

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOMES

Capturing the views of 200+ care
experienced individuals from around
the UK.

September 2024



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Foreword from Esla (YPBMF Champion)

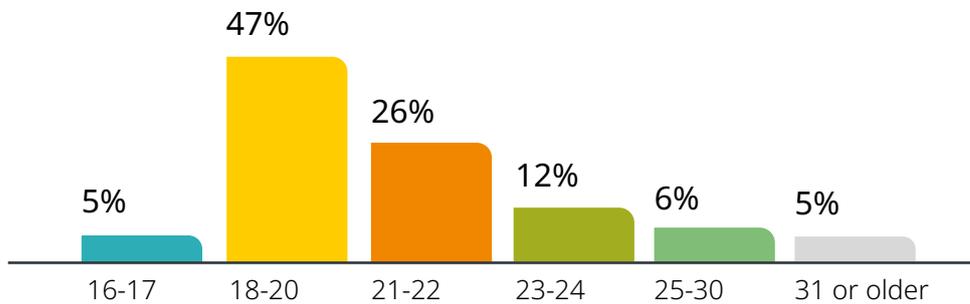
Every young person deserves to have a home and neighbourhood that they feel safe in and the professionals around them should be supporting them to find accommodation that's affordable. A secure and stable home would encourage young people to build foundations they'll need to thrive through education, employment or other things they want to do. Feeling safe in your neighbourhood and home shouldn't be a luxury but some care experienced individuals might believe it to be. Professionals should ensure their young people feel safe, supported and listened to when they are trying to build a life for themselves and live independently.

Throughout this survey we saw that a lot of care experienced young people are placed in accommodation or areas with a lot of crime and people who are unsafe. Many are left to deal with this on their own which affects their mental health. No adult wants to feel unsafe and scared in their own house or neighbourhood, so why is it ok for care experienced young people and adults to feel this way? Professionals could be doing more to prevent this from happening. You have a responsibility towards care experienced young people and adults to support and stay in touch with them and not leave them just because they are living independently.

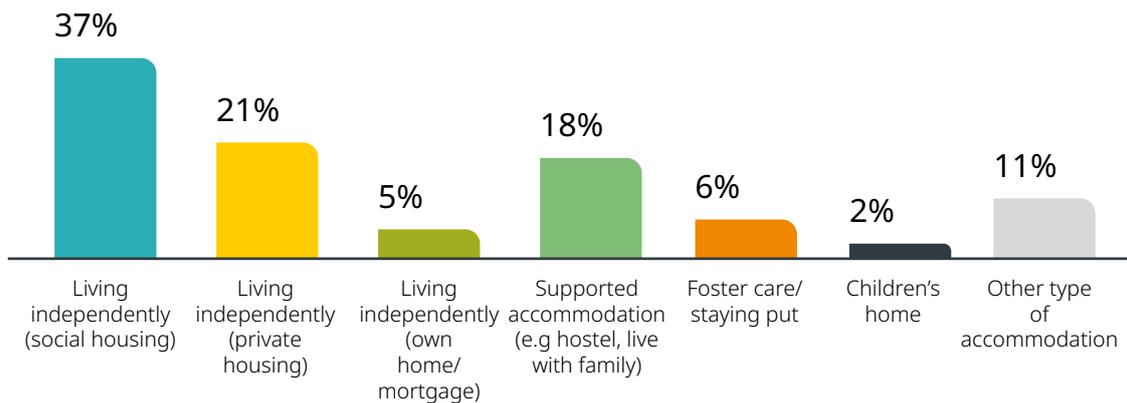
For some care experienced young people they might have not had many opportunities to make their own choices in regard to things happening in their lives. Professionals could be more understanding and allow them to have options about where they live, how they furnish their house, and the area they live in. Be more proactive in your support, understand when we move into a new home we may need help with furniture, and decorating choices. It can feel scary to make these decisions and we need somebody to be by our side whilst we go through this change.

As you read through this report think about the young people you support and how important it is for them to have a home where they feel safe and secure in an area where they feel welcomed.

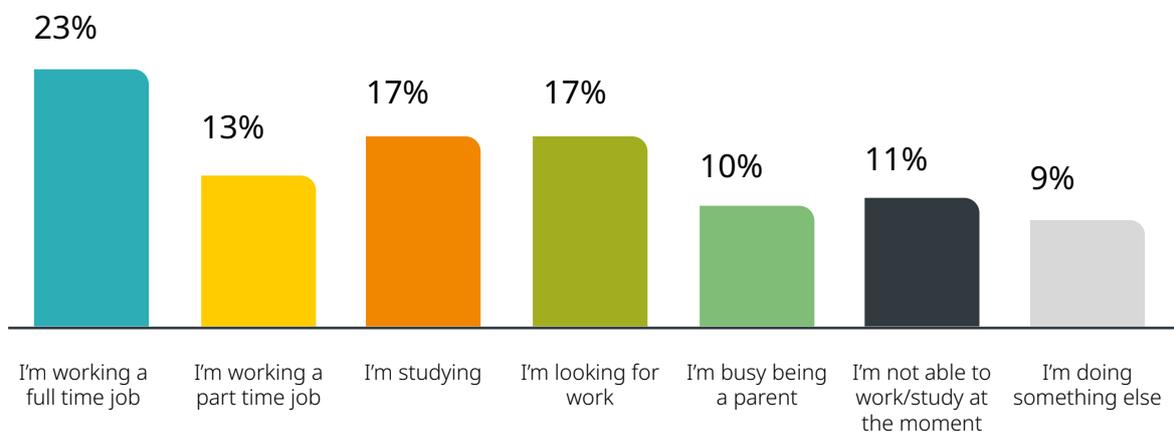
How old are the participants?



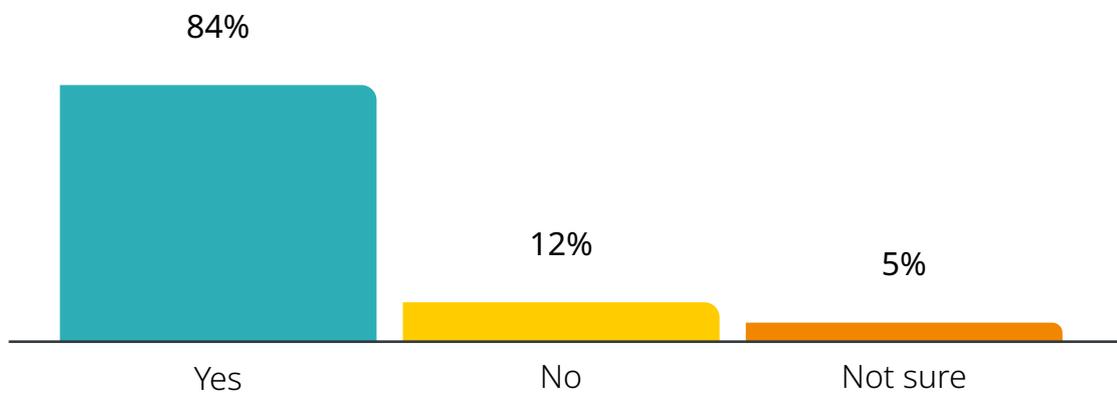
Where are participants living?



What's the main thing participants are doing right now?



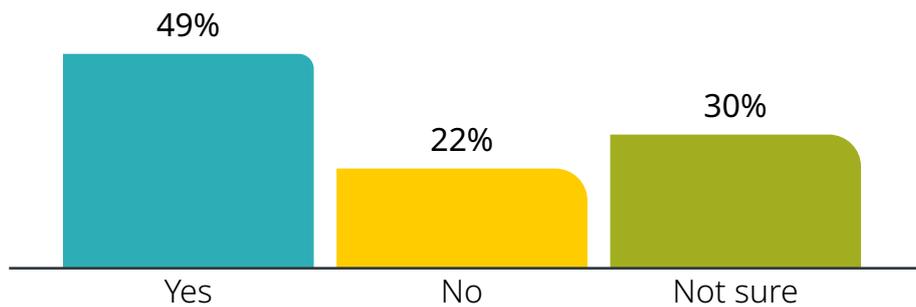
Do participants have a Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker or support from your Local Authority?



Priority housing for care leavers

49% say care leavers are prioritised for housing in their local area.

Are care leavers prioritised for housing in your area? i.e. social housing, council housing/flats etc



Different areas have different systems for prioritisation, such as points, or banding. These can be confusing to understand. It is important young people are supported to understand their rights within the local housing system.



Help me find a move to a property that is more suitable for me and my partner."

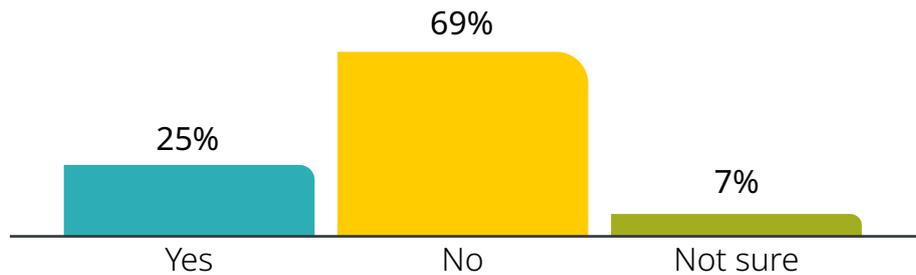


Help with swaps for band A council properties out of the area. I want to start new life in another city but not give up my flat but there is no support with this."

Risk of homelessness

25% have been advised to make themselves homeless to move to a more appropriate home.

Have you ever been advised to make yourself homeless in order to move to a more appropriate home?

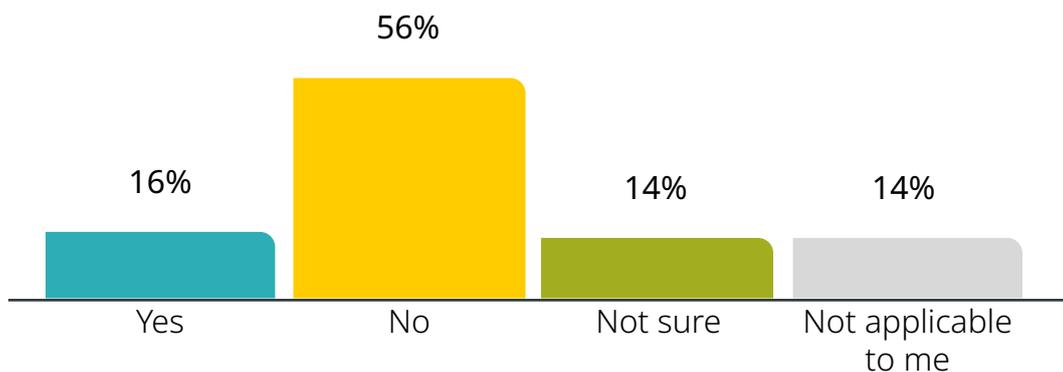


Nobody should have to put themselves into the vulnerable position of homelessness to find appropriate housing. The lack of suitable housing means after reporting themselves as homeless, many care experienced individuals end up in temporary accommodation which still does not meet their needs.

Care experienced individuals often reported that it is more difficult to get the support they need after the age of 18 years. This is especially a problem in areas where the support and options available around accommodation are not shared clearly with care experienced individuals in the Local Offer or by professionals supporting them.

70% are not at risk of homelessness due to their rent, however some groups are more likely to be in this position.

Are you at risk of homelessness through getting behind with your rent?

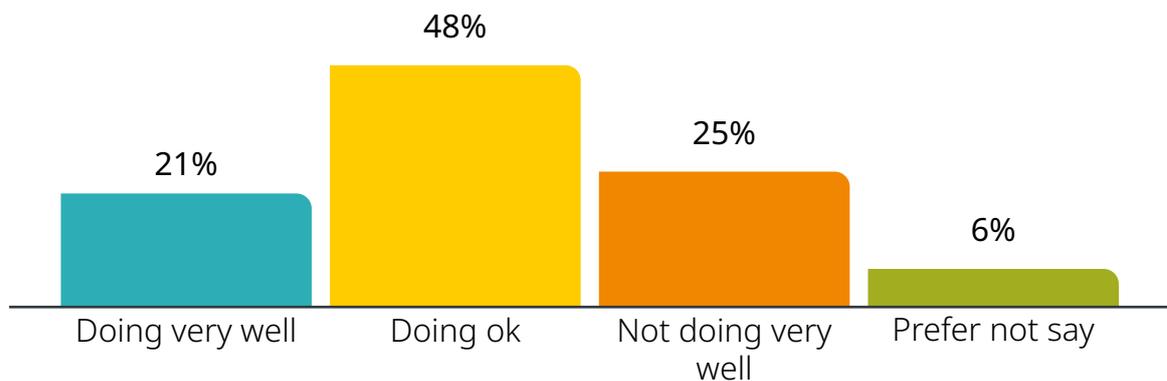


Those looking for work were the group that were most likely to be in this position, 27% said they are at risk of homelessness due to rent.

Affordability

25% of care-experienced individuals are not managing their money very well.

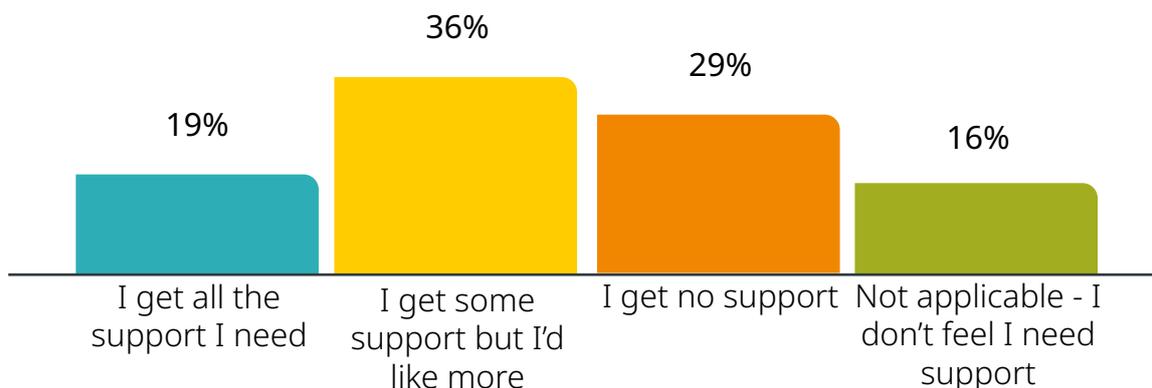
How well do you think you are doing managing your money (e.g. paying bills)



These figures only slightly varied by accommodation type, indicating they represent a range of situations. Whilst 48% feel they are 'doing ok' paying bills, we know a large majority struggle to buy food at least some of the time. This shows care experienced individuals are having to make difficult financial choices. Find out more in the [In Their Own Words: Cost of Living report](#).

65% wanted more support or felt like they got no support.

Do you get the support you need to manage your home and monthly outgoings e.g. pay for bills, shopping



It is good that over half are receiving support. However, there is only a small number who are receiving all the support they need. This places care experienced individuals at risk – almost half of those that would like more support have placed themselves in a vulnerable position to pay for essentials. Support can mean different things, and 'some support' may only be minimal. It is important to help all care experienced individuals understand the support that is available to them and avoid assumptions that those living independently no longer need support.

Safety

Do you feel safe in your home and your neighbourhood/area?

In my home



In my neighbourhood/area



I never feel safe

I always feel safe

Different areas may carry different safety concerns, so it is important for the appropriateness of accommodation to be assessed in context. For example, in Northern Ireland residential segregation by religion, and in areas of the UK gang related issues in communities, can cause care experienced individuals to feel unsafe in their neighbourhood and home.

What makes you feel unsafe about your home or area?

- **Crime**
Care experienced individuals living in areas with high crime rates feel unsafe. Anti-social behaviour, sexual harassment, burglaries, incidents of violence, people taking or selling drugs and knife crime were all mentioned as frequently occurring nearby.
- **Other people**
Groups or individuals living in the area make some care experienced young people feel nervous or intimidated.

“

There are some unsafe people in my building, I avoid other residents.”

- **Poor security measures**
A lack of prevention and protection at home. Some shared buildings have broken front doors, entry systems that don't work, and a lack of CCTV in communal areas. There can be a lack of police presence or safety measures in the neighbourhood.

- **Other answers included**

Nothing – I feel safe, the general neighbourhood, mental health or previous experiences, noise, lack of support, unhygienic streets, animals, exploitation and being homeless.

“

My past trauma also creates anxiety but I'm much better with this. I have security installed to help me feel more safe.



Helpful support for care experienced young people

Who helps you with any difficulties around your home?

- **Support networks** - Partners, family, friends, neighbours, or foster carers.



Some of my neighbour's help, one neighbour gave me a double airbed whilst I wait for my bed frame and mattress."

- **No-one** - Many care experienced individuals said they had no one to help with difficulties at home, having to manage this themselves.
- **Professionals or services** - Leaving care teams, social workers, housing providers and other services provided support to care-experienced individuals for certain tasks.



My Personal Advisor helps with everything. Without her I'd genuinely have been kicked out of my flat a year ago."

How do they help?

Available support is highly dependent on individual circumstances such as the area or type of accommodation.

Care experienced individuals described getting help with:

- **Cleaning,**
- **DIY,**
- **going to the shops,**
- **providing food,**
- **organisation and motivation to complete household chores,**
- **advocating for them,**
- **advice and,**
- **borrowing money or contributing towards household costs.**

What could local authorities / leaving care teams do to help you make your home feel better for you?

- **Nothing / Not sure**
- **Financial support and guidance**

Making monthly living costs affordable through higher, and more regular financial support. Support with the costs of decorating, white goods, and furniture including more flexibility in how Setting Up Home allowance / Leaving Care grant can be used e.g like a Personal Budget in social care. Individualised financial advice, for bills, benefits, debt, and savings. Find out more in our [In Their Own Words: Cost of Living report](#).

“The Setting Up Home Allowance should be more than £3000 and young people should have more trust and choice with how they spend it.”

- **Supportive relationships**
Somebody to talk to about decisions such as paint and furniture. Regular check-ins where any concerns are taken seriously. Overall, they want to feel that someone cares about them, and believes in them.

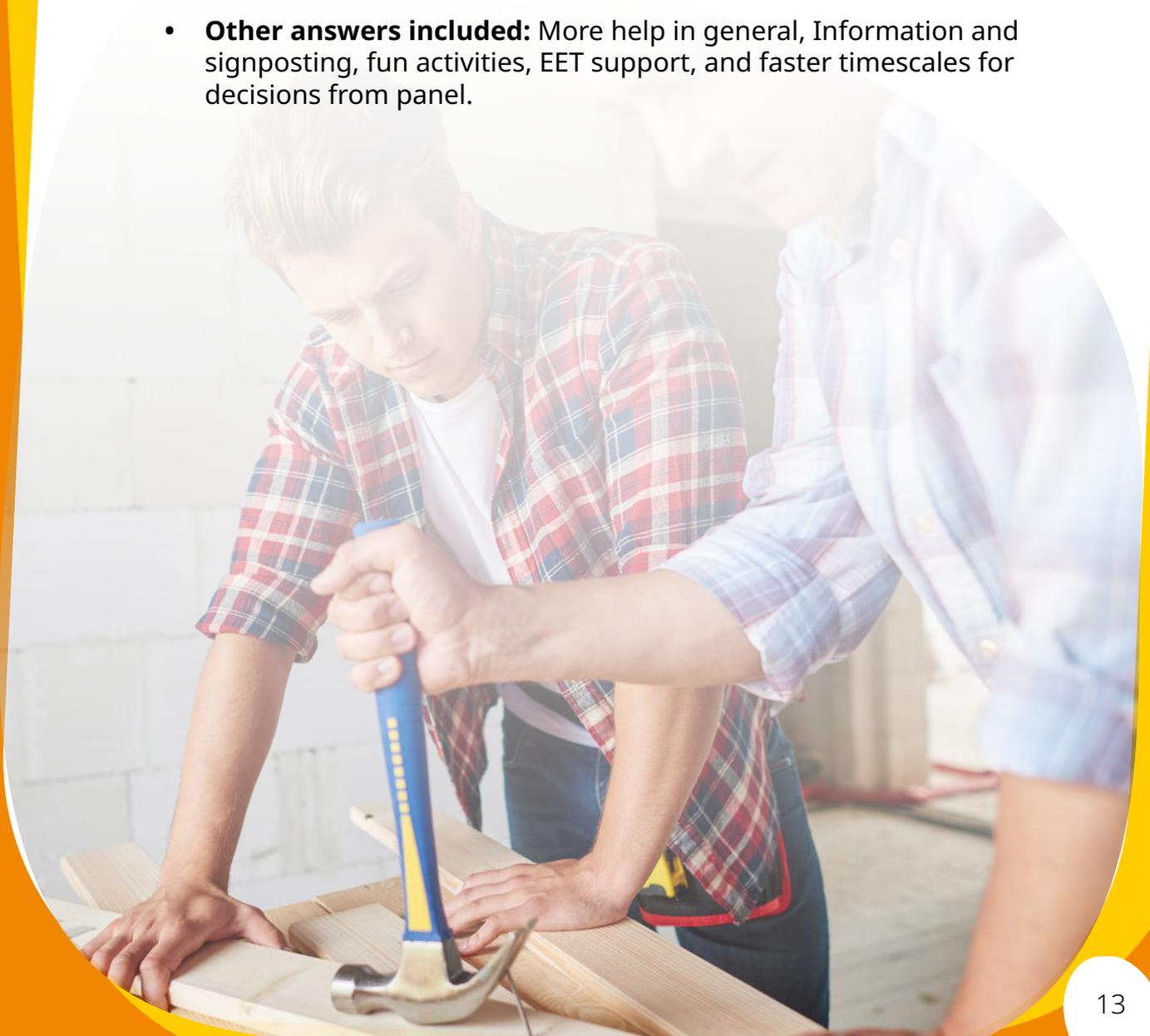
“Making sure we know someone is there as a helping hand and advising us with stuff instead of telling us how to do things they can walk us through it, so we understand completely.”

- **Better housing options**
Affordable accommodation, which is safe, well maintained, and meets their needs. This includes more choice about the area they are housed in and support to move to somewhere with stability, where they can feel safe and connected. A place to call home.

“

There should be legislation that controls private landlords. My home is in disrepair and has mould but there are no affordable alternatives.”

- **Transition support**
Planning and preparation for independent living and getting the timing right e.g. not being moved on a Friday.
- **Practical support**
Providing services to support with decorating, and DIY. Some would also like to attend sessions to learn these practical skills.
- **Security**
Support to feel safe including CCTV, Ring doorbells, and outside lighting.
- **Other answers included:** More help in general, Information and signposting, fun activities, EET support, and faster timescales for decisions from panel.



What are we asking for?

Local asks:

- **Clean affordable start** – The local authority should decorate the first home to a clean and neutral standard, add curtains, carpets/ flooring and small essentials.
- **Security of home** – A local offer that makes young people feel safe e.g. Ring Doorbell, CCTV and homes in safer areas.
- **Help with maintenance** – Utilising in house/housing association handyman services to help with early repairs and understanding how to choose good maintenance services in the future. Especially where individuals don't have a support network.
- **Check in** – We might have a job, a house etc. but that doesn't mean we are not struggling. Check in to help us resolve small problems before they get bigger.

National asks:

- **Setting Up Home Allowance / Leaving Care Grant** – £3,000 wasn't a big enough increase with the pressures of the Cost of Living Crisis. Require a larger amount, a commitment to increase with inflation and recommended best practice on how it can be spent flexibly e.g. with a Personal Budgets/Direct Payments model.
- **Priority Housing** – all care experienced individuals 18 – 25 years should be on priority banding. A national message about this would help.
- **Expand the National House Project (NHP)** – NHP provides excellent support to get people in their own homes and learn how to manage their tenancy with a support network. This provision and other high-quality projects should be in more Local Authorities, with more care experienced individuals able to access it.
- **Have aspiration for us** – We are your children, and we deserve the option to work towards owning our own home. Build homes and help us to buy them.

Best practice examples & Top Tips

- **National House Project are now in 19 English Local Authorities (with 2 more in process of being set up), creating a network of support around sustainable housing.**
- **Provision of RING doorbells or other CCTV options.**
- **'Handyman Hours' provided by the local authority & housing association to help with putting up curtains/pictures etc.**
- **Dedicated tenancy support worker helps care leavers with the practicalities of setting up home and managing their tenancies in Salford.**
- **Young inspectors paid to provide feedback to leaders on the quality and suitability of housing provision in Bromley.**
- **Personal adviser for housing helps care leavers to access the most suitable, secure and sustainable housing available in Essex.**
- **Bolton has opened its own store for care leavers to select important good-quality items such as white goods at no cost.**
- **Pool's Domestic's offer discounted white goods for care leavers in the Wigan Care Leavers Local Offer.**

Top Tips for care experienced young people who are struggling to find a safe home at the moment

“

Reach out. Go to a friend or a trusted person.”

“

Squirrel away as much money as possible.”

Please watch more words of advice & encouragement from care experienced young people on our [In Their Own Words](#) page.

Senior decision makers pledges & reflections:

Here are some actions senior policy and decision makers said they were going to take following our In Their Own words event in July 2024.

“

We need creative ideas to help care experienced Individuals such as providing ring doorbells and DIY workshops to help them settle into their first home.”

“

I will pledge to work with the district council cabinet member for housing to look at housing for care leavers. I will ask about the county council being a rent guarantor for care leavers.”

What do you plan to do to help us?



*Please scan QR code to
view the 'In Their Own
Words' page*

**Thank you to the care
experienced young
people and adults who
shared their views and
contributed to this report.**

Thanks to our YPBMF Champions, Legends and NLCBF Sessional workers who co-produced our workshops, events and reports.

Thank you to the Local Authority Leaving Care teams, Coram Voice, Become, Care Leavers National Movement, Drive Forward Foundation, and everybody who circulated the survey.

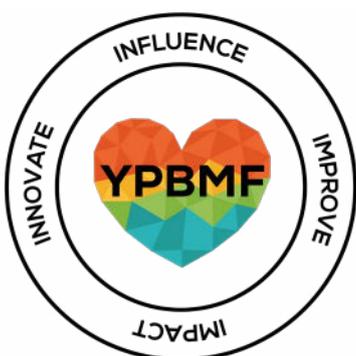
CONTACT US

Invite us to your events, ask us questions about the reports and let us know what you are planning to do as a result of reading our reports, listening to or watching our events:

Email: nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk

Website: www.leavingcare.org

The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum is run by the charity Catch22 & funded through membership fees from local authorities.



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22**

