

Youth Homelessness and Neurodiversity

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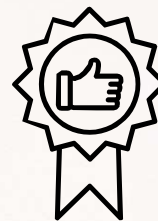
End Youth Homelessness Cymru



Partnership



Youth Voice



**Championing
Best Practice**



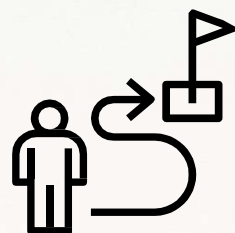
Research

Research Background



Rationale

Increased risk of homelessness
Inaccessibility of services



Purpose

Gain understanding of the
interaction of youth homelessness
and neurodiversity



Aims

Young people's experiences
Practitioners' experiences
Amplify youth voice

Research Methodology



Participatory

4 peer researchers



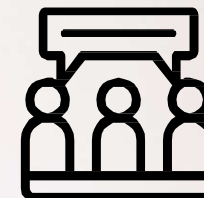
Interviews

12 in-depth interviews



Surveys

60 responses
from practitioners



Workshops

Focus group with practitioners
Discussion with young people
and practitioners
Reflective workshops for teams

Findings

Pathways into Homelessness



Family Breakdown

Family neurodivergence
Family ableism and trauma
Lack of support for families



Foster Placement Breakdown

Lack of training and understanding
Young people's needs unmet



Tenancy Breakdown

Young people with high level of
needs in independent
accommodation

Family breakdown



'The problem with my stepdad was he was one of those people where he would keep pushing at you. He would find little things that would annoy you. And it is 'cos quite a lot of times like me and him had fights like physical, actual fights and that, and he had pinned me up into a corner and then my ADHD is telling me, right. Just, just push him out the way, everything, you know, get out the corner. So having like a temper as a child against the temper of a full grown man, you know, it doesn't help the situation. And he was always blaming me. Like I was the troubled one. I was always the naughty one because that's like how some people see it. If someone has ADHD and autism, they're the troubled child, they're always causing it.' (Young Person)

Family breakdown

'Many neurodivergent people face ableist abuse and alienation within our families and beyond. Part of this is that we don't conform to neurotypical standards, either because we are unable to do so, or because we reject the structures that place this expectation upon us. We are often subjected to mistreatment, overstimulation, and damage by parents/caregivers, whether this is out of malice, carelessness, or neglect. This can cause meltdowns which place us in a state of extreme dysregulation through an involuntary response to stressors and triggers. We are subsequently punished (physically, socially, or otherwise) for these unavoidable reactions to overwhelming input, even though they are traumatic experiences beyond our control. Repeatedly being pushed to a state beyond what we are capable of dealing with is incredibly harmful. It leads us to operate from a state of hypervigilance, which further increases tension and distrust within a family setting, and home situations can eventually escalate beyond the point of recovery. These experiences don't exclusively happen at home - education, healthcare, and social settings can also have the same or similar impact - but when our homes aren't safe places, we are more likely to be driven toward dangerous situations, including homelessness.'

(Peer researcher)

Accessing Support

Neurodivergence

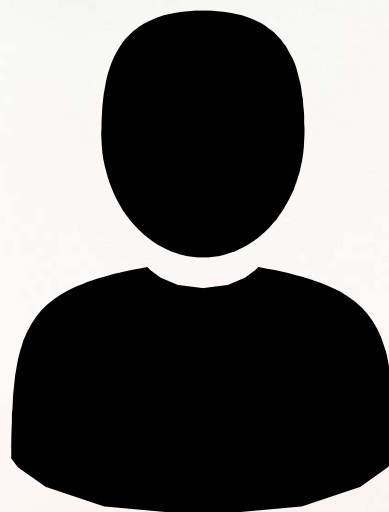
*(Often undiagnosed +
lack of support)*

Traumas

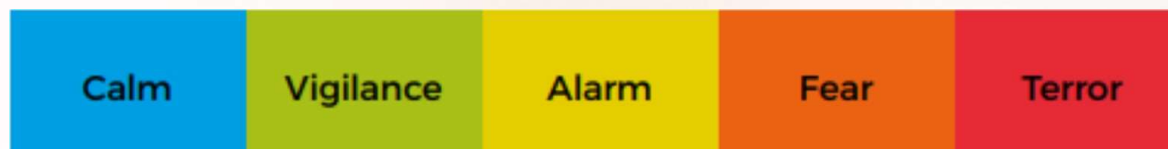
*(Multiple +
unhealed)*

**Ill mental
health**

(Untreated)



In crisis



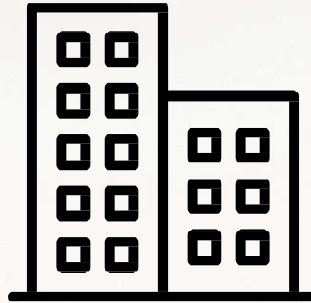
Accessing Support



'I've been with somebody when they phoned up the County Council to make a homeless statement and they've been completely overwhelmed and bamboozled with what's going on... Like you're in crisis. Your support structures have gone, all of the kind of stuff that you've got, all the routine that you put in place to make you manage life has just being removed and then you've got to phone the Council and just taking in those information and giving over lots of personal information and then be placed in an emergency, temporary accommodation. It's just there's an awful lot going on.'

(Practitioner)

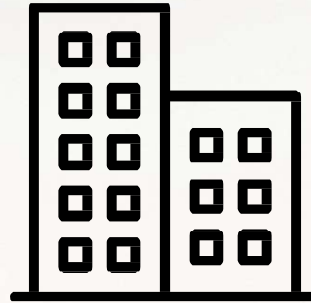
Accessing Support



'But just admitting to the council, like everything that's happened and then having to prove that you're homeless. That was a stress. And then them telling me that I had to go set up the universal account and then it was very stressful. And having ADHD and autism and being stressed does not add up. Like I was losing my patience, you know, I was paranoid that I wasn't going to get anywhere. I was like, oh no, they won't give me universal credit. You know, like I was really thinking negative thoughts.'

(Young Person)

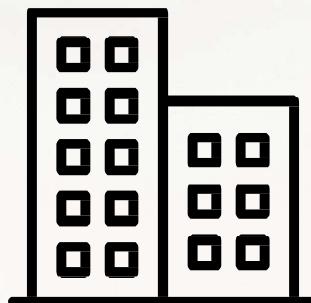
Accessing Support



'That was very scary going into the council building and declaring yourself homeless... [The council building] is like a big glass building... And then everything's just like this big, massive open room and there's workers around, you know, in which I didn't expect to be put in that position.'

(Young person)

Accessing Support

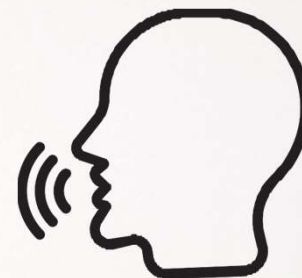


'I have witnessed young people coming into our very corporate, formal reception for appointments... pausing and walking back out.' (Practitioner)

Information and Communication

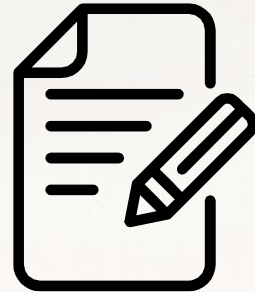


Written



Verbal

Information and Communication



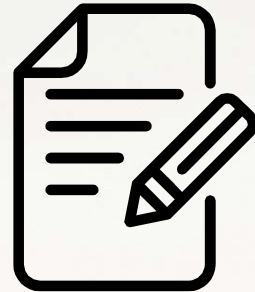
'No, the council didn't explain things to me that well. They sent me an email a few weeks ago, explaining that I was no longer under the duty of care or something, but it was just so confusing. I had to screenshot it and send it straight away and be like, what does this mean to [the support worker]? Because like they just didn't explain it in a way that was easy to understand.' (Young person)

Information and Communication



'But no, what did they send me? A notification and part two of the Housing Wales Act 2014, section 68, duty to secure interim accommodation for homelessness application has ended in section 73 in duty to secure accommodation for a homeless applicant has ended. And I'm like, I can understand that to some, some extent, but then there are like all these sections and duties and I'm like, I don't know none of this like.' (Young Person)

Information and Communication



'Most of it was verbal, but then they gave me, what was it, a big leaflet? And I can't read things and then understand it. So I didn't really bother reading the things they gave me.'

(Young Person)

Housing Options - Barriers

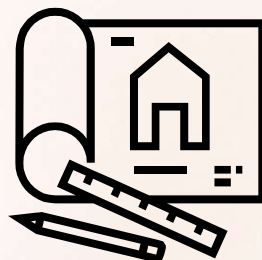
'We do sometimes see young people that are just closing down their housing applications and say well if you're not able to give me what I need I carry on sofa surfing or just manage and that's how they remain homeless basically because we can't give them what they need.'

(Practitioner)

Paperwork



**Personal
Housing Plans**



**Shared
Accommodation**



Practitioner's Experiences

'Some of our neurodivergent clients need things broken down for them and lots of help. Our resident with ADHD and autism is verging on needing care rather than support.' (Practitioner)

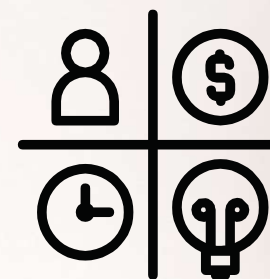
High Level of Need



Lack of Capacity



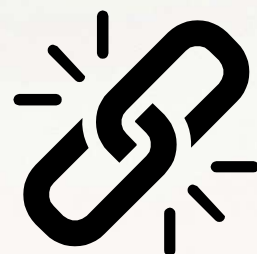
Lack of Resources



Practitioner's Experiences

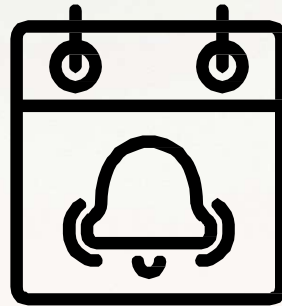
'It's not an excuse, but you know there's no point in sugar-coating it. I don't think that the individual caseworkers have got time that they need to spend with people and to make sure that they understand and to keep on reminding them about what they need to do. There's just not the capacity to... Things like we've mentioned about needing to remind people about what we've asked them to do that week or what the next stage is, there just isn't the capacity to do that, especially in a manner that might be more understandable for people who are neurodivergent. So I think that's probably the biggest issue. And in terms of housing options at the moment anyway.' (Practitioner)

Whole System Approach



'The service is only as good as the weakest link in the chain.'

Whole System Approach



'It was just last week I had a discussion with one of our young people on housing first because the substance misuse worker just didn't remind him about his appointment. She told him a week in advance. And she didn't remind him, and he forgot and he didn't turn up... And actually, he always turned up to his mental health appointments because the Community Psychiatric Nurse understood that he had ADHD and he needed reminding constantly, but he still felt let down because the substance misuse worker didn't appreciate that.' (Practitioner)

Whole System Approach

'It's, you know, everyone saying this person should pay for it, housing should pay for it, but actually it needs to be an integrated approach because as housing ... they present to us and we have to house them somewhere but the housing that we're offering isn't appropriate, it isn't adequate and they're still going out and offending. They're still calling the crisis team, they're still using drugs because we haven't got it right and we just need a more joined up approach to working really and it's really basic but it isn't, it's an unbelievable amount of work to get social care to buy in, and the police, probation to buy in and mental health teams to buy in. It's just, it's just so hard. And I thought, you know, it's above my pay scale.' (Practitioner)

Best Practice

Best Practice - Communication

'There's never like a waiting in between things. Like for example, I will always know that I've got a point of contact during that service, and they will always keep me up to date. If [my support workers] is having a morning off to go for a hospital appointment, for example, he won't necessarily say 'I'm going to the hospital this morning', but he'll say, 'Hi, just to let you know, I won't be in work Wednesday until 12 o'clock, if you need anything ring the office'... They keep me very informed.' (Young Person)

Best Practice – Rekindle/Small Steps



'I basically said to housing and the police that if they didn't help me, I was gonna end up basically burning the police station down. I was gonna start targeting every paedophile in this town. I was gonna start targeting the police. And with the help of Small Steps they managed to actually get the services to start listening to me that it's just genuine cry for help. And I don't wanna hurt anyone and since then things have started getting better.



I wish that there was more people like Small Steps, that actually go above and beyond... So it is talking therapy. They do all kinds of things. They recognize that people don't get time out of town. Some people have never left town. And it like opens opportunities to meet people, to build confidence.

And coming here, I've met so many people who actually understand me and like I've got with Small Steps' help I've got adult psychology coming up, CMHT has been going amazing. I'm on medication now. And I've never felt this good.' (Young Person)

Best Practice - Team Around the Tenancy



'At the beginning, I didn't have any support, but as soon as Team Around the Tenancy were on board, I had the, the best support that I could ever imagine. [The support worker], she did so much for me. She helped me get my PIP back. She put me in touch with benefits people who helped me do my application. She chased the council left right and centre for me. She even made me doctor's appointments, bless her because I was struggling to make my own doctor's appointments. She helped me with my council tax debt, she was so amazing.

*She was very reassuring. She explained the process in detail.
You know, she just spoke to me, like I was a human.'* (Young Person)

Young Person's Reflections



'I want housing to understand that not every person is bad, not to judge a book by its cover, 'cos some people can come across as angry, but if you like, if they pull their fingers out and actually try to support them in the right way and make sure that there's enough support in place that they don't fall, then people can actually prove to be so amazing.'



'Like they can't just stick a young person into a flat and then like leave them be, there needs to be a process leading up to before they get to flat where they talk about everything and they go actually in depth. And then even when they're put into a flat or a house, the services need to be making sure there's support for at least the first year, if possible, because it's the first year where things can go wrong, that majorly wrong. And basically to just keep an open mind, because like some people can come across as really naughty and a bit of an ass, but maybe they're the best people ever, and they've just got their own shit going on.' (Young Person)

Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Local authorities should consider creating sensory-friendly and young person centred spaces in their local area.
2. Local authorities should improve the accessibility of the information shared with young people.
3. Local authorities and third sector organisations should ensure all staff undertake neurodiversity training, including senior and middle management.
4. Local authorities should collate information about the diagnosis process, support pathways and support services for neurodivergent young people available in their area.
5. Where waiting lists for diagnosis are long, Welsh Government should provide additional funding for local authorities to fund private assessments for young people.

Recommendations

6. Local authorities should work more closely with schools to ensure that teachers are trained and resources made readily available to support neurodivergent students and ensure that the teaching environment and learning materials are inclusive.
7. Local authorities should work with partners to ensure that parents of neurodivergent young people have a strong support network around them made up of schools, youth workers and neurodivergent-specific organisations to work collectively together to prevent youth homelessness caused by family breakdown.
8. Housing staff should try to ensure that accommodation provided to young people is sensory friendly to be accommodating of the young person's needs.
9. Local authorities should work with and support local neurodiversity specific organisations and consult them on the matters concerning Local Authority services and their accessibility for neurodivergent individuals.

Recommendations

10. Local Authorities should work with Youth Services and grassroots organisations to create neurodiversity friendly youth clubs, community groups and hubs. As the poor wellbeing neurodivergent young people experience is commonly due to a lack of support networks and community around them, both youth services and third sector organisations need to be supported to provide community building activities and run sensory-friendly community spaces.

11. Local authorities should promote multi-agency meetings where best practice can be shared and issues can be identified with regards to supporting neurodivergent young people.

12. Local authorities should promote youth friendly and person centred practice, drawing on youth work methods and working to a strengths based approach for each individual young person.

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