also help find a landlord who would take in the young person, along with paying the deposit and first month's rent, although even this would generally have to be outside the borough. This would be consistent with work being done on the Council's Supported Accommodation Strategy.

Additionally, young people in work could be moved into transitional accommodation as already occurs with care leavers. This is more supported and encourages them to learn skills around paying rent on time, budgeting income etc, but also gives them three months support in work to demonstrate that they have managed to stay in a job.

6.5 Council Support for young people wanting to Move Out of London

Research has indicated that many young people want to stay in Hackney ([Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy - 2023-26](#)). However, out of the five young people interviewed in the focus groups, only one person reported wanting to remain in Hackney. Three of them positively expressed interest in moving out of London. One of those young people recently applied to universities and none of them were in London.

For many young people moving out of London, maybe to be near other family members, can be a highly desirable option but individuals need support to make it practicable.

6.6 Relax restrictions on Local Housing Allowance

It is extremely difficult for young people to enter the Private Rented Sector because of the high rental costs and restrictions on the Local Housing Allowance. The Hackney support and accommodation research document states that clients rarely see the PRS in Hackney as a viable option for them. The empirical research supported this view. Even with grants and a deposit from the ETE programme those interviewed stated that the financial support available is not enough to cover what is needed to rent. From the ETE Programme over some years only ten people have used their grants to move on, twelve people have not been able to do so because grants are not covering the total cost of what is needed for a deposit and/or first month's rent in Hackney. This, in itself, suggests the approach needs to be modified.

6.7 Targeted transport subsidies

Young people are often placed in temporary accommodation far away from their jobs or college. Transport time and costs can result in young people losing their jobs or dropping out of college. Providing advice on existing transport subsidies specifically for those young people who are involved in ETE and advocating for more targeted help would be a tremendous help for many who spend a large amount of their income or benefits on travelling into work or education.

While it is clear that Hackney can only provide very limited suitable accommodation for young homeless people with minimal employment experience, this does not remove the fact that the LA is responsible for meeting the needs of those who are made homeless within the borough. It is therefore appropriate that they examine all possibilities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Hackney's proposal for youth homelessness and employment project

Research questions:

Overarching:

- Can we reduce the number of young people who become homeless through family evictions from overcrowded social housing, by supporting these young people into secure employment and tenancies?
- What would an intervention look like, to deliver this?

Underpinning:

- To what extent is it realistic that secure employment can lead to secure housing in Hackney, for young people?
- How can work placements and mentoring lead to secure employment for young people? What does best practice look like and who could we partner with in Hackney?
- What advice do we need to give to young people living in overcrowded social housing in Hackney? What are their perceptions of social housing?
- What does our data tell us about the causes of homelessness for young people that approach? Who would we target, where employment support and advice could prevent homelessness?

What's the problem we are trying to solve?

A homelessness crisis

Hackney is at the epicentre of a housing crisis decades in the making. In the last 20 years house prices in Hackney have increased by 407%- the highest increase in the UK.

- *But what about social housing?*

Since 1980, the number of social housing properties has significantly fallen and residents who qualify for the Housing Register are now having to bid anywhere between 3 to 35+ years before being anywhere near successfully bidding for a property.

- *And how does the welfare system help?*

For the last 10 years the Local Housing Allowance ((LHA) the maximum benefit someone will get towards their rent) has been frozen- today a maximum benefit towards rent would only cover 60% of an average rent.

This has pushed a staggering amount of people living in Hackney into homelessness and created unmanageable demand on council services. Today, there are over 3000 people in Hackney living in temporary accommodation and 1 in 30 Hackney children are homeless.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Particularly affecting young people

Young people in Hackney represent an increasing proportion of those at risk of homelessness. 1 in 5 people who present to the council as homeless are between 18-25, representing over 800 young people a year.

Many of these people have been born and grown up in social houses that their parents have always lived in for decades. As their families have grown, they have become stuck in the same sized properties, with no option to move to larger homes. The current wait time for a 3-bedroom social house is over 19 years. These young people end up growing up in overcrowded family homes.

When young people living in these conditions hit the 18-25 bracket, often their families will ask them to move out. This year 40% of all people in Hackney who presented as homeless had been 'evicted' by family or friends. Because these households have always lived in social housing, there is often still an assumption (at odds with the reality) that these young people will be able to get their own social house. They approach the council and there is often little we can do. Unfortunately, the private rented sector landlords have for many years now found providing shared accommodation at the Shared Accommodation (SAR) LHA rates level financially unfeasible, which means young people relying on the welfare benefit system to cover their rent can't access affordable tenancies.

In a small number of cases, we can support them into:

- The Peer Landlord project- a partnership with Thames Reach offering shared accommodation for approximately 12 people at a time, to provide 6–9-month short term accommodation where young people with low needs can gain skills to living on their own before moving onto the private rented sector.
- For those with high, complex needs we may be able to support them into the Young Person Supported accommodation pathway.
 - In some cases, a room in a YMCA who supports young people between 18 to 35 years old can be an option or alternatively privately run providers such as Assisted Homes or Just Homes could provide an option for young people for up to 2 years.

But for lots of young people, who do not have high and complex needs, **there is a very real risk of rough sleeping.**

What do we want to test?

Can we reduce the number of young people who become homeless through family evictions from overcrowded social housing, by supporting these young people into secure employment and tenancies?

We want to research and develop a model which allows early intervention for young people in this situation, to prevent homelessness. We hold the right data as a Council to be able to identify and target a cohort of young people that are:

- In the right age bracket.
- Are living in social housing that we know is overcrowded.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

- Aren't in employment, education, or training.
- Don't appear to have high / complex needs.

We want to research and develop a model that targets these young people, and proactively supports them before they approach as homeless (which by then is too late); by offering a wrap-around support package of:

1. Employment advice and a caseworker with Hackney's employment service Our hypothesis is that employment is one of the biggest barriers to young people having the income in order to access secure housing. We want this cohort to have access to high quality employment advice, on career options that meet their strengths.

2. A high-quality work experience placement to improve employability We know young people of this age may have limited work experience, and high-quality work experience / first jobs can be inaccessible to those from lower income households. We want to give this cohort enough high-quality experience, and develop the habits of working, in order to improve their employability and help them secure the employment they need for a secure tenancy.

3. A mentor outside of the placement

We want to give young people access to someone that they trust and is outside the family unit, who can mentor them through this transition into adulthood, employment, and self-sufficient housing.

4. A Housing Needs advisor

We want this cohort to have access to someone that can explain the housing context, the lack of social housing, options in the private sector and how much this will cost, and someone who can support mediation with the family to manage any risk of eviction through the intervention.

If they engage with the above, and complete their placement, we would identify funding (working with charity organisations in Hackney), to provide a grant for rent in advance / deposit, to support a move into an affordable private rental property, which in many cases will mean moving outside the London travel zones 1-4.

What could a 3-month research placement look like?

Researchers would be embedded alongside Hackney's Homelessness Prevention service, with access to data, policy, processes, and staff, to deliver:

Discover

- User research with to test our hypothesis on the causes of homelessness for this cohort:
 - young people and families in our target cohort, who have been through the homelessness process.
 - Hackney Council Homelessness officers, who have a designated focus in

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

assisting young homeless people.

- Dig into the data on homelessness approaches by young people in Hackney, looking at reason for approach, employment / education situation, finances and outcomes.
- Research into best practice on work placement and mentoring schemes in supporting long term employability.
- Work with community organisations that we could partner with, such as [St Martin's](#), [Fat Macey's](#), [London Youth Gateway](#) and [Hospitality Action](#) to understand availability of employment placements and potential grants for deposits.
- Work with Hackney Council's employment service to understand their offer and how it can work for this cohort.

Define

- From the discovery define what solutions we could deliver; what are the key recommendations, who needs to be involved, who has the right skills and capacity.
- Define our target cohort, and the data indicators we need to use to identify them (i.e., what does the discovery tell us about the right age to intervene)
- Propose key recommendations for how a model could prevent homelessness for this cohort to test with stakeholders.

Develop

- Work with delivery partners across Hackney employment services, Homelessness prevention to develop and design a delivery model that is costed.
- Test this with people in our target cohort on a small scale- get their feedback and input.
- Develop an evaluation framework against the problem we are trying to solve; define how we are going to measure the Social Return on Investment in preventing homelessness for this group.

Deliver

- At the end of 3 months, we would have a research report that outlined:
 - A model of intervention for this cohort- with delivery partners identified and committed- that is built on a strong evidence base.
 - The right data to target our cohort.
 - A full evaluation framework
- This would then be taken forward by Hackney into delivery.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Appendix B: Statement of Consent

Read to Interviewees:

We are two research assistants from LSE working on research for Hackney Council on young people presenting as homeless or living in overcrowded housing who are likely to present as homeless.

We are exploring the possibilities of linking ETE (education training employment) and finding tenancies together to try to come up with a best practice model that could keep young people where they are with the offer of training, employment and support finding and keeping a tenancy. We are looking to understand how the front-line offices work and if the link between ETE opportunities and housing pathway offers would be a realistic way of supporting young people who are in a not-ideal family accommodation until the young person has received training and employment or support finding accommodation as part of their training.

We'd like to record this conversation if that's okay with you. We'll use the recording for our notes. We'll be using the information to write a report for the project leads - LSE London and Hackney. After the report has been written the recordings and our notes will be deleted. Is it okay with you if we record?

Read to Focus Group Participants:

We're two researchers from a university working on research for Hackney Council around young people who are homeless or living in crowded housing who might become homeless.

The Council is wondering if they can reduce the number of young people who become homeless through family evictions from overcrowded social housing by supporting those young people into secure employment and tenancies.

We have been looking at the possibilities of linking employment training and education and finding tenancies together to try to come up with a "gold standard" or best practice module the Council could use to help YP stay where they are with the offer of training, employment and support finding and keeping a tenancy.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Appendix C: Interview details

<u>Interview #</u>	<u># of Participants</u>	<u>Background</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Type of Interview</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1	2	Head of Hackney Works, Employment Project Manager	Feb 20, 2024	Virtual Video	41:55
2	1	Learning and Development Officer for Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service, Hackney Council	Feb 21, 2024	Virtual Video	32:31
3	1	Impact & Learning Lead, Fat Macy's	Feb 22, 2024	Virtual Video	1:00:11
4	1	Youth & Care Leaver-Focused Benefits & Homeless Prevention Officer, Hackney	Feb 26, 2024	Virtual Video	41:19
5	2	Team Manager - Benefits and Homeless Prevention and Project Lead for Mediation, Hackney	Feb 27, 2024	In Person	40:53
6		Observation Day, DWP Hackney Youth Job Fair	Feb 28, 2024	In Person	2:30:00
7	2	Young Person's Service Manager, Causeway Irish Housing Association	Feb 29, 2024	In Person	29:31
8	2	Shadow Assessment at Hackney Service Centre	March 1, 2024	In Person	9am-12:30 pm
9	3	YMCA Monarch Court Hostel Tour & chat with staff	March 12, 2024	In Person	12 noon - 2pm
10	3	Riverside YP Focus Group	March 14, 2024	In Person	1:00:00
11	1	East London Youth Offer Lead, Department for Work and Pensions	March 19, 2024	Virtual Video	29:20
12	8	LSE Roundtable	March 25, 2024	In Person	2-3:30pm
13	1	Young Hackney	April 3, 2024	Virtual Video	54:42
14	2	YMCA Monarch Court YP Focus Group	April 10, 2024	In Person	1:00:00
15	1	Head of Services, Youth Work, New Horizon	April 22, 2024	Virtual Video	55:51

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Appendix D: Glossary - Housing Benefit guidance for supported housing claims

Community benefit society	An organisation that carries out an 'industry, business or trade' where it is, or intended to be, conducted for the benefit of the community.
Community interest company (CIC)	A type of limited company whose purpose is primarily to provide a benefit to the community they serve.
Exempt accommodation	The first category of specified accommodation. Supported housing where the landlord is a not-for-profit organisation and provides care, support or supervision to the claimant.
Extra care accommodation	Accommodation usually for older people, like sheltered accommodation but where tenants need and receive significantly more care and support. Also known as 'very sheltered accommodation or extra care sheltered.'
Housing association	An organisation set up to provide social housing which invests its surplus back into providing social housing.
Housing Benefit	A benefit that provides help with housing costs for individuals on low incomes.
Local authority hostels	The fourth category of specified accommodation. Hostel accommodation provided by a local authority where the tenant receives care, support or supervision.
Long-term supported housing	Accommodation for people with long-term care or support needs such as those with enduring physical or mental health condition or a learning disability or autism.
Lower-tier authorities	A type of English local authority in an area with two tiers of local government that is responsible for services like rubbish collection, Council Tax, and Housing Benefit. These could be district, borough, or city councils.
Managed properties	The second category of specified accommodation. Supported housing where the landlord is a not-for-profit organisation and the claimant receives care, support, or supervision, but does not meet the definition of exempt accommodation because the care, support or supervision is not provided by the landlord or on their behalf.
Refuges	The third category of specified accommodation. Refuge accommodation for people fleeing domestic abuse where the landlord is a not-for-profit organisation.
Registered charity	An organisation registered with the Charity Commission or Scottish Charity Regulator.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Sheltered accommodation	Supported housing for mainly over-55s with care and/or support needs.
Short-term supported housing	Accommodation for those in crisis, such as domestic abuse refuges and hostel accommodation. This accommodation is intended to be transitional, with residents moving onto settled accommodation within two years. and can also include services for young people transitioning out of care and people with a learning disability or mental health support need perhaps leaving a long stay institution or hospital or leaving the parental home.
Specified accommodation	A definition used in Housing benefit regulations which sets out the different types of supported housing and the criteria that must be met in order to receive support with housing costs through housing benefit. There are four categories of specified accommodation: exempt accommodation, managed properties, refuges, and local authority hostels.
Supported housing	Accommodation where residents require and are provided with care, support and/or supervision to help them live as independently as possible within the community.
Unitary authorities	Single-tier local authorities which provide all the local services in their area, such as Housing Benefit, social care, and housing. All authorities in Scotland and Wales are unitary authorities.
Upper-tier authorities	A type of English local authority in an area with two tiers of local government that is responsible for services like social care, transport, and education across a county. These are also known as county councils.
Voluntary organisation	A not-for-profit organisation.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Appendix E: Hackney Social Housing Bands

Band A

- Highest priority band
- Only a very small number of people to be allocated to this band each year.
- People and households in band A do not bid for property in the usual way – instead they're made a direct offer of property.

You qualify for band A if any of the following applies:

- You are in hospital and cannot be discharged because you have nowhere to go and there is no suitable temporary accommodation.
- You are a police witness, and your life is at risk as a consequence of providing assistance to the police or a law enforcement body.
- You are a current Council tenant, and your current property has become uninhabitable because of fire, flood, or a roof collapse.
- Where a Local Authority Ombudsman has ordered that emergency rehousing is appropriate.
- You have applied to the Administrative Court and a judicial review has decided that your housing need is such that it constitutes an emergency.
- You are a connected carer for children that our unable to live with their parents and as a result of this need more rooms.

Band B

- Most people who qualify to join the register are allocated to.
- You can bid for properties.
- If you're living in temporary accommodation, you might also be made direct offers for property.

You qualify for band B if any of the following applies:

- You are currently living in significantly over-crowded accommodation lacking two or more bedrooms for a household of your size.
- You are an existing social tenant who has a significant social need such as where there is a threat to your life or the life of someone in your household and there is no alternative but to move you.
- You or some in your household have a significant medical need which is being made significantly worse by your accommodation and it is not reasonable to adapt or improve the accommodation (issues such as damp, mould, dust, and broken lifts can be fixed or improved). In addition, an alternative property would need to significantly improve the medical condition.
- You have been accepted by the council as being statutorily homeless and are owed a full housing duty under section 193(2) of the Housing Act 1996. This does not include those that are owed a Prevention duty or Relief duty.
- Your current accommodation is unsanitary such as not having an inside toilet, running water, or functioning electrical supply and an inspection and report has

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

determined that there is not a good prospect the property will be made habitable in a reasonable timespan.

- You are an existing social tenant and have applied to the Council's under-occupation scheme because you want to move to a smaller accommodation.
- You are a young person who is leaving Hackney Council care provision and are a care leaver aged between 18 and 25.

Band C

- Mainly for households that need a specific type of accommodation such as Older Persons' Housing
- You can usually bid for a limited number of properties which are appropriate to your specific needs.

You qualify for band C if any of the following applies:

- You are over 55 and want to move into older person's housing.
- You are already a tenant of a Registered Housing Provider, and you are applying under the Government's Right to Move scheme to move to Hackney for work-related reasons.
- You are a foster carer who requires a larger accommodation to accommodate your foster children.
- You or someone in your household has a medical condition that would be alleviated by a move to alternative accommodation. The need is urgent, but your current accommodation is not a threat to significantly exacerbating the condition. A change of housing would need to make a substantial improvement in the quality of life of the affected person.
- You are homeless but aren't owed a full housing duty under section 193(2) of the Housing Act 1996. This includes households who are owed a Prevention Duty or a Relief Duty.

Homelessness among younger households in Hackney

Appendix F: Examples of Questions used in Interviews

- Can you describe your role for us?
- Can you tell us more about ETE and job skills services/support?
- Is there any difference, if at all, between the ages you work with?
- In your opinion, where have you seen the most success in young people in terms of a combination of work and school?
- Could you explain how benefits are affected by work hours and school?
- Anecdotally, is the volume going up or down? Are you seeing more of a certain "profile", less of a certain need?
- What are your thoughts around relating employment with accommodation? Is it viable?



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