



FEANTSA

# 17 Practices to help end Youth Homelessness in Europe



## Overview of this Document

Young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness have a variety of needs which homeless services need to address to create **sustainable solutions to exit homelessness for the long-term**. In 2020 FEANTSA published the European Framework for Defining Youth Homelessness, which was designed to promote a shared understanding of youth homelessness in Europe. This framework took an intersectional perspective and highlighted **the different profiles that exist within youth homelessness** and the challenges that youth can face in exiting homelessness. This guide is a follow-on report which aims to share insights, ideas and practices for how services across Europe can respond to the needs of young people.

While FEANTSA has been calling for youth-oriented solutions designed to meet youth specific needs to not just support the transition out of homelessness but the transition to independent living, **tackling youth homelessness requires an intersectional approach**. Young people are not 'just' young people, they are not a homogenous group. Within the profile of youth homelessness there can be a great diversity of experience which impacts on how supports should be designed and delivered to young people.

This guide has been designed with a dual focus:

- **Section 1** shares services to meet the broader needs of young people experiencing homelessness and includes practices around youth empowerment, housing, prevention, and mental health supports.
- **Section 2** covers practices with a thematic focus that supports youth with specific experiences and includes services for youth leaving care, LGBTIQ youth, young women and young migrants.

## Section 1: General Services to Support Youth Experiencing Homelessness

**Challenge:** Housing

**Organisation:** Kaizen, Jeugddorp

**Country:** Belgium

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### Context



In Belgium a majority of young people experiencing homelessness have spent a prolonged period couch surfing, as they cannot access the private rental market. In most cases the young people do not have the money to pay private market rents, while others have a history of anti-social behaviour or don't have the savings for a deposit or references for a landlord. Some of the young people Kaizen work with are migrants, creating structural and legal barriers to accessing housing.

Additionally youth experiencing homelessness generally suffer from anxiety and poor mental health. As a result they are unmotivated and lack the energy to apply to and access services and supports. **When they are ready to contact support services they are caught in a negative cycle** as support services can be challenging to navigate and have waiting lists, in the meantime their mental health and housing situation worsens.

### Service



Kaizen supports 25 people between the ages of 16 and 25. 13 of them are supported by a government waiting list and the remaining spots are accessible by young people without an intervention by the government. To access the latter system the young people need access to government social welfare to subsidise the cost of the rent and social supports. There are three different housing options available :

- Kaizen is the first house, supporting 8 people. In this house each person has their own bedroom, kitchen and living space with a shared bathroom.
- KaJac is the second house, supporting 4 people. In this house the residents share the living space and have their own bedroom.
- A third house supports three people. In this house the residents share the living space and have their own bedroom.

In addition to these housing options the service has 10 apartments in the city of Mechelen. Access to the housing has no conditions attached, the clients can stay for as long as they need and is designed in the spirit of housing first. **The young people in this apartment are supported both by youth care and adult care, to support the transition to independent living.**

In this service young people usually stay for 9-12 months. Generally the young people move on to social housing, the year spent in the service is sufficient to prepare this move. While staying within the service they can spend time working on their relationship with family, when possible and safe, the young person may return to their family. Others upskill while staying with Kaizen and get a job, and at the end of the year they move into the private rental market.

**The service also has an agreement in place that if there is local housing that is waiting to be demolished or renovated** the service can house young people as a temporary solution as the housing is left vacant and awaiting planning permission.

## Funding



This service is primarily funded through the social welfare system. The clients in this service pays rent for their housing from their benefits, and the social welfare system pays a top up to cover both the housing & social supports offered by Kaizen.

**The service is further subsidised by public donations and fundraising**, this money is used to cover staffing costs.

## Partnerships



Kaizen partners with 30-40 organisations at different levels to meet the various needs of young people. **The aim of this multi-collaboration system is to ensure young people**

**have access to the supports and expertise they need** as they require, as it can be difficult for any single service to achieve that balance.

## Words of Inspiration



This project started without any government funding, but they saw the problems young people faced and believed in their housing solutions. In time the government came on board and supported them which has assisted

their development and growth. **Sometimes you simply have to think outside the box** and trust the solutions you have in mind can meet needs of young people, and know that government support will come.

“ Access to the housing has no conditions attached, the clients can stay for as long as they need and is designed in the spirit of housing first.

## Section 1: General Services to Support Youth Experiencing Homelessness

**Challenge:** Housing

**Organisation:** Housing First for Youth, Limor

**Country:** Netherlands

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# 2

### Context



In the Hague youth homelessness had been rising for some years. The existing homeless services designed for young people were not fully capable of meeting their needs and in some cases were inaccessible for young people. Some young people were not comfortable in shared shelters while others had experiences of poor mental health, substance use or had a record of anti-social behaviour, all of which acted as barriers to accessing services. Effectively **the triggers**

**which caused young people to become homeless were also factors that perpetuated and worsened their housing situation.**

The Hague had already established a Housing First project for adults for 7 years which had proved successful, and against this background Housing First For Youth was identified as a service to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

### Service



Young people are referred to the Housing First for Youth service through the local authority. The city of the Hague has a central service that young people report to when experiencing homelessness. **This service links with outreach and youth teams to support youth access the different social services in the city.** The service examines the different referrals to decide, based on the needs, what services best match the young person's situation. For example who needs transitional housing, supported housing or Housing First for Youth.

This project includes 35 independent apartments that are scattered across the city, having started with 10 apartments in 2018. The target group of this service is 16–24-year-olds, however this is a general framework the service developed to help make strategic decisions. Most clients are 18 or above but in certain situations Housing First For Youth works for youth aged 16. It is important to note this service does not have a hard cut off point. If a person in the service is turning 25, they are not kicked out, and can stay for as long as they need supports, in line with Housing First for Youth core principles. The wrap around supports provided to the clients are designed to meet the daily needs

and challenges that young people may face.

**The service helps support youth back into education and training.** There are additional services around relationship building. While the service does not have expertise for every challenge a young person may face they can support the youth to access other support services such as legal services, debt counselling or mental health services.

This Housing First for Youth project is supported with a peer worker who is also a support worker. This role helps bring an important perspective from someone with lived experience. **Young people like being able to work with someone who has been in their shoes and can understand their situation better.** The peer worker also helps engage young people with the service.

There are 5 clients for each full-time support worker, allowing for plenty of time and flexibility to support the young people as needs arise.

## Funding



The service is funded by the municipality. In the Netherlands young people receive lower benefits than their adult counterparts. To bridge this problem **the municipality pays a supplement to the benefits for young**

**people in Housing First for Youth.** This combined with a rental allowance allows the young people to cover their rent and living costs.

## Partnerships



As mentioned previously the service partners with mental health supports and other social services across the city to ensure young people have access to the relevant expertise to meet their challenges.

## Words of Inspiration



This service has been incredibly successful. **When you ask young people about their experience, they describe Housing First for Youth as a life-saver, it has provided a sense of safety and security they hadn't experienced before.** This also bears out in the results, with an 88% success rate for this

service. Prior to joining Housing First for Youth there was a sense of hopelessness and a history of failed interventions for young people, and Housing First For Youth has demonstrated there is an effective support service for all young people experiencing homelessness.

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This Housing First for Youth project is supported with a peer worker who is also a support worker. This role helps bring an important perspective from someone with lived experience

**Challenge:** Preventing Youth Homelessness & Housing

**Organisation:** Finnish Youth Housing Association, NAL.

**Country:** Finland

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# 3

## Context



In Finland, like many European countries, **young people are at risk of becoming homeless due to poor access to the private rental market.** This can be attributed to having unpaid rent or bills in the past or low or unsteady income and unaffordable rents.

Often young people have not lived alone and sustaining a tenancy presents new challenges in recognising both the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant, which can lead to young people being evicted.

## Service



NAL (Finish Youth Housing Association) offers counselling and floating supports to 23 local associations around Finland that provide housing for young people to support their transition to independent living. NAL has 4,000 apartments which they partly own as a social landlord and through other housing associations. They offer housing counselling to anyone in youth housing, who is aged 18–34, particularly those transitioning to independent living. Housing counselling consists of individual housing orientation and early intervention supports.

Housing orientation centres around **learning about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, financial literacy and budgeting, home maintenance and learning what to do if something goes wrong.** For example if you cannot pay a bill or are suffering from anxiety or poor mental health, what are the avail-

able supports and how do you access them. Housing orientation is delivered in both group settings and to individuals.

Early intervention is a programme used to prevent evictions. The housing counsellors are also youth work professionals and have access to the rental database and can see if rent has not been paid. The early intervention allows the counsellor to contact the young person before a letter is sent from the landlord, to try and solve the problem as early as possible. The counsellor can help the young person budget and review the resources and entitlements they can access, to search for a solution with the young person. **Approximately 85% of the tenancies continue, as a result of the early interventions.** This reduces the number of young people who get evicted, and in turn the number of young people who become homeless.

## Funding



The service is funded through the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, in a programme funded by the state-owned gaming company which comprises lotto, slot machines and casinos.

## Partnerships



Housing counselling guides young people to other social services and partnerships with those organisations is key. The counsellors do not have the expertise to support all the

challenges a young person might face, and they connect and guide young people to other services around social work, mental health, welfare and health.

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## Words of Inspiration



**85% of young people supported by the housing counsellors sustain their tenancies.** The counsellors not only prevent young people from becoming homeless or getting evicted, but the research has also shown that

the early intervention also addresses other challenges and problems encountered by young people at an earlier point and provide supports for more than just the housing.

“The early intervention allows the counsellor to contact the young person before a letter is sent from the landlord, to try and solve the problem as early as possible.”



**Challenge:** Preventing Youth Homelessness & Housing

**Organisation:** Upstream Cymru, Llamau

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# 4

## Context



In the Welsh context there is no a specific system designed to prevent youth homelessness at an early stage. The Housing Wales Act provides for a duty to prevent homelessness, but this relies on a person coming to their local authority and requesting support. This system often means that by the time a young person

requests supports, **the intervention is delivered too late, or is more challenging than it needed to be to resolve.** For example in the case of a family breakdown the necessary supports to prevent a young person from becoming homeless are too late.

## Service



Upstream Cymru aims to identify young people at risk of homelessness at an earlier instance, before the young person enters a crisis period. Once identified the service allows for support staff (including family mediators) to provide a targeted intervention at a sufficiently early point to prevent a situation deteriorating into homelessness.

Upstream Cymru runs a universal survey in high schools (beginning with 14- and 15-year-olds in the first year of delivery but ultimately aiming to cover the whole school) which features questions about housing, general resilience, school engagement, conflict at home and mental wellbeing and other questions which identify risk factors for youth potentially at risk of homelessness. The questions are similar to those used in versions of the Upstream model implemented in North America and Australia. Working with young people, the questions were refined for the Welsh context and to ensure they were accessible for young people. The surveys are completed on an app and it typically takes a young person about 30 minutes to fully complete the survey.

The app, developed by neurodiversity experts Do It Profiler, is fully accessible, with the possibility of changing font sizes and colours, and can read the questions out to the young person. Fundamental to the approach's success is the

universal way in which the survey is applied. **By asking every young person to complete the survey, rather than using pre-existing data or staff intuition to identify young people who could be asked to take it.** The model enables those who are not already known to other services to be identified, in particular this affects young people for whom school is a haven from trouble at home and who are not recognised by school staff as needing help.

Young people are given a username which is accessible to Upstream Cymru, however the data to match usernames to the names of the young person is kept with the school. The data gathered by Upstream Cymru is anonymised with no personal indicators. If a young person's results indicate risk factors for a future experience of homelessness then this is flagged to the school, who can match the username to the specific young person. Then Upstream Cymru team-members work with the school to understand what supports the young person currently has in place and identifies any additional supports the young person may require.

**Upstream Cymru can provide family mediation services, which focus on communication and conflict resolution skills to support the young person and parents to improve their relationship.** Alternatively, Upstream Cymru can provide a social worker, from Llamau's EM-

PHASIS team, who will focus on re-engaging a young person with education. The innovation in this service is not the specific supports put in place, which are tried-and-tested, but rather

the early indication of concerns, which allows interventions to be made before a young person's problems become insurmountable.

## Funding



Upstream Cymru is currently funded by local authorities in whose schools they work, with additional funding from the Oak Foundation supporting research into how best to scale the service up.

## Partnerships



The key partnership for Upstream Cymru is between Llamau, Cardiff University and Do It Profiler who have developed and delivered the survey. Team-members delivering the service

work with schools, local authorities, youth homelessness officers and housing officers to bring in the variety of supports a young person may need.

## Words of Inspiration



Having now run hundreds of surveys a young person has never refused to participate. This has been an amazing tool to identify at risk young people. Often the youth that struggle the most are beneath the surface and are quiet in school although facing a lot of challenges but unknown to social services or

schools and lacking the relevant supports. The approach, which has worked in Australia, Canada and the United States, **works to identify who needs early interventions to prevent youth homelessness from ever occurring and marks a revolution in how we prevent and end youth homelessness.**

“The innovation in this service is not the specific supports put in place, which are tried-and-tested, but rather the early indication of concerns, which allows interventions to be made before a young person's problems become insurmountable.”

**Challenge:** Empowering Youth

**Organisation:** Sea Tribe, Y-Foundation

**Country:** Finland

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5

## Context



Young people facing barriers to employment & education are more likely to experience homelessness and social exclusion. For these young people **their life situations can deteriorate quickly when faced with challenges without supportive communities around them**. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds due to the family's socio-econo-

mic status and risks of deprivation are more likely to have negative effects in adulthood. These can include difficulty in managing health (physical and mental) challenges, independent living skills, social exclusion and poor relationships which exacerbate their situation of homelessness.

## Service



Sea Tribe - Passage to the Future! (2018-2020) project was designed to meet the needs of young people transitioning to adulthood and independence to have friends, a hobby, to be included in their own community, to be met and accepted as themselves and to receive timely guidance if needed. **The goal has been to build a community of young people that is not characterized by problems** that unite individuals, but by diversity, potential and a will to change.

The target group is young adults aged 18-30 living in the Helsinki metropolitan area who want to make a positive difference in their lives. They typically had challenging life situations in the past and are referred to the project through networks of partners, such as social work.

In the project, **sail training was combined with goal-oriented, adventure-educated group activities and needs-based service counseling**. During the sail trainings participants were responsible for running the daily life on board the boat in small groups. They learn skills such as cooking, cleaning and other everyday skills which seamlessly overlaps with the strengthening of teamwork. On a sailing ship, nothing is done alone. From the participant's perspective, everyday life onboard is a constant negotiation with oneself and others.

Approximately half of the participants have been involved in more than one sail training trip. This is based on the idea of a "sailing path", where the participant first comes along for a shorter trip to get acquainted and try it out to see if the method is suitable for them. Then they can then embark on a longer sailing, possibly train to become a peer instructor and join in a new role the following summer.

Sailing is a seasonal activity but the participants get involved in yearlong activities to maintain their community, this includes overnight trips to a national park, to a graffiti workshop and cooking clubs. Activities were designed, implemented and evaluated as projects, during which the participants concretely practiced and learned the basics of project work: making plans, division of tasks and managing schedules. All activities were group-shaped and always focused on concrete action instead of mere discussion. In between the group activities, there was service counseling, which was done on a need-based basis. Counselling here generally centers on housing difficulties or finding a job. However, the majority of counseling is "micro-guidance" during activities where the instructor could gently get to know the young people, advise them and could check in the next time they met.

This service is built on a Community First me-

thodology, which is influenced by the Housing First principles. This includes ensuring young people have the possibility to be part of a community regardless of the individual's character, background, wealth or starting point in life. Participation in the community is not limited in time. Participants should have choice and decision-making power. The sail training is not therapeutic, the focus is on practical activities and experimenting with learning, **this is not a holiday as the trips are meant to challenge and make the participant see things and themselves from a new perspective.** The goal

of sail training is empowerment supporting young people to find and strengthen their resources and potential. The project fosters a harm reduction approach as Sea Tribe's activities offer an alternative way to connect and spend time supporting the participant to better manage their lives. Participation in this programme is voluntary and there are no sanctions for non-compliance nor are there economic benefits from engagement. Finally the project is flexible and offers needs-based support tailored to the young person.

## Funding



This project is fully funded by Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organizations, which operates in connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

## Partnerships



The project is led by Y-Fondation and works with the Sail Training Association to organize sail training trips and training the crew. Further collaboration is done with the social services

and health care divisions in the city of Helsinki, Espoo & Vantaa, Kalliola ry and NAL, the Youth Housing Association in Finland and the Helsinki Deaconess Institute.

## Words of Inspiration



The project empowered young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, housing and social exclusion. Through creating a community spirit, participants have strengthened their self-esteem. This safe community has helped young people move forward in their lives to further education and employment during the project. Sea Tribe has provided

young people a long-lasting and suitable, sufficiently flexible model for building their own independence. Participants self-report feeling stronger, empowered, identifying their skills and more confident. **6 months after their initial sailing trip 80% of respondents had maintained contact with the people they met through the project.**

The goal of sail training is empowerment supporting young people to find and strengthen their resources and potential.

**Challenge:** Empowering Youth

**Organisation:** Nadeje

**Country:** Czech Republic

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## Context



**Many young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, come from poor and difficult social environments, ageing out of state care or state institutions.** Their needs vary from physiological needs such as

shelter, food, hygiene and basic healthcare to wider social skills such as communication skills, confidence, empowerment & a sense of community.

## Service



Nadeje is the only youth homeless service in all of Czech Republic. The service starts by providing food, drinks, laundry and other basic services to address the needs of young people. From there young people can build a relationship with the service and receive services focussed on social interaction such as group cooking classes, theatre groups and weekend trips outside of Prague.

The Hero's Journey is a weekend trip outside of Prague, this is modelled on an approach by Brad Stevenson's which explores the young person's past, present and future to understand their beliefs and identify their path forward. By focusing on sharing their experiences they build trust and increase their social skills. **This four-day trip empowers young people to discover their personal resources and develop skills that are important for independent living.**

The project considers weekend trips as the most important, helping young people improve their confidence. These trips comprise 10 young people, 2 professional lecturers facilitating the

trip and 2 social workers. All the participants including lecturers and social workers stay under one roof and everyone participates in all of the jobs like preparing meals, cleaning up etc.

The service also offers trips to the wild which consist of **trips outside Prague, to experience pure nature and to engage in physical activity. It is usually a trip to the woods with hiking, climbing, bouldering and adventure of this kind, or includes river rafting and canoeing.**

The Social Circus is another service and tool used by Nadeje for working with disadvantaged youth with a lot of energy and difficulty in concentrating it. Through creating a space and group dynamic that is respectful, the young people are taught skills such as juggling, handstands and acrobatics. Many of the young people haven't been given the opportunity to do creative activities previously and disengaged from formal education. They learn new skills that they never thought possible and get to experience their own development and grow in confidence.

## Funding



The projects are funded by the national government and municipality grants.

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## Partnerships



The project cooperates with other social services in Prague. Through Erasmus+ projects they have been inspired by approaches across Europe.

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## Words of Inspiration



Working with young people experiencing homelessness is a long-term project, where you see gradual changes, improvements, and growth in time. Within these groups the project has watched young people grow in confidence

and self-esteem, **watching the young people develop their skills and showcase them at international events and share their stories has been hugely inspiring**, particularly hearing them speak about themselves positively.

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Many of the young people  
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formal education.

**Challenge:** Empowering Youth

**Organisation:** PETE – Preparing for Education, Training & Employment

**Country:** Ireland

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# 7

## Context



The unemployment and education services designed for the general population are not easily accessible for young people experiencing homelessness who encounter additional barriers. For example young people experiencing homelessness have often experienced homelessness throughout their childhood which can disrupt their education and **leave them with a negative impression of educa-**

**tion and a poorer perception of their own abilities.** These young people have also experienced significant traumas which impact on their communication skills, their self-esteem and confidence and their capacity to manage conflict at the work place. Other young people who have had their education disrupted as a result of homelessness have lower literacy and numeracy levels.

## Service



PETE (Preparation for Education, Training & Employment) is designed especially for people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of becoming homelessness. The service was designed for people experiencing homelessness who face barriers in accessing employment as well as upskilling, education and training.

There are different ways of engaging with the services, for example it partners with a local Housing First for Youth service as part of its social and community integration stream of services. Additionally other homeless services can refer young people to this service if they are looking to engage in education, training or employment. Thirdly the service accepts self-referrals where young people engage from word of mouth of others who have previously used this service.

Young people accessing this service start with dropping into the service and have an informal conversation over a cup of tea with the service. This helps to identify what the young person wants to get out of PETE and set realistic goals for both the young person and the service. **The majority of young people are focussed on improving their employability.** When they first join, they tend to be highly motivated and eager to progress.

Young people go through an informal edu-

cation assessment to stock take on existing qualifications and soft skills or formal qualifications to identify what their next steps could be.

For formal training and qualification programmes PETE supports young people to access courses offered by other organisations within the community. PETE offers courses around soft skills such as art, cookery and horticulture or interpersonal, communication skills and conflict management. **These courses also engage young people back into education and help youth to adjust being back in the classroom.**

While the service is focussed on education, training and employment it is built in a youth-oriented way, and upon the principles of Psychologically Informed Environments. The service recognises that many young people experiencing homelessness have suffered trauma, and as such put the young person and their needs first, allowing for education to be flexible and to meet young people at their level.

PETE isn't just about education for the sake of having a qualification, **it uses education and training as a gateway to regaining independence** and supporting young people to become involved in their community.

## Funding



**Funding is difficult to access** by the state for this type of programme where education intersects with youth experiences of homelessness and this project relies on funding

from within Focus Ireland and through philanthropic donations.

## Partnerships



This service works with other homeless services to identify young people who would be interested in engaging in education, training or employment. The services works with the local educational board that provides places in courses, tutors, funding for tutors and a grant for digital inclusion to help people access edu-

cation during times of Covid. Local businesses work to provide employment opportunities and prepare young people to apply for those jobs. The service also partners with private course providers including barber or beautician courses.

## Words of Inspiration



In 2020 15 young people engaged in the service and accessed training or education and went on to employment. **Those are 15 young people**

**who have experienced trauma and never saw themselves back in education and have progressed to employment and independence.**

“ This service works with other homeless services to identify young people who would be interested in engaging in education, training or employment.



**Challenge:** Mental Health

**Organisation:** Rock Trust

**Country:** Scotland

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# 8

## Context



Many of the young people experiencing homelessness who come to the Rock Trust request support around mental health and well-being as well as trauma from past events in their life. Young people have generally tried to access mental health supports in the past but have found it difficult to navigate the system and/or there are long

waitlists for support. **When young people are not in stable housing it is difficult to access a service at a pre-determined time.** A young person who misses their slot for mental health supports, ends up at the bottom of the list meaning important services are often inaccessible for youth at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

## Service



The health and wellbeing team at the Rock Trust is supported by a team of three art therapists and a peer worker. **The wellbeing supports are flexible to meet the needs of young people and meeting the young people where they are at.** They can start by connecting via text and then in time when they are ready they can meet a therapist for a coffee and move to a one on one session, move into group supports or join peer supports.

Young people can access 12 one to one sessions, which can be both face to face or online. These are client centred and designed to meet their needs and work on topics the young people identify.

Group activities can include walks, art, photography, collages, sculpting classes or yoga therapy. These group activities promote a sense of community and combat feelings of isolation.

The peer support work is led by mentors who comprise people from the community and from young people who have been through the Rock Trust. Mentors are offered training, support tools, recreational activities, and supervision support. Mentees will be supported by the mentors to engage in well-being activities while completing a strength-based goal packet.

Young people have reported anxiety and isolation as a result of the global pandemic, with some fearing leaving their home. The Rock

Trust has sent out 80 art packs during the pandemic to help support young people's mental health and are sending out another 200 packs. These packs include but are not limited to; journals, drawing books, canvas, paints, artist pens, etc. The Rock Trust have set up meeting spaces outdoors in COVID-19 regulated spaces, where there is a fire pit to keep warm and they distribute masks, gloves, hats and hand sanitiser too.

The health and wellbeing team sits within the youth development team at the Rock Trust. This helps to map out and capture the needs of young people and tailor the service accordingly. **The success of the service relies on this holistic approach where wellbeing is supported in tandem with housing and other services** and is integrated with the services provided by the Rock Trust, rather than being siloed or separated from other supports.

## Funding



The health and wellbeing work is funded by Comic Relief, with a separate community grant, publicly funded, for their peer mentoring and part of their art therapist support.

## Partnerships



The project sets up a partnership with the local community to find activities that young people will enjoy participating in and support their wellbeing such as Edinburgh community yoga & Edinburgh Sculpture Workshops. The team also regularly meets with other

groups providing wellbeing supports for young people in Edinburgh to share practices, and make referrals where young people need more supports, to improve the quality of supports available for young people.

## Words of Inspiration



**Every six weeks the team checks in with their clients, to look at what has been a challenge, what has gone well and what do they want to work on going forward.** These check in's can be incredibly motivating for the team hearing the progress young people make, but also the value of their work. During one check in a young person reported that when

they were having a difficult week, they could hold out knowing they would have a one-to-one session. **Knowing that they would have that connection was so important for their mental health and underscores the importance of having mental wellbeing supports in place for young people.**

“Group activities promote a sense of community and combat feelings of isolation.”

## Section 2: Services to support specific profiles of youth homelessness

**Challenge:** Young Women Experiencing Homelessness

**Organisation:** Securing Housing for Women, NEA Project, Helsinki Deaconess Foundation

**Country:** Finland

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**More information:** <https://ysaatio.fi/en/nea-securing-housing-for-women>



### Context



Many women in the homeless system have experiences of abuse including physical, financial, emotional, and sexual. **These forms of abuse can erode women's independence and autonomy and result in many young women becoming reliant on men for their survival**, this can include the perpetrators of violence, older men and/or turning to sex work. In the Finnish context engaging in sex work increases the risk of women being human trafficked. Typically women in these positions are not in control where a pimp exploits their situation and benefits from their sex work, rather than the woman.

Engaging in sex and/or turning to older men for supports generally results in stigma and shame, which prevents young women from seeking help. Additionally these types of relationships further erodes young women's independence and are typically disempowering and controlling.

This becomes a challenge for services working with young women as even when they want to access social supports, **they do not**

**believe they are in position to get help.**

Young women experiencing homelessness have multiple and complex needs. While they vary individually, typically services need to respond to basic survival needs including hunger, fatigue and hygiene and as they build supportive relationships with young women, **they identify needs around building self-esteem and confidence to take back control of their life.** Young women in particular lack the skills to cope and survive on the street, compared to older women.

**In Finland, the number of young women experiencing homelessness has increased over the past number of years.** Many of the young women have been in foster care or come from difficult family situations, they lack supports many other young people take for granted. When something goes wrong in accessing housing and basic social services their situation worsens quickly as they do not have the supports in place that most young people have.

### Service



The NEA Project works across Finland in 9 different organisations. The Deaconess Foundation's sub project of NEA predominantly focuses on supporting women who have been long-term homeless often living with mental health problems and/or problematic substance use.

The sub project works with experts by experience (EbE) where each social worker partners with a young woman who has previously been homeless. Working with EbE has given the social workers many tools and new approaches for outreach and work with young women experiencing homelessness. The social worker brings the knowledge of how to access

and navigate services and how to cope with the experience of homelessness, while **the EbE knows the experiences of the young women and can relate to their situation and build a trusting relationship.** The social workers gets valuable information which leads to better results and services with the support of the EbE. They know what to look for in the behaviours and attitude of the young person and identify areas for concern that the social worker might not. Together the young woman experiencing homelessness, the EbE and the social worker can build the right solutions and path for the young woman to secure her own housing and exit homelessness.

The EbE give hope to these women, in a way the social worker cannot. Many of the young women experiencing homelessness do not know any woman who has survived this difficult situation, let alone working with a homeless service. **Many of these young women have been failed by social services**

**in the past and have a mistrust of social services from previous poor experiences.**

The EbE plays an important role in combatting these problems.

Each social worker has 5-6 clients, which allows them to give intense, flexible and tailored support to the women they work with.

## Funding



The project is funded by the Ministry for Health and Social Welfare, through the state gaming company.

## Partnerships



The project works with a range of other organisations in supporting the young women including social services, child protection,

housing companies, landlords, the family of women they work with and health services.

## Words of Inspiration



For the duration of this project, only one young woman has not secured a sustainable tenancy, all the others have. Sari, one of the social workers on this project, notes that she has never had such high level of success, **attribu-**

**ting the success of this project to working with the experts by experience to build lasting and trusting relationships with the young women.**

Many of the young women experiencing homelessness do not know any woman who has survived this difficult situation, let alone working with a homeless service

## Resource Spotlight: St. Mungo's Toolkit for Homeless Pregnancy

There is little data available on women experiencing homelessness who are pregnant. **During the gestation period when the foetus is growing rapidly it is particularly vulnerable to maternal stress, poor nutrition and the impact of alcohol and drugs use.** Women experiencing homelessness are also at increased risk of maternal death, physical harm, poor mental health in addition to financial and sexual exploitation. Additionally these women may have previous pregnancies which resulted in children being removed from their care. Pregnancy while experiencing homelessness is an incredibly stressful time for a woman, and young women require help navigating a range of services and supports. Support services for women experiencing homelessness often do not have the expertise to help young women navigate health services. **The St. Mungo's Pregnancy Toolkit is**

**a fantastic resource for homeless services to identify some of the common needs experienced by homeless women,** providing a framework for how certain supports can be provided and offers general guidance to homeless services. The toolkit addresses:

- Promoting autonomy over fertility
- Support after miscarriages
- Accessing midwifery services
- Substance misuse
- Identifying and managing risks
- Safeguarding referrals
- Pregnancy and housing
- Role of a lead professional in supporting pregnant clients
- Plans for delivery of the baby
- Supports post delivery

You can find more information about the toolkit [here](#).

Pregnancy while experiencing homelessness is an incredibly stressful time for a woman, and young women require help navigating a range of services and supports.

**Challenge:** LGBTIQ Youth  
**Organisation:** Streha Center  
**Country:** Albania  
**Contact:** Elvis Popaj [info@strehacenter.org](mailto:info@strehacenter.org)  
**More information:** [www.strehacenter.org](http://www.strehacenter.org)

10

## Context



**Albania has strong homophobic attitudes, and LGBTIQ young people live in a hostile environment,** an estimated 62% of LGBTIQ people have experienced domestic violence. This usually happens when a young person comes out to their family or when a parent outs their child by reading their messages on their phone or interfering into their personal life. Some young people are even locked up in their homes. Domestic violence is one of the primary triggers for LGBTIQ homelessness in Albania.

The wider homo and transphobia prevalent in Albania means that gay men, lesbians and bisexuals **try to hide their sexual orientation to avoid discrimination in accessing housing, employment and education.** This is

more difficult for trans youth, who generally are more visible and cannot hide their gender identity. The resulting transphobia they experience is another key trigger to homelessness. For many LGBTIQ youth discrimination and prejudice is a cause of their homeless situation, however they continue to endure discrimination which is perpetrated by services while experiencing homelessness. This can often worsen trauma around coming out and make life more difficult and complex for young people who are forced to choose between their sexual orientation or gender identity and their safety.

**The Streha Centre is the only safe space for LGBTIQ young people experiencing homelessness in Albania.**

## Service



Streha's initial mission is to support LGBTIQ people experiencing domestic violence. As part of this work they have established a safe house that has capacity for 10 people. The service also rents apartments for 32 people in the private rental market. In addition to housing Streha provides other supports to help young people exit homelessness and live independently. In addition to assistance with food and shelter the organization helps beneficiaries with a package of services including medical care, psychological counselling, legal assistance, training and skills development, enrolling into education and training with prospective employers, whilst enabling individuals to heal and create a sustainable life for themselves in an often-hostile cultural environment.

To foster independence Streha works with young people to secure employment. The clients **they work with are encouraged**

**to upskill and enrol in vocational training programmes, rather than taking quicker jobs in hospitality sector.** Through upskilling they can access higher paid and more secure work. The service also supports young people to find work, apply for jobs, prepare cover letters, CVs and interview skills.

While staying at Streha **young people are encouraged to build up their savings to help create sustainable solutions** for homelessness when they exit the service.

**Young people also have access to a psychologist** who provides counselling for clients who choose to avail of the service to respond to their needs and trauma.

Streha works with other social services to develop skills and competencies to work with LGBTIQ youth, understanding their needs and combatting homophobia and transphobia, **to ensure young people have access to more inclusive social services.**

Some of the LGBTI+ people they work with do not want to remain in Albania, and when this is the case they work with young people to pre-

pare them for a safe migration plan and develop language or other skills that can help back their migration plans safer and smoother.

## Funding



Funding for this project is challenging. The national government provides 27% of the core costs of the service. The EU Delegation in Albania has provided additional funding over the past three years. Streha hosts an annual

gala to help fundraise costs, covering about 15-20% of their annual costs. The remainder of the budget is project based applying to different foundations and agencies.

## Partnerships



**As general attitudes change towards the LGBTIQ community, businesses are beginning to offer assistance to Streha.** For example, in the last year 80% of the food at the safe house is provided through a partnership

with a supermarket chain. International donors and companies are less likely to provide funding for services, as an EU accession country donors believe this is the responsibility of the state.

## Words of Inspiration



Through Streha, **186 young people who have lived through abuse and terrible life situations have been empowered not just to live independently but become a voice and**

**advocate for human rights.** Watching these young people move through services has been a huge inspiration and motivating factor.

“Discrimination and prejudice is a cause of their homeless situation, however they continue to endure discrimination which is perpetrated by services while experiencing homelessness.”

**Challenge:** LGBTIQ Youth  
**Organisation:** Ljubljana Pride Association  
**Country:** Slovenia  
**Contact:** Vesna Štefanec [vesna@ljubljanapride.org](mailto:vesna@ljubljanapride.org)  
**More information:** <http://www.ljubljanapride.org/en/>

11

## Context



Within the LGBTIQ community in Slovenia an increasing number of young people experience homelessness and housing deprivation. In Slovenia there is no research and little understanding about the needs of LGBTIQ youth experiencing homelessness, however from conversations & consultations with young people three priority areas have been identified by Ljubljana Pride Association.

### 1. No safe home:

Young people who came out or were transitioning experienced homophobia and/or transphobia. This occurs in the family home, living with flatmates and with discriminatory landlords in the housing market. This was a trigger for homelessness.

### 2. Experiencing discrimination:

When searching for housing in the private rental market many young people also faced discrimination from housemates or landlords, creating obstacles towards accessing housing and creating a pathway into homelessness. Discrimination by public services was another issue that resulted in young people avoiding potential support services.

### 3. Hetero-normative and cis-normative services:

Homeless services are designed and delivered in a way that makes LGBTIQ youth feel excluded, this was particularly pronounced for trans youth.

## Service



Ljubljana Pride Association is delivering their solution (Sqvot - Programme for reducing the risk of homelessness and housing exclusion of LGBTIQ+ youth) for LGBTIQ youth homelessness across three areas. Their office functions as a one stop shop for prevention of homelessness and to support them exit homelessness. There are three key areas they target:

### Supports:

- Administrative support, assisting young people navigate social services, managing bureaucratic **systems and helping them become more aware of what services they are entitled to.**
- Emotional needs and counselling, supporting the wellbeing of young people and **improving mental health and addressing traumas.**
- Crisis housing service. This is a **safe space for LGBTIQ youth to turn to stay in and find solutions for their housing situation.** Usually for a short period, this prevents young people from sleeping

rough. There are 7 housing units available in this service, and young people can stay here for 14 days to find solutions to their housing difficulties.

**Advocacy & Research:** In order to get further local and national supports, Ljubljana Pride Association is mapping the scale of LGBTIQ homelessness to better understand the triggers and to develop effective services that help LGBTIQ youth. Through commissioning research and building their understanding of the problem and having data, it is hoped to expand the solutions available.

**Prevention & Awareness Raising:** Providing information and advice for young people to understand existing supports and services and benefits they can access to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first instance. Ljubljana Pride Association is also establishing a field service that will ensure their presence in the spaces occupied by young people at risk of homelessness and/or housing deprivation.



## Funding



The majority of work undertaken is supported by volunteers. The municipality of Ljubljana provides part of the funding for the crisis housing service. Additional funding was secured through ILGA Europe and the European Youth Foundation to support the work on LGBTIQ youth homelessness.

This housing service is community based, volunteers provide accommodation free of charge in their own homes. The funding the service receives is budgeted for coordination of the Programme and complementary services, such as psychosocial counselling and administrative support for beneficiaries.

## Partnerships



Ljubljana Pride works with several local homeless and youth services in the city to reach out to young people. They are working with the homeless sector to bring the LGBTIQ perspective to the wider conversation on youth homelessness. LGBTIQ homelessness remains hidden and young people do not feel comfortable coming out to homeless services, by partnering with them Ljubljana Pride can provide an alternate and safe space.

Ljubljana Pride works with and trains homeless and youth services to become more competent and confident in working on topics related to the LGBTIQ community.

**This service also has an international dimension and partners with organisations across Europe** working on LGBTIQ homelessness to share solutions and develop a common understanding of LGBTIQ homelessness.

## Words of Inspiration



The launch of their crisis housing programme is one of their biggest successes. **The association put out a call for host families within their community and was surprised with the support and volunteers who joined their host programme.** The service has 7 accommodation units with 10 hosts. The hosts do not just provide housing but also help in creating a vision for where the project is going and how to support vulnerable LGBTIQ youth.

The project has set up a peer support programme to share their stories and experiences which aims to connect the young people and combat a sense of loneliness. Informal exchanges in their peer reviews has proven to be motivating and empowering for the young people, and compliments the social supports. **It is not just about having a roof over their head but about being part of the community too.**

“LGBTIQ homelessness remains hidden and young people do not feel comfortable coming out to homeless services.”

**Challenge:** LGBTIQ Youth

**Organisation:** Quore

**Country:** Italy

**Contact:** Silvia Magino [segreteria@quore.org](mailto:segreteria@quore.org)

**More information:** <https://www.quore.org/to-housing-accoglienza-lgbtqi/>

# 12

## Context



**In Italy LGBTI rights are often under political attack, without laws to protect against homophobia or transphobia**, many in the LGBTIQ community experience discrimination. This has the dual impact of widening socio-economic inequalities for LGBTI people that contributes to LGBTIQ homelessness and furthers its hidden dimension as the commu-

nity doesn't feel protected to access services. When they do engage with social or homeless services, they report experiences of homophobia and transphobia, noting **that mainstream service do not have the training to understand LGBTIQ needs and deliver inclusive and empowering services.**

## Service



ToHousing, a social co-housing programme based in Torino, provides 5 apartments, with a combined capacity for 24 people. **This cohabitation is aimed at facilitating peer supports for young people to forge connections, socialise and create a supportive network and community.** It is a space to meet other people with similar lived experiences.

ToHousing is not just about putting a roof over their head, it's about supporting and empowering LGBTI people. **The guests at ToHousing are supported with project workers who develop a plan for each individual.** With the support of a core team comprising 2 psychologists, a psychiatrist, a job expert, an education expert and four social workers clients are provided with supports for the following:

- **Psychological supports:** It is important for the guests to process and work through their previous traumas which come from experiences of homelessness and family rejections.
- **Employment supports:** Guests are supported by an expert in the job market to help young people identify and recognise their skills. It's important for the young people to be empowered and have a sense of motivation and purpose.

Finding a job supports the young people towards financial independence.

- **Legal supports:** ToHousing works with young LGBTIQ people coming through the asylum system and supports them through the integration process and attain international protection.
- **Health care services:** ToHousing partners with the centre for gender dysmorphia in Torin Hospital to support trans clients in their transition.

In return for their access to housing and these supports, the guests volunteer in their community, this helps to strengthen the connection with their neighbours. During the recent pandemic for example the guests helped elderly neighbours by doing their shopping and providing other supports to vulnerable groups.

## Funding



Funding comes from diverse sources to try to be sustainable. About a third of their funding comes from local government, there is no national funding available yet. Two thirds of funding comes from private companies, in a combination of cash and in-kind services

such as products and services. Ad-hoc funding is also raised through private donations of citizens, fundraising campaigns, charity events, crowd funding and wedding lists. At ToHousing they are creative in how to diversify their funding.

## Partnerships



At local ToHousing partners with the centre for gender dysmorphia, local job centres and community development organisations. This allows for the sharing of expertise.

At national level ToHousing **partners with LGBTI organisations across Italy to share practices and knowledge**, boosting the common understanding of LGBTI homelessness.

## Words of Inspiration



The big achievements from this service are **the young people who have moved on from ToHousing and secured their own housing**

**and employment and re-connected with their family in a healthy way.**

ToHousing is not just about putting a roof over their head, it's about supporting and empowering LGBTI people.

**Challenge:** Youth Leaving State Care

**Organisation:** Rock Trust

**Country:** Scotland

**Contact:** Lova Bromander [Lova.Bromander@rocktrust.org](mailto:Lova.Bromander@rocktrust.org)

**More information:** <https://www.rocktrust.org/housing-first-for-youth/>

# 13

## Context



Young people leaving state care are at a heightened risk of becoming homeless, as **they lack some of the traditional support structures young people have around them as they prepare for the transition to adulthood.** Many care leavers experience insecure housing and chronic homelessness, often consisting of sofa surfing or temporary accommodation. Others may return to complicated family situations after leaving care, which had not been deemed appropriate prior to turning 16. Arising from this situation many of the young people also experience poor mental health, substance use and involvement in the criminal justice system.

With poor experience in social services earlier in their lives, these young people were quite likely to dis-engage from supports. They were also unlikely to access permanent housing because many have a history of anti-social behaviour and failed tenancies.

A lot of services for young people can be high threshold, meaning that young people have to meet certain expectations which can be an obstacle to active engagement in the system. For these young people, **Housing First For Youth offered a new opportunity to receive unconditional support and fast access to permanent housing.**

## Service



The Rock Trust's Housing First for Youth service is a low threshold service, tailored to the needs of young people. There are no pre-requirements to accessing support and housing through Housing First for Youth, and **the young people do not need to commit themselves to a certain level of engagement with the service as it is completely voluntary.**

In the Housing First for Youth service in Edinburgh, the majority of referrals come from Housing Officers based in the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options service for young people. These Housing Officers have long standing relationships with the young people they refer onto Housing First, and **they are in a position to select young people whose complex needs can be met by the service.** Each Housing First worker is allocated a maximum of 7 clients to ensure that they have the capacity to work flexibly with each client.

Once the young people have received Housing First status they can bid for flats from the City of Edinburgh council or from Housing Associations and expect to be made an offer quickly as a result of their Housing First priority. There is an expectation that housing providers will not bypass young people on the grounds that they have a history of anti-social behaviour, and they should be afforded the opportunity to have a fresh start in permanent housing. **This system allows Housing First clients access to housing quicker than they would without priority and allows them a level of choice in choosing their new home.**

They are supported into their housing by their worker at Rock Trust, and they are given a grant of £1500 to furnish the housing to their taste. Their support from HF4Y is open-ended and not time limited, it aims to help them sustain their tenancy. These wrap around supports can extend to substance

use supports, accessing healthcare and/or navigating the criminal justice system. **By the end of 2020 none of the clients had**

**dis-engaged completely from the service,** a testament to the success of the programme.

## Funding



The Housing First for Youth project is funded by both the Scottish government and Social Bite.

## Partnerships



The HF4Y project is part of the Pathfinder consortium in Edinburgh. This brings different partners around homelessness together and allows organisations expert in social supports, housing, substance use, addiction or criminal justice to share knowledge and problem solve.

**This allows for referring clients between services and sharing practices and building a shared knowledge to get the best outcomes for clients while promoting a sense of collaboration between homeless and housing services.**

## Words of Inspiration



The majority of the young people have received and sustained their own tenancy, against the expectations and odds you might expect for someone with complex needs. Housing First For Youth marks a new experience and a renewed sense of faith and confidence in social services for the young people they work with. Even if there is a period of dis-engagement from clients, they are not discharged from

the service into homelessness, giving young people trust in the service and cultivates a positive relationship with their Housing First workers, resulting in better outcomes.

**Working in this service is empowering for staff who are given a lot of flexibility in how they work with their clients and is a positive space to work in.** The staff reported having a sense of impact and success.

“Housing First For Youth marks a new experience and a renewed sense of faith and confidence in social services for the young people they work with.”

**Challenge:** Youth Leaving State Care

**Organisation:** Aftercare Service, Focus Ireland

**Country:** Ireland

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**More information:** <https://www.focusireland.ie/our-stories/>

# 14

## Context



The vast majority of young people who are coming into the care system have experienced trauma and lack the traditional supports most young people often take for granted, which put young people leaving care at a disproportionate risk of experiencing homelessness.

While most of **these young people have long-term foster care placements there is a significant minority who have several placements while in care and have been involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour and possess problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol.** Many of these young people have difficulties building trusting relationships particularly with social services and authority

figures. This creates challenges in supporting young people not only into independent living, but also in preventing homelessness.

In the Irish context there is no state guaranteed housing stock for care leavers, this is a particular concern as the private rental market is under such pressure from general demand that young people leaving care find it challenging to find private rental within their budget. Housing is the ultimate prevention of homelessness, and in absence of the provision of housing, this aftercare service aims at providing the relevant and necessary supports young people need to prevent homelessness.

## Service



In Ireland the right to aftercare was put on a statutory footing in 2015, the service itself has been running for many years but it is now a right to any young people leaving state care. TUSLA, the state agency responsible for young people in state care, makes a referral through the social worker working with each young person to the aftercare service within their catchment area when the young person turns 16 to access an aftercare worker. Between the ages 16 and 17 the young person receives their aftercare worker.

An aftercare worker typically has about 20 clients. When a young person is assigned to them the aftercare workers gets a copy of the young person's care plan and a recent needs assessment to get a sense of the young person. In the lead up to their 18th birthday the social worker from the state agency remains the lead worker, working with the aftercare worker and the young person in partnership. When the young person is a legal adult the aftercare worker becomes their lead support worker. In the

period leading up to their 18th birthday **an after-care plan is developed to support the young person in the transition to independent living.**

Typically the aftercare worker will conduct a needs assessment, out of which will develop a dynamic aftercare plan which is formulated in partnership with the young person, to get relevant contact details of the young person, details of other carers and support professionals working with the young person, this can include their GP, dentist, foster carers etc. The assessment identifies the young person's needs related to 1) finance and budgeting, 2) housing, 3) education, training and work, 4) health and well being, both physical and mental 5) personal and social development which includes their social and support networks which can include drug or alcohol use, anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour, 6) identity and emotional wellbeing and 7) family support, some young people have a birth family, a foster family and a friend network which can be viewed as a family.

This assessment is fluid, and it is considered a living document. The assessment and aftercare plan are both mandatory, legally required documents, but within this service the assessment is integrated into the young person's aftercare plan to support them meet their goals. In key working sessions the aftercare worker supports the young person. These sessions are held as often as the young person needs and can take place every few weeks or months. The key working session follows the aftercare plan and goals set by the young person and is

a space to check in on progress and point the young person towards other relevant supports.

**Arguably the most important aspect of the aftercare service is building a trusting and lasting relationship between worker and young person.**

Aftercare is a voluntary process, although it is a right for young people who come through care, they are not obliged to participate. In general social workers promote the aftercare programme so most young people are keen to join and see its value.

## Funding



The aftercare services is funded by TUSLA, the relevant state agency, in conjunction with Focus Ireland and other non-statutory agencies such as Crosscare and Don Bosco Care.

## Partnerships



The aftercare worker supports the young person in not only identifying the needs of the young person but in connecting them to relevant services. The young people provide

their consent to allow their aftercare worker to share their details with relevant services to meet the goals and aims established in the aftercare plan.

## Words of Inspiration



**Young people leaving the care system are some of the most vulnerable in the world,** not only to becoming homeless, but they lack the typical social and community supports that the vast majority of young people rely on in their transition to adulthood. **After-**

**care provides a positive adult and critical supports for young people to have the foundations to build their lives and take decisions.** While aftercare cannot replace a family, it offsets some of the challenges arising from its absence.

Arguably the most important aspect of the aftercare service is building a trusting and lasting relationship between worker and young person.

**Challenge:** Youth Leaving State Care

**Organisation:** Team Around the Tenancy, TGP Cymru, Wales

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Contact:** Tracey Gibbs [tracey.gibbs@tgpcymru.org.uk](mailto:tracey.gibbs@tgpcymru.org.uk)

**More information:** <https://www.tgpcymru.org.uk/>

# 15

## Context



A lot of young people leaving care present with **multiple and complex needs and a history of being failed by social services, creating a level of distrust for support services.** An estimated 90% of the young people this service works with have self-diagnosed mental health conditions. Others have never had the opportunity to learn to live independently. The benefits and social services systems can also be difficult to navigate with young people re-

quiring support to understand their rights and accessing the correct supports.

For young people in care many decisions are taken for them, which can be disempowering, resulting in young people feeling powerless about the direction their life evolves in. Team around the tenancy aims to ensure young people are empowered to not only sustain their housing but to live independently.

## Service



Team around the tenancy work with young people aged 18-25 who have been in the care system and find themselves without a home or are on the brink of losing their home.

Young people are referred by the local authority and the wider third sector to this service. However they also have an outreach team which facilitates young people to self-refer. **Outreach happens through their website, WhatsApp and social media, with specially designed communication that avoids jargon and buzzwords and creates a more accessible services for young people.** Recently the project hired an engagement officer, a person with experience of care, and this has led to an increase in young people accessing the service with communications tailored to their language.

Most referrals are taken and addressed within 24-48 hours, ensuring that when a young person wants a services that it is accessible to them. For most social services there can be a waiting time, this often means that when young people are ready to access supports, the support are not available to them creating difficulties with continuity of care.

The aim is to help young people to sustain their tenancy, **increase their independent**

**living skills, learn how to navigate the welfare, health and housing services while building an empowering relationship with the young people.**

Young people accessing this service can be homeless and living in Bed and Breakfasts, for up to a year, social housing, living in housing associations or private rentals. Young people struggle to access social housing due to long waiting lists while private rental is often in accessible due to discrimination against young people or they are priced out of the market.

The supports are tailored to the needs of young people which has included traditional social supports but also extends to what young people need help with which has also included laying a carpet and help fixing a car to get to a job interview.

The voice of young people is incredibly important to this project. **Young people are part of the recruitment panels for the staff** to help bring the needs of young people and their perspective to how the support team is recruited. Having these perspectives in the recruitment brings an added value in making the team more youth oriented.

This project is not about social workers determining what the young people need, rather



youth drive this service forward and set out the supports they receive, as a means to empower them and ensure they get the help they identify.

For example young people generally chair their support meetings. Team around the Tenancy will meet with the young person first, to identify what they want done and supports they need. They then organise the meeting bringing together the different practitioners and support workers and design an action plan around housing, social welfare, health care or mental health. This experience has re-built the trust young people have in social services and can see the support and help that is out there and available to them.

The team can also join meetings with social

services, at the request of the young people, this can help prepare young people for their meetings and assist in navigating complex systems and coordinate the relevant paper work. Most practitioners have an average caseload of 10 people, **ensuring a flexible and personal approach** for the young people. The service aims to work with young people for 10 weeks, but due to delays in accessing mental health services or welfare and housing, **usually young people stay with the service for up to 17 weeks to help secure their housing and tenancy.**

The team also help young people put together portfolios to access housing which can include character and previous landlord references.

### Funding



This service is funded by the Youth Innovation Grant from the Welsh Government, on an annual basis.

### Partnerships



The service works with a local hub that comprises 36 different services and organisations with a range of support services young people can access as a one stop shop.

### Words of Inspiration



Watching young people grow and develop throughout their time with the organisation, and being empowered to make decisions that

affect their life and learn not just the skills, but acquire the confidence, to **live independently is the biggest achievement for this project.**

“youth drive this service forward and set out the supports they receive, as a means to empower them and ensure they get the help they identify.”

**Challenge:** Young Migrants Experiencing Homelessness

**Organisation:** Fondazione Caritas Trieste [marcoaliotta@caritastrieste.it](mailto:marcoaliotta@caritastrieste.it)

**Country:** Italy

**Contact:** Marco Aliotta

**More information:** <https://caritastrieste.org/>

# 16

## Context



**Homelessness among young migrants and asylum seekers is a reality in Trieste**, a Northern Italian city, **that is one of the first major cities along the Balkan migration route**. The majority of the young migrants are aged 18-25. Their immediate needs vary, many have walked to Italy starting their journey from places as far as Pakistan and their primary needs vary. It

is not just about housing and shelter, but also physical health needs as this journey can take up to three years.

Resulting from the Covid19 pandemic a new challenge emerged around isolation spaces for people arriving into Trieste while meeting the regulations around public health.

## Service



Caritas Trieste offers different services to support young migrants who have arrived in Trieste.

A new service, started as a result of Covid19 offers isolation space for 14 days, to ensure people do not have Covid19 before entering other services. **1,780 people have used this service between March – December 2020**. Once the quarantine period ends, the clients proceed to other services and supports.

To prevent young migrants from sleeping on the streets or in emergency services, Caritas, in partnership with 3 other NGOs, provides more than 100 flats across the city. **While the starting point is having a secure and safe space to re-build their life, there are other services available.**

Caritas provides legal supports to help asylum seekers process their legal documents to gain the status to remain in Italy. In cases where an application is denied they support appeals to the decision. Once a young person has been granted their legal status, they move into the

integration part of the service.

The integration services allows a continuity of support, which allows the young people to access housing and supports their integration into society and their community. This can **include finding a job and updating skills in association with companies and training centres**. Community integration can include volunteer work such as gardening, community services with children and elderly people. This approach helps to build trust and a positive relationship between the community and asylum seekers, often there can be fears around asylum seekers, and this project provides a positive experience.

## Funding



The funding for this project comes from diverse sources. The isolation unit for Covid19, the process for following the asylum seeking process & the supports once their refugee

status is granted is all supported by national government together with other funds for integration (i.e. AMIF)

## Partnerships



**The service works with other services** in the city of Trieste to share their experiences at local level. This includes **expertise on legal processes, social supports and finding a job**. At national level, Caritas shares their experience with Caritas community in Italy and Europe and gets training for more supports and challenges.

In the past four years the services has worked with partners in Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Spain, UK, Portugal Greece and Germany to better understand the dynamics and patterns around migration, to develop services that better meet the needs of young migrants and ensure the best policies and practices are in place.

## Words of Inspiration



**The big achievements and success of this project are the outcomes for clients.** Watching young people arrive in Trieste and move through the legal process, gain their status, get a job and settle. **Over the years**

**the young migrants have kept in touch with many of the people they've worked with and supported, it's incredibly motivating to hear those stories and experiences.**

“It is not just about housing and shelter, but also physical health needs as this journey can take up to three years.”

**Challenge:** Young Migrants Experiencing Homelessness

**Organisation:** Step by Step, Solidarity Now

**Country:** Greece

**Contact:** Ioanna Pertsinidou [jpertsinidou@solidaritynow.org](mailto:jpertsinidou@solidaritynow.org)

**More information:** <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/stepbystep>

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## Context



Unaccompanied minors who arrive in Greece usually stay in a reception centre from 2 months up to a year, depending on the time it takes to process their application. **Young people coming through the system have diverse needs, but priority needs include**

**food, shelter and clothing.** Additional needs include physical and mental health support and assistance accessing education and vocational training.

## Service



Step by Step is a service supporting unaccompanied minors, aged 16-18, and supports their transition to independent living and their social integration into the community.

The programme has 8 apartments in Athens and 4 apartments in Thessaloniki. The apartments are scattered in the neighbourhood, which allows the young people in different apartments to get to know each other. The support services are available to the young people as they need but are not given 24-hour care in their apartments, this service is for more independent youth.

Before joining Step by Step, the social worker working in the reception centre or the camp hosting the young people conducts a needs assessment and sends a report to Step by Step, together they interview potential young people to see if Step by Step would be a good fit, and if they'd be able to live and get on with the young people in the programme. At the same time the Secretariat for Unaccompanied Minors will make a placement order, allowing the young person to move to the Step by Step service's independent living.

**This service supports formal and non-formal education. These can include courses in English or Greek or art courses.** The children have individual action plans that reflect their needs and desires, this helps to select courses that the young people want to join in and supports their development.

Additionally they support youth to navigate the health system, **when a minor needs access to healthcare the service escorts them through the system.**

Other supports include working with young people to develop independent living and budgeting skills which can include learning how to save money, budget and manage their expenses. Depending on the situation of the young person the service also provides mental health support. **Some young people have legal support to assist the process for getting international protection and in some situations appeal decisions.** The service also offers vocational training and skills development courses to assist the young people find work and access the labour market.

When the young person turns 18 they are supported into another independent living apartment and works with another NGO who provides social assistance. If it is not possible to find an apartment when they turn 18 they can stay until the end of the school year.

## Funding



The service is funded by the Greek Government, however the service is funded only for the children sleeping in an apartment. This has created funding challenges, as the service has fixed costs for renting the apart-

ments and providing support, however due to delays in administrative procedures the apartments can be empty, and when a bed is empty the funding is cut, although the fixed costs continue.

## Partnerships



Step by Step works with other services to offer educational and vocational programmes as well as working with health professionals to support the needs of the clients.

## Words of Inspiration



The biggest achievement is watching young **people who have experienced adversity and hardship integrate into Greek society**

**and transition to independent living, and to live in their own private space, often for the first time in their life.**

“  
Young people coming through the system have diverse needs, but priority needs include food, shelter and clothing.”



FEANTSA

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