

# **CYCLING THE SERVICE SYSTEM: YOUNG PEOPLE'S PATHS THROUGH AND OUT OF HOMELESSNESS**

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# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: RISING RATES GLOBALLY

Estimated that youth aged 18-29 represent 20-30% of the total homeless population in many European countries (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014).

## UK

(Centerpoint, 2021)

- Estimates for 2019-20 indicate that 121,000 young people aged 16-24 were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## Netherlands

(FEANTSA, 2017)

- The number of homeless young people (aged 18 - 30) **increased by 50%** between 2015 and 2016, making up 40% (n = 12,400) of the total homeless population (N = 31,000).

## Ireland

(Department of Housing, Local Govt and Heritage, 2014; 2022)

- Figures from the Pathway to Accommodation and Support System (PASS) recorded 477 youth aged 18-26 years as homeless. By December 2022, this figure had climbed to 1,387, representing **an increase of 190%**.

## US & Canada

(HUD, 2021; Gaetz et al., 2016)

- In the US, 34,210 unaccompanied young people under the age of 25 reported to be experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2020 while, in Canada, rising numbers of youth accessing homelessness services have also been recorded.

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

## Young People's Paths to Homelessness

- A wide range of contributing factors: histories of state care; LGBTQI+ identification; racial disparities; mental health problems and substance use (Mayock & Parker, 2023).
- In the literature, family environment consistently emerges as a dominant theme in the reasons why youth experience homelessness (Mallet et al., 2010; Mayock & O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock et al., 2014; 2021).
- Young people who become homeless invariably come from poor neighbourhoods and grow up in households where there may be persistent financial stress (Mayock et al., 2014; Pleace et al., 2008; Quilgars et al., 2008).

## Once Homeless

- Young people suffer multiple losses and deprivations (McNaughton, 2008); exposure to drug use and experiences of victimisation (Gaetz, 2004); deteriorating mental health (Mayock & Parker, 2017); identity losses and ontological insecurity (Farrugia et al., 2016; Mayock, 2023).

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITIONING FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOUSING

Longitudinal research has significantly bolstered understanding of young people's routes out of homelessness:

- Evidence that the transition time from homelessness to housing can be relatively short for some young people (Milburn *et al.*, 2007, 2009; Braciszewski *et al.*, 2016; Mayock *et al.*, 2008).
- Housing availability – rather than individual behaviour – the key driver of homelessness among youth (Cheng *et al.*, 2013; Mayock & Parker, 2020).
- Key factors that support exits from homelessness include:
  - Access to affordable housing (Cheng *et al.*, 2013; Mayock & Parker, 2020)
  - Social stability, i.e. engagement with education/employment (Roy *et al.*, 2016)
  - Reconnecting with family/family support (Mallet *et al.*, 2010; Mayock *et al.*, 2011)
  - Service engagement and professional supports (Mayock & Corr, 2013; Mayock & Parker, 2017).
- The challenges and barriers young people confront in exiting homelessness are likely to increase with the passing of time (Mayock & Corr, 2013; Mayock *et al.*, 2013).

# THE STUDY

## STUDY AIMS

1. Capture the temporal dimensions of the homeless experience.
2. 'Track' homeless young people over time to understand their trajectories through and possibly out of homelessness.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative & Longitudinal

Data Collection at two points in time:

- Phase 1 (May 2013 - January 2014)
- Phase 2 (July 2015 - April 2016)

## STUDY SAMPLE

### Homeless Young People

- At baseline (Phase 1), 40 young people aged 16-24 years were recruited to the study.
- All except one were living in either under-18s 'out of home' provision or in youth-oriented or adult homelessness services.

### Family Members

- Family members of a proportion of participating young people were recruited at Phase I of the study (where appropriate and possible).
- 10 Family Members participated at Phase I of the study, including 5 mothers and 5 female siblings.

# RESEARCH METHODS

## BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

40 Young people, aged 16-24 years recruited at baseline.

- ❖ Interviews commenced by asking young people to tell their life story.
- ❖ During Phase 2, young people asked to update their life stories. They were also invited to reflect on their experiences.

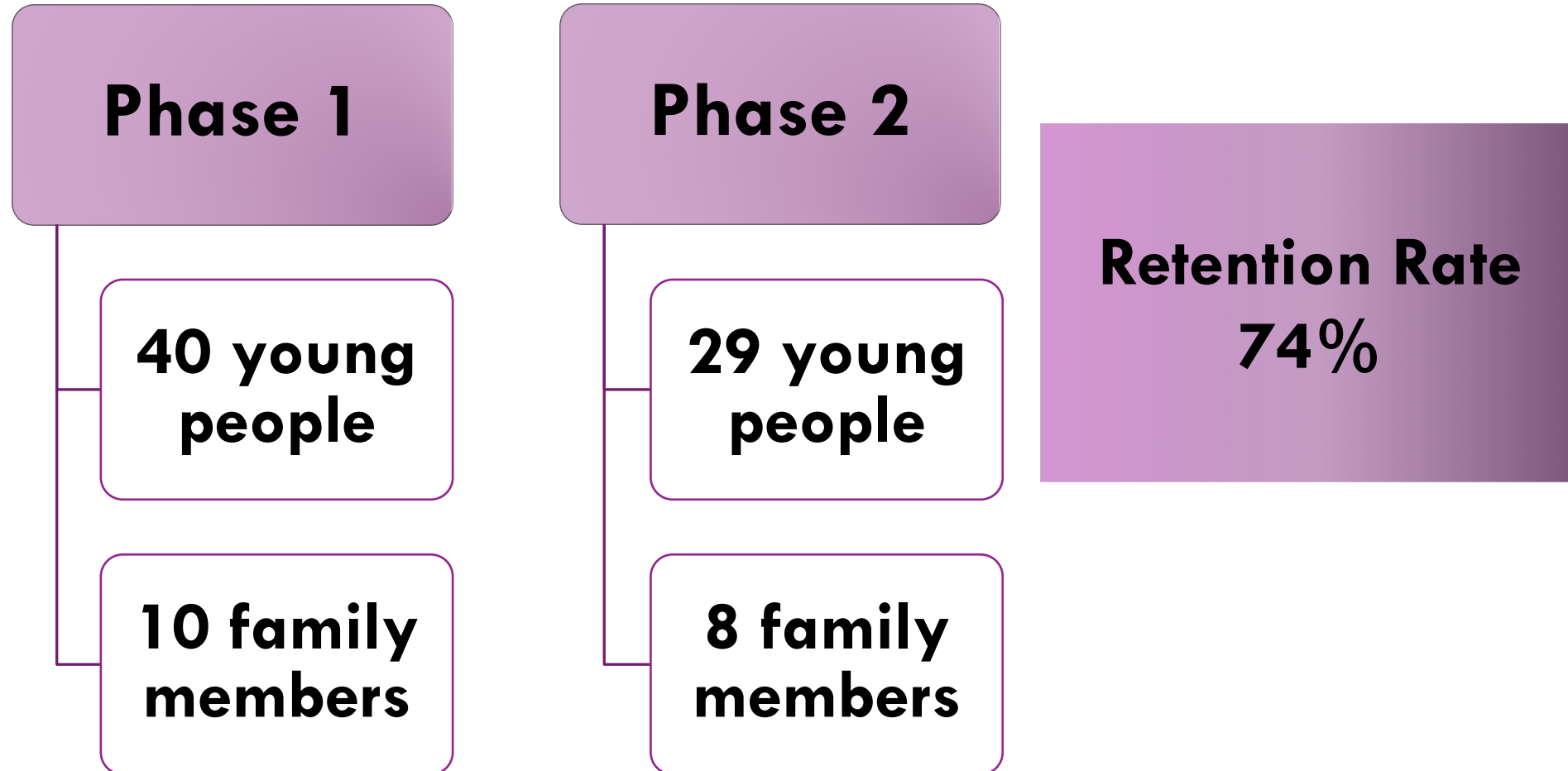
## IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

- ❖ Family members invited to share their views on their child's/sibling's situation and needs.

## Merits of Qualitative Longitudinal Research

- ❖ Permits the identification of young people's homeless and housing trajectories.
  - ❖ Yields understanding of the *dynamics* of change and the factors, processes and experiences that influence change over time.
- ❖ Relevance for policy and service provision.

# SAMPLE & RETENTION





# SAMPLE PROFILE: YOUNG PEOPLE

## Gender

- Phase 1  
Male: 25 (62%)  
Female: 15 (37%)
- Phase 2  
Male: 17 (59%)  
Female: 12 (41%)

## Age

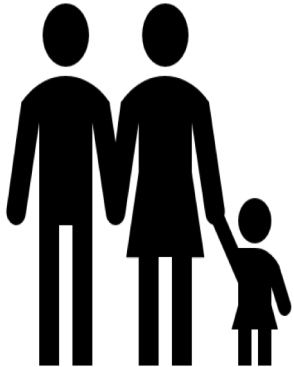
- Phase 1  
Range: 16-24  
Average: 19.9  
(9 under 18)
- Phase 2  
Range: 18-26  
Average: 21.9

## Education/ Employment

- Phase 1  
Ed: Low across  
sample  
Employed: 0
- Phase 2  
Ed: n=8  
Employed: n=4

# SAMPLE PROFILE: FAMILY MEMBERS

LIVING SITUATION	PHASE 1	PHASE 2
Transitional Housing	2	0
Emergency Hostel	1	1
RAS Housing	2	1
Private Rented Sector	1	2
Owner Occupiers	3	3
Foster Care	1	1



1/4 of the young people reported periods of family homelessness as children



Five young people reported periods of homelessness with their own children



Twelve young people were aware of a family member(s) who had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S PATHWAYS OUT OF HOME

## Histories of State Care

### 14/40 young people

- Multiple childhood adversities
- Multiple care placements
- Left a care setting to enter homelessness or youth crisis accommodation

## Household Disruption & Family Instability

### 9/40 young people

- Parental separation and family bereavement
- Transience and frequent moves
- Negative coping strategies

## Family Conflict, Family Violence

### 9/40 young people

- Parental absence
- Experiences of abuse and violence
- Parental substance misuse
- Social work intervention

## Problem Behaviour & Neighbourhood Stressors

### 8/40 Young People

- Problematic substance use
- Anti-social behavior
- Neighbourhood stressors and negative peer associations

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOMELESS AND HOUSING JOURNEYS

Transition and change a cornerstone of longitudinal research

Homeless and Housing Transitions

Trajectories through Homelessness

Non-housing Transitions

Key Drivers of Housing Stability/Instability

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVING SITUATIONS AT PHASE 1

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>Male (n = 25)</b>	<b>Female (n = 15)</b>	<b>Total (n = 40)</b>
<b>Under 18s 'Out of Home' Provision</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA) (ages 18-23 years)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) (ages 18 – 25/26 years)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Adult Emergency, Temporary or B&amp;B Accommodation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Residential After-Care</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Semi-Independent Accommodation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rough Sleeping</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Supported Lodgings</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Private Rented Accommodation</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVING SITUATIONS AT PHASE 2, CATEGORISED ACCORDING TO ETHOS (EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION)

## ETHOS CATEGORIES

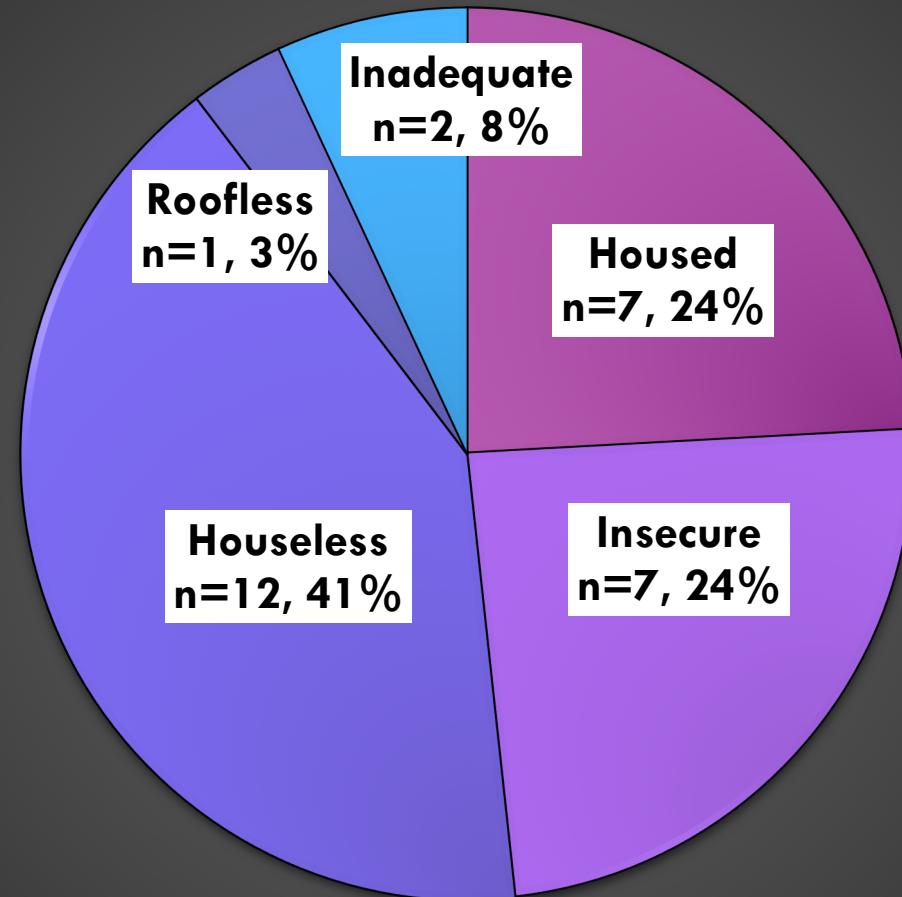
HOUSED

INSECURE

HOUSELESS

ROOFLESS

INADEQUATE



## YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVING SITUATIONS AT PHASE 2

- Of the 7 young people who were housed, 4 were living in private rented accommodation, 2 in local authority (social) housing and 1 reported a stable return home.
- More than three-quarters (76%) remained homeless two years after first contact with them.
- A majority of the young people had therefore experienced prolonged patterns of homelessness or housing instability.
- Those who remained homeless were living in: emergency/supported temporary homelessness accommodation; overcrowded accommodation; situations of hidden homelessness (for example, with friends in accommodation where they had no legal (sub)tenancy). One young person was sleeping rough.

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH HOMELESSNESS

## 1 Linear Trajectories through Homelessness (N=7)

### Typically moved 1-2 times

- STA → Mother's House (Fiona, 21)
- Under 18s 'out of home' provision → Residential care → Residential aftercare (Eoghan, 19)

## 2 Non-linear Trajectories through Homelessness (N=13)

### Typically moved 3-4 times

- ETA → PRS #1 → Residential Treatment → PRS #2 → Rough Sleeping (Michael, 25)
- ETA → PRS → Mother's house → Relative's house → ETA → Local authority housing (Collette, 22)

## 3 Chaotic Trajectories and Continuous Homelessness (N=9)

### Typically moved between 5 and 9 times

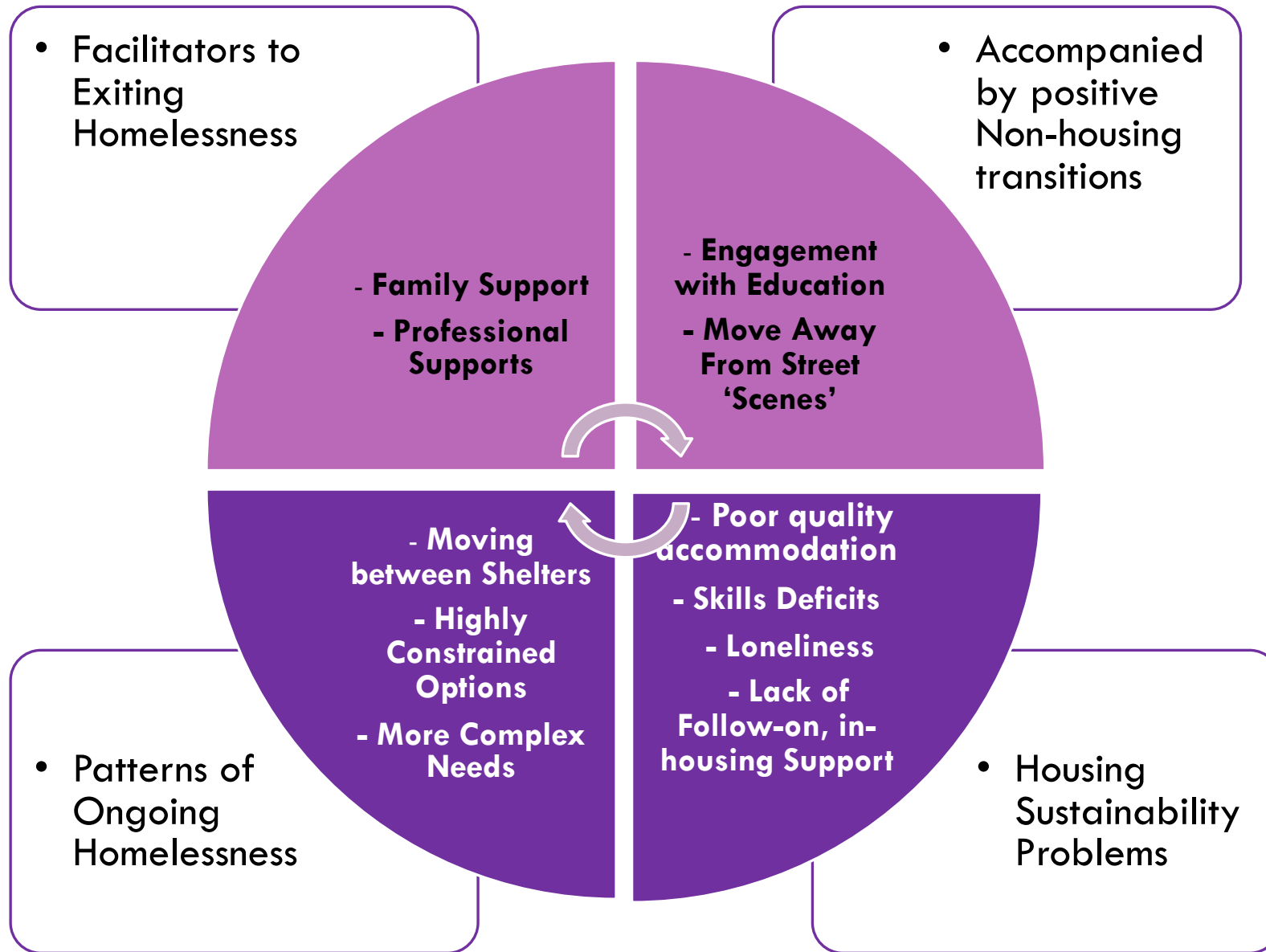
- Under-18s 'out of home' provision #1 → Under-18s 'out of home' provision #2 → Residential aftercare → Friends' houses → Partner's house → Father's house → Friend's house (Alan, 18)
- ETA → Prison → Residential treatment → Relative's house → Friend's house → STA (Aoife, 21)

ETA: Emergency Temporary Accommodation (Shelter)

STA: Supported Temporary Accommodation (Shelter)



# YOUNG PEOPLE NEGOTIATING A ROUTE TO HOUSING STABILITY



# DRIVERS OF ONGOING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

## Exclusion from the Private Rented Market

***“Even though I was eligible for the rent supplement initiative it was still impossible to find housing” (Bryan, 24, Phase 2).***

***“They don’t like the idea of an eighteen-year-old with no history of living on their own. They just look and think, ‘No, he’s too young’” (Christopher, 18, Phase 2).***

***“She’s [Aoife] not going to find somewhere now, there’s nowhere for her to live anyway. Like there’s nothing, especially not on rent allowance” (Samantha, Aoife’s sister, Phase 2).***

# DRIVERS OF ONGOING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

## Inadequate Service Supports

*“They looked after you and made sure you didn’t die but the minute you turn eighteen, just kick you out and having to sleep rough and all” (Ross, 19, Phase 2).*

*“She [Abigail] had one [aftercare worker], but you only get one up ’til you’re twenty-one ... So it’s all the work to do on her own now ... It’ll be real difficult for her to find housing” (Jess, Abigail’s sister, Phase 2).*

*“[Service are just] sent a piece of paper that says, ‘Maria, Twenty-six, Ex-addict, Baby’. That’s all they get ... It’s so faceless, you know, it’s all paperwork. It doesn’t say that a I went into [treatment] and got clean and now I have a beautiful baby ... And that’s sad because you’re being judged at your worst moments. It’s not even five per cent of your personality but it is a hundred per cent of how you’re perceived by this system” (Maria, 26, Phase 2).*

# DRIVERS OF ONGOING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

## Housing Sustainability Challenges and Lack of In-housing Support

***“It was strange, I wasn’t used to adjusting to living ... Because we were so used to (shelter/hostel), living with people, staff there. It was just, it was strange to be just lining, fending for yourself ... when you live with staff, it was different because at night-time especially, if you felt lonely or felt like you had a problem or something, you could just go downstairs” (Ashley, 21, Phase 2).***

***“When you go in [to private rented housing] and kind of isolate yourself, it does get very lonely. Like they were sying to me there would be people linking in with me but that just gradually went ... I would have liked more support, especially moving back to your own place like to give you more suppor. Like a bit of aftercare or something instaead of ‘There you go, there’s your flat”’ (Warren, 26, Phase).***

# DRIVERS OF ONGOING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

## Higher-level Needs (related to substance use/mental health)

*“I was walking around and I was just thinking of things. My mind was over-thinking ... And, to be honest, I felt suicidal, like. My mental health was rock bottom ... I felt like I just couldn’t take it anymore” (Sophie, 22, Phase 2).*

*“Nobody’s helping her. I think Rebeca needs to be put into a drink and drugs facility. She needs to be talked to about relationships, parenting, she needs all that stuff like ... I think she could be capable of doing something bad to herself like, you know” (Jacqui, Rebecca’s mother, Phase 2).*

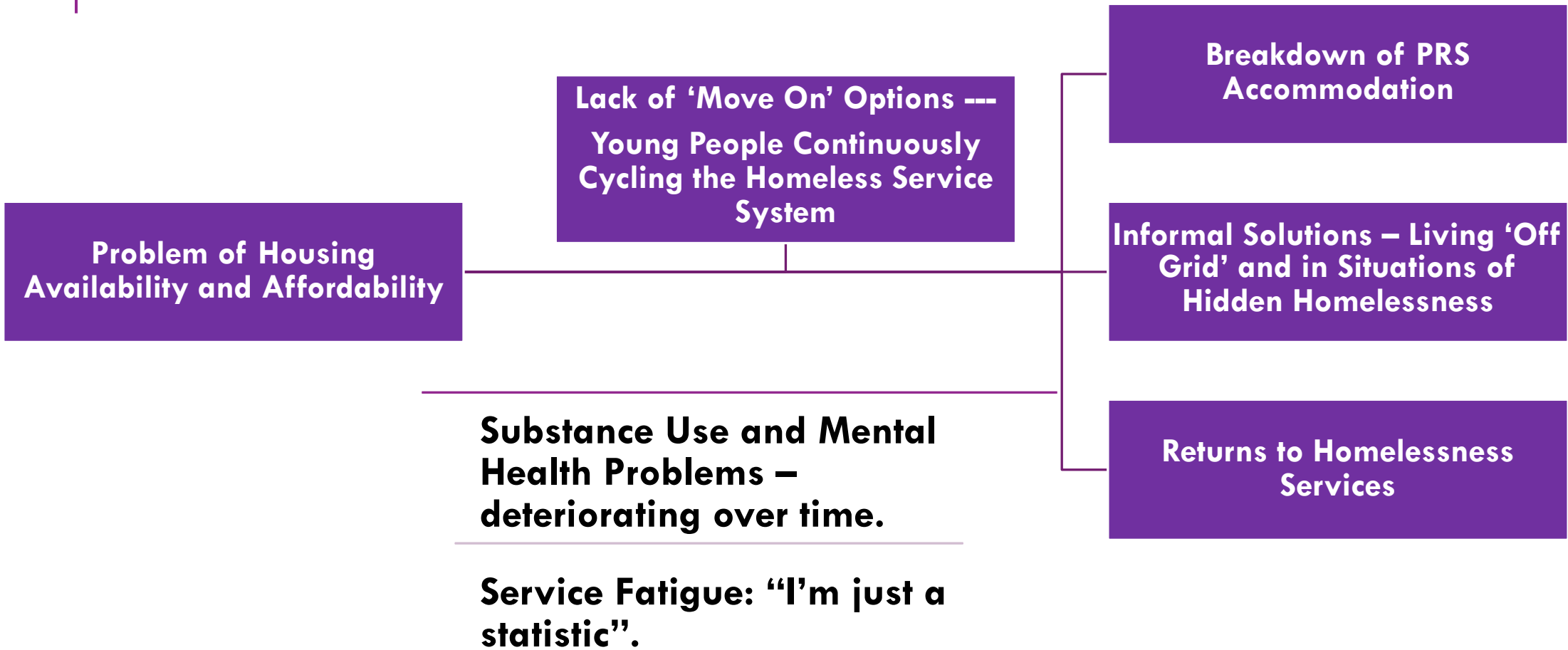
## SENSE OF STASIS ... “GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES”

*“And they (hospital staff) were trying to put me into hostels again. I said, ‘I’m not going back there, I’ll quicker go out and sleep on the streets’. So the day I left, I ended up back in my friend’s house again. I was just going around in circles” (Joe, 22, Phase 2).*

*“I want to move on from (temporary emergency accommodation) ... been here six months now. It’s like I’m waking up every morning in the same one room, like you know what I mean? It’s making me more depressed” (Sophie, 22, Phase 2).*

*“It’s a big difference, trying to talk so someone new (referring to staff in service setting). It’s very hard to open up and try and explain to them what your story is, you don’t have the same bond as you did with the other person” (Peter, 24, Phase 2).*

# CONCLUSION



**For a large number, the problem was cyclical and enduring**

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY AND SERVICE PROVISION



**THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF ONGOING CYCLES OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY FOR YOUTH: CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF SOLUTIONS THAT FACILITATE SPEEDY EXITS.**

**UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRAJECTORIES OF HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE REQUIRES ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NOTION THAT 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' SOLUTIONS ARE UNLIKELY TO PROVIDE A LASTING RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS.**

**RELIANCE ON PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR NOT A VIABLE SOLUTION TO THE HOUSING NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS.**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS OF HOUSING, INCLUDING HOUSING FIRST, FOR HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE REQUIRES URGENT ATTENTION.**





**THANK YOU**

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