



Report on the Consultations with Young People to inform the Youth Homelessness Strategy Consultation

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FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS CONSULTATION - FINAL

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ABBREVIATIONS

CYP	Children and Young People
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
HAP	Housing Assistance Payment
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
NHAC	National Homeless Action Committee
NPO	National Participation Office

Glossary

HAP	HAP is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities. HAP means that local authorities can provide housing assistance for households who qualify for social housing support, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients. Under HAP, local authorities will make a monthly payment to a landlord, subject to terms and conditions including rent limits, on a HAP tenant's behalf. In return, the HAP tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the local authority. This 'rent contribution' is based on the household income. It is calculated in the same way as the rent paid by a tenant of a local authority owned property.
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YOUTH FRIENDLY SUMMARY (TO BE COMPLETED FOR THE FINAL VERSION OF THE REPORT)

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

In the Programme for Government '[Our Shared Future](#)' and in the [Housing for All](#) Housing Plan to 2030), the Government committed to developing a Youth Homelessness Strategy. The aim of this Youth Homelessness Strategy is to help people who are aged 18 – 24 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The strategy will require an integrated, whole-of-Government approach, with a range of key stakeholders playing a vital role in addressing the fundamental issues arising in addressing youth homelessness.

In 2021, a National Homeless Action Committee (NHAC) was established with representatives from key Government Departments, statutory bodies, and stakeholders. The purpose of NHAC is to ensure that a renewed emphasis is brought to collaborating across Government to implement actions in Housing for All, along with bringing better coherence and coordination of homeless-related services in delivering policy measures and actions to address homelessness. Chaired by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, one of the first priorities of NHAC is the development of the Youth Homelessness Strategy.

1.2 This consultation

As part of their consultation to inform the Youth Homelessness Strategy, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) approached the National Participation Office (NPO) and Hub na nÓg to consult with young people who have lived experience of homelessness to secure their views and experiences of youth homelessness in Ireland.

The consultation was undertaken in partnership with Youth Homeless Services and The Irish Traveller Movement during May and June 2022.

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SECTION 2: THE CONSULTATION

2.1 Aim of the Consultation

The focus of the consultation was to secure the views of young people with lived experiences of homelessness in Ireland on how this new Strategy can best support young people going through similar experiences.

Young Travellers: The consultation asked seven questions:	Homeless Young People: The consultation asked seven questions:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What comes to mind when you hear the word 'homeless'?2. In general, what causes young Travellers to become homeless?3. For young travellers (aged 18-24) what are the main challenges to getting a home?4. What are the problems facing young travellers who are homeless?5. What services should be available to help prevent young Travellers from becoming homeless?6. What services should be available to help young Travellers to leave homeless?7. What are the main things the Youth Homeless Strategy should focus on?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What comes to mind when you hear the word 'homelessness'?2. In general, what causes young people to become homeless?3. For young people (18-24) what are the main challenges to getting a home?4. In general, what are the problems faced by young people who are homeless?5. In an ideal world what services should be available to help prevent young people becoming homeless?6. In an ideal world what services should be available to help young people to leave homelessness?7. What are the main things the Youth Homeless Strategy should focus on?

2.2 The recruitment of the young people to the consultation

Hub na nÓg and the NPO team worked with practitioners from two organisations working with young people who are homeless and one organisation working with young Travellers. The keyworkers from all three organisations were asked to recruit the young people to the consultation and to complete the consent and assent procedures.

By working through the keyworkers, who have a trusted relationship with the young people, the recruitment strategy was designed to uphold the best interest of the young people, and to make the consultation a positive experience for them.

The young people from the Traveller community were offered the option to participate in an online consultation or to complete a short questionnaire (see section 3.2.1 for details). The young people who chose to complete the survey were supported by their keyworker who had attended an online briefing with NPO and Hub na nÓg on the process and best practice on involving young people in this

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process. Each keyworker was also sent a consultation pack with written instructions, information consent forms, blank worksheet, and stamped return envelope.

Each pack had a unique identifier to link the Jotter Worksheet response with the information held by the organisation. To maintain the anonymity of the individual, the completed consent form was retained and stored by the organisation in contact with the young person, in accordance with their own organisational policies, procedures and GDPR. No identifying information on the young person appeared on the completed worksheets that were returned to the report writer for analysis, and no personal or identifying information are included in the report.

On a separate sheet, the practitioner provided some contextual information about the young person's experience of homelessness. An overview of this contextual information is provided in the report but to preserve anonymity, none of the quotes are linked back to this information.

The recruitment was undertaken in May 2022 and individual packs were sent to the keyworkers in the Traveller Organisation, who were given three weeks to complete and return the completed questionnaire.

The young people from the homeless support organisations were invited to participate in-person consultations which were facilitated by Hub na nÓg and the NPO. Online consultations also took place for those who chose to attend.

2.3 The Consultation Approach

2.3.1 The Consultation Tools

DHLGH worked with the National Participation Office and Hub na nÓg to plan and administer the consultation. Working from a children's rights-based approach, the team developed two approaches to consulting young people: a survey (using a jotter page style worksheet with each of the questions - see Box 2 for example) and an interactive focus group approach. The approach was piloted with a young person with a lived experience of homelessness who provided feedback on the questions and the proposed methodologies.

1. **The survey** was administered by trusted keyworkers who work with Young Travellers aged between 18-24 years. The pack had a brief introduction to the purpose of the consultation in a youth friendly format. The young people were asked to write (or have the keyworker scribe) their response to the seven questions (see Box 1). The first question had a speech bubble for their response and remainder used Jotter style worksheets for young people to write their responses to the remaining questions (see Box 2 for example of the Jotter Worksheet).

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Box 2: Example of Jotter Page Worksheet

Youth Homelessness Strategy Consultation

Q.1 In general, what causes young Travellers to become homeless?

Q.2 For young Travellers (aged 18-24), what are the main challenges to getting a home?

2. **Interactive focus group** (using world café approach and tablemats¹) were used for the in-person consultations with young people with lived experience of homelessness (see Box 3 for examples of outputs from the activities). Similar to the survey, the first two questions had a speech bubble for responses to Question 1 and 2. The responses to the remaining questions were captured in large place mats (see Box 3).

¹The World Cafe approach makes use of an informal 'cafe type' setting to allow participants explore an issue by discussing it in small table groups. The discussion is held in multiple rounds of allowing the participants discuss the first topic/question before moving to the next tablemat to discuss the next question. The facilitator and/or the participants record their views on a tablemat.

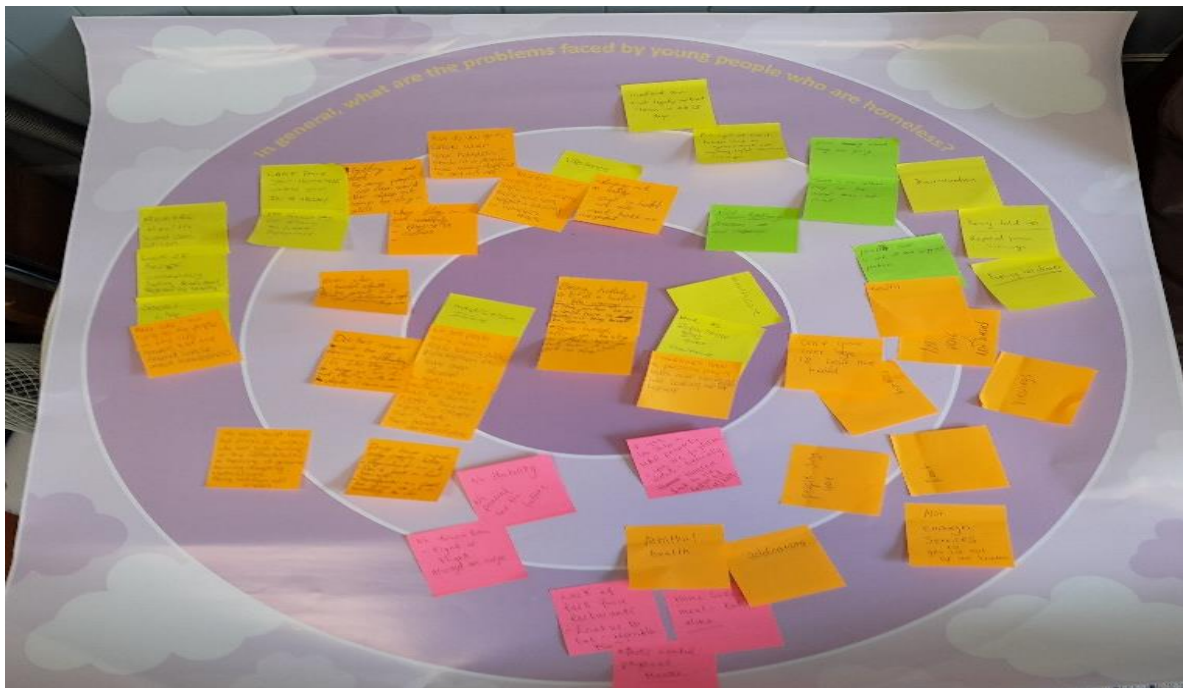
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Box 3: Example from Activity 1 Face to Face Consultation

Question 1: What comes to mind when you hear the word 'homelessness'? (Example of completed Speech Bubble)



Question 2: In general, what are the problems faced by young people who are homeless? (Example of completed tablemat)



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2.3.2 Survey Consultation: Jotter Worksheet (Young Travellers)

Keyworkers from the Traveller Support Organisation supported seven of the young people to complete the survey on an individual basis. If requested, the keyworker scribed the verbatim response for young person. The completed worksheet was returned to the report writer for analysis.

Two of young men from the Travelling Community participated in an online consultation facilitated by staff from the Hub na nÓg and NPO. Due to the smaller number for this session, the facilitator used the questions from the worksheet to guide the discussion and a second facilitator recorded their responses which were shared with the report writer. The survey responses and the findings from the online discussion were merged and analysed thematically for each question.

2.3.3 In person consultations: World Cafe and Tablemats (Homeless young people)

For the in-person consultations with young people from the two housing support organisations, the following format was used.

Background to the Consultation. One of the team provided a background to the consultation, explaining that the consultation was part of a wider process of developing a Youth Homelessness Strategy for young people aged 18-24 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness which being undertaken by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (details [here](#)). The participants were informed that young people's views and opinions will be considered alongside the findings from a wider public consultation, and that inputs from all consultations may be published by DHLGH but these will be anonymous and no identifying information will be included. The NPO will continue to link with the DHLGH and will provide young people with updates (via the two organisations) on any progress made indicating where the young people's views have been considered.

Introductions and ice breakers. All the young people and adults in the room introduced themselves and short icebreakers were used to place the young people at their ease. Before commencing the consultation, the Participation Officer discussed the importance of keeping boundaries around sharing personal experiences (option of stepping out of the room at any point and/talk privately with the facilitator if any issues came up). The group agreed a group contract (Fair, Respect, Engage, Safe, Honest) for the duration of the session.

Activity 1: Speech Bubbles to explore the causes of homelessness

In this activity, the young people were asked to consider two questions.

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1. *What comes to mind when you hear the word 'homeless'?*
2. *In general, what causes young people to become homeless?'*

The young people were asked to write a word or draw an image on a post-it note on what comes to mind when they hear the word 'homeless' which they shared the post-its on the blank Speech Bubble image (see Box 3 above). The facilitator then read through each answer and discussed the meaning and facilitate discussion. The facilitator repeated this process with the second question.

Activity 2: World Café to discuss youth homelessness and to identify actions for the strategy

Using World Café approach, working with small groups the facilitator explored the young people's responses to the remaining questions. Three large placemats were used to capture young people's answers to each of the questions. The first two placemats captured the young people's opinions on the main challenges to getting a home and the problems facing young people who are homeless. The third placemat focused on the actions that might be taken to prevent youth homelessness and to help young people leave homelessness.

Placemat one:

For young people (18-24) what are the main challenges to getting a home?

Placemat two:

In general, what are the problems faced by young people who are homeless?

Placemat three:

In an ideal world what services should be available to help prevent young people becoming homeless?

In an ideal world what services should be available to help young people leave homelessness?

The facilitator began with the first placemat where the group discussed the main challenges to getting a home, writing / drawing their ideas on the placemat (using post-its). The facilitator ensured everyone had an opportunity to contribute. The participants moved to placemat 2 to discuss the problems facing young people who are homeless, before moving to the final placemat where the focus shifted to identifying actions that might be taken to prevent homelessness or to help young people leave homelessness.

Activity 3: Prioritising actions for the Youth Homelessness Strategy

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After everyone had an opportunity to discuss all four questions, the facilitator asked participants to consider the responses on the placemats and to identify their top five priorities (using sticky dot votes) that they think the Youth Homelessness Strategy should focus on.

Close of meeting

After the prioritisation exercise, the facilitator summarised the young people's views, offering them the opportunity to ask further questions/clarifications before seeking their feedback on the session. Before closing the session, the facilitator reminded the group where their opinions are going and how they will be used and explained the next steps.

The report writer assembled and summarised the responses to the seven questions from the pilot interview and the two in-person consultations (noting the number of mentions each message received).

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SECTION 3: CONSULTATION FINDINGS

3.1 Profile of participants

In total, 25 young people aged between 19 and 26 years participated in the consultation.

3.1.1 Pilot

- 1 young mother (with young child) who was currently experiencing homelessness.
 - Face to face consultation using the seven questions. The young woman provided feedback on the questions and the proposed methodologies.

3.1.2 Young People from Traveller Community

- The NPO and Hub na nÓg worked with the Irish Traveller Movement to ensure the language used as part of the consultation was appropriate.
- 9 young people aged between 19 and 26 years (4 males/5 females).
 - 2 young people (males aged 25 and 26) who had experience of homelessness when aged between 18 and 24 participated in an online consultation discussing the 7 questions on the Jotter Worksheet. (June 2022).
 - 7 young people completed the Jotter Worksheet (May 2022).

Context information was provided for 5 of the young Travellers.

- 4 of the young travellers had experience of living in supported accommodation provided by a homeless organisation
- 1 had experience of overcrowding in family home.

3.1.3 Homeless Young People

- 15 young people aged between 19 and 25 years (9 males/6 females)
- 2 Face to face consultations using *Speech Bubble Exercise* and *World Café* (recorded on the placemats).

Context information: All the young people in this group had lived experience of homelessness. The older young people had lived experience of homelessness when aged between 18 and 25 years.

Homeless organisation 1	Homeless organisation 2
Six young people aged between 19 and 22 (3 males/3 females) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently in homeless accommodation • All face-to-face consultations using <i>Speech Bubble Exercise</i> and <i>World Café</i> (recorded on the placemats). 	Nine young people aged between 21 and 25 years (6 males/3 females) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently in homeless accommodation • All face-to-face consultations using <i>Speech Bubble Exercise</i> and <i>World Café</i> (recorded on the placemats).

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3.2 Findings from the Consultations with Young Travellers

3.2.1 Question 1: What comes to mind when you hear the word 'homeless'?

Respondents' responses to this question captured four themes:

- The experience of being homeless
- Isolation
- The cause and effect of homelessness
- Racism and discrimination

Figure 1: Summary of themes on the word 'Homeless' (Young Travellers)



*Someone that has no home
No bed to sleep on
Not wanting to live on top of people and being crowded*

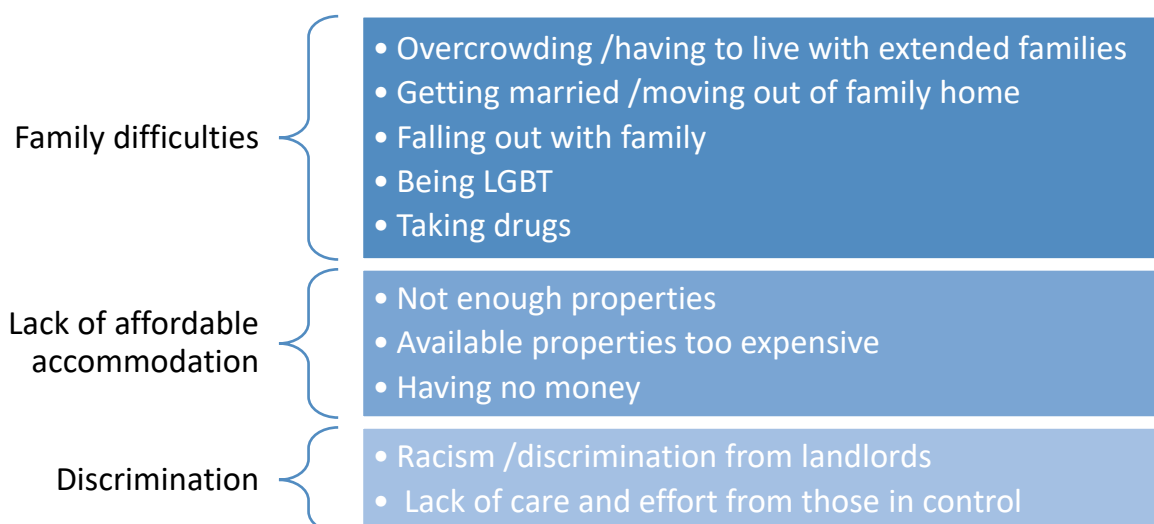
3.2.2 Questions 2-4 What are the **causes** of homelessness, the **challenges** to getting a home, and the **problems** facing young Travellers who are homeless?

The respondents' opinions on the causes of homeless among young Travellers covered three broad themes.

- Family difficulties
- Lack of affordable properties/lack of money
- Discrimination and lack of care

Figure 2: Summary of Young Travellers' views on the '**causes**' of homelessness (Young Travellers)

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Overcrowding and nowhere to live. Travellers who live in sites, they are very overcrowded. There's not many places getting built.

Living in caravans with no space.

Being shunned or disowned from the Traveller community. There are lots of girls and boys who get disowned for being part of the LGBT community and for other reasons like having intercourse before marriage or even while married.

Young people getting married and moving out of family homes. Then they have children and go through homelessness for years, no end, and soon enough children are all grown up and it's all on repeat. Then once children grow up, get married, create their family and they're left going through homelessness. It's all a cycle to be honest. A lot of people, including myself, feel like they're driving around a roundabout with kids in prams, our whole lives in suitcases and bags. I personally think that a lot of us, not only Travellers, are homeless is because lack of care and effort from the ones that are in control.

In Kerry, there's not enough properties. Not even the chance to talk to a landlord. 7 hostels in Tralee and they're all full. They're having to move people to other towns as there is no room.

Landlords won't take you on once they realise you're a Traveller, when they hear your accent or see your second name. You can be accepted for HAP, but once the landlord realises you're a Traveller, they'll turn you down.

The young people's responses to the questions on the challenges to getting a home and the problems facing young Travellers echoed some of the reasons they put forward on becoming homeless including:

- Getting on the council list/being on the council list/having to prove your homeless status.

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- The lack of properties.
- Prejudice and discrimination among housing agents and landlords – not willing to accept Traveller tenants.
- Not having enough money for rent / deposit and not having a bank account.
- Not having support or not knowing about the available supports and how to access them
- The experience of being homeless.
 - Living in the hostel – the rules and level of control – not being able to participate in family celebrations as need permission to stay out / if not back by 10 will lose room.
- The impact of homelessness on mental health.

There is a challenge in securing a house because of no reliable income and discrimination. I think a lot of people think that renting their houses to Travellers will destroy their houses and might not stay there long because of the Traveller nature.

Prejudice from housing agencies.

Not knowing how to access support.

Some of their rules are unfair, not needed, just letting us know they can control us, watch every move we make and control each and every step.

Being in a homeless service was like a prison, sign in and out back by 10, prior to permission to stay over with a family/friend but they might tell you no and if you're not back by 10pm you'll lose your room (even if it's just 5 mins past 10).

Some described the effects of homelessness on young Travellers. These included:

- Arguments/fights in overcrowded conditions in the family home.
- Feelings of shame/poor mental health/isolation due to discrimination (e.g., being talked down to by service staff).
- Addiction (drug/alcohol use) *(This can be the cause and outcome of homelessness)*
- Living in unsuitable conditions / lack of safety (especially with children)
- The impact of homelessness on education for young adult/and their child.
 - Having to make many school changes resulting in incomplete education reducing chances of completing education
 - Experience of racism/discrimination and social isolation in school.

I, as a very young Traveller at the time, experienced a lot of racism, criticism in schools, councils, homeless accommodations. We was always judged and punished for who we were and the position we were in etc. No home to go back to. I missed a lot of school because of

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homelessness. I had to change schools over 10/11 times throughout my childhood. Because of it I eventually dropped out of school. I was sick and tired of changing schools all the time, friends, books, classrooms. Racism was the biggest problem for me and being looked down upon because I had no home.

Discrimination and bullying, also isolation. Depression due to a strong sense of community. Usually being homeless in the Traveller community is because they are being isolated over sexuality or drug abuse or even alcoholism. Families can be very unforgiving.

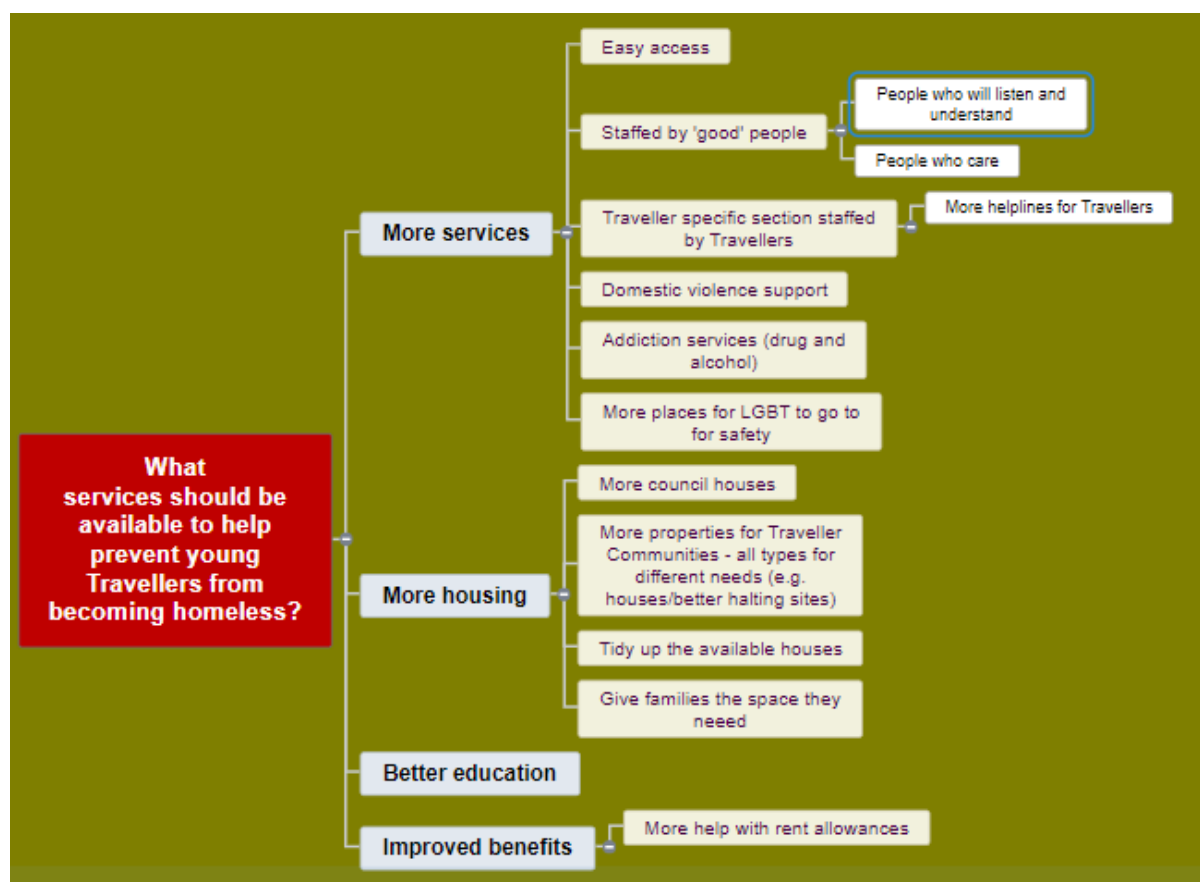
3.2.3 Question 5: What services should be made available to help prevent young Travellers from becoming homeless?

The young people's suggestions on ways to prevent young Travellers from becoming homeless reflected many of the themes captured under the causes (and challenges of homelessness). Their messages are summarised in Figure 3 and consist of four themes:

- Improve services
 - Easy access to available supports and services
 - With sympathetic and understanding staff
 - Specific Traveller section to homeless services staffed by members of the Traveller Community who have better understandings of their cultural and support needs. Include helplines for young Travellers (to overcome some the literacy barriers).
 - Access to support services e.g., LGBT services, addiction services, domestic violence services.
- Improve housing e.g., more council houses, more housing to reflect Travellers' needs (e.g., houses for families, houses for young people, improved halting sites).
 - Tidy up homeless accommodation and give families enough space.
- Better education
- Improve housing benefits

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Figure 3: Summary of Young Travellers' Suggestions on services to **Prevent** homelessness



We should be heard and listened to a lot more than what we have. People who are in control should be nice, willing to listen, try to understand what it is we're going through. The pain, the changes, all the different stages that we go through in homelessness. If they did that a little more, it would make lives for others that little bit nicer for us. It isn't much to ask to be heard.

I think they need to take a look at all homeless accommodations and really consider fixing, cleaning and give families the space they need. It's all so uncaring for us all and so unorganised.

Traveller specific housing section with Traveller employees

3.2.4 Question 6: What services should be made available to help young travellers leave homelessness?

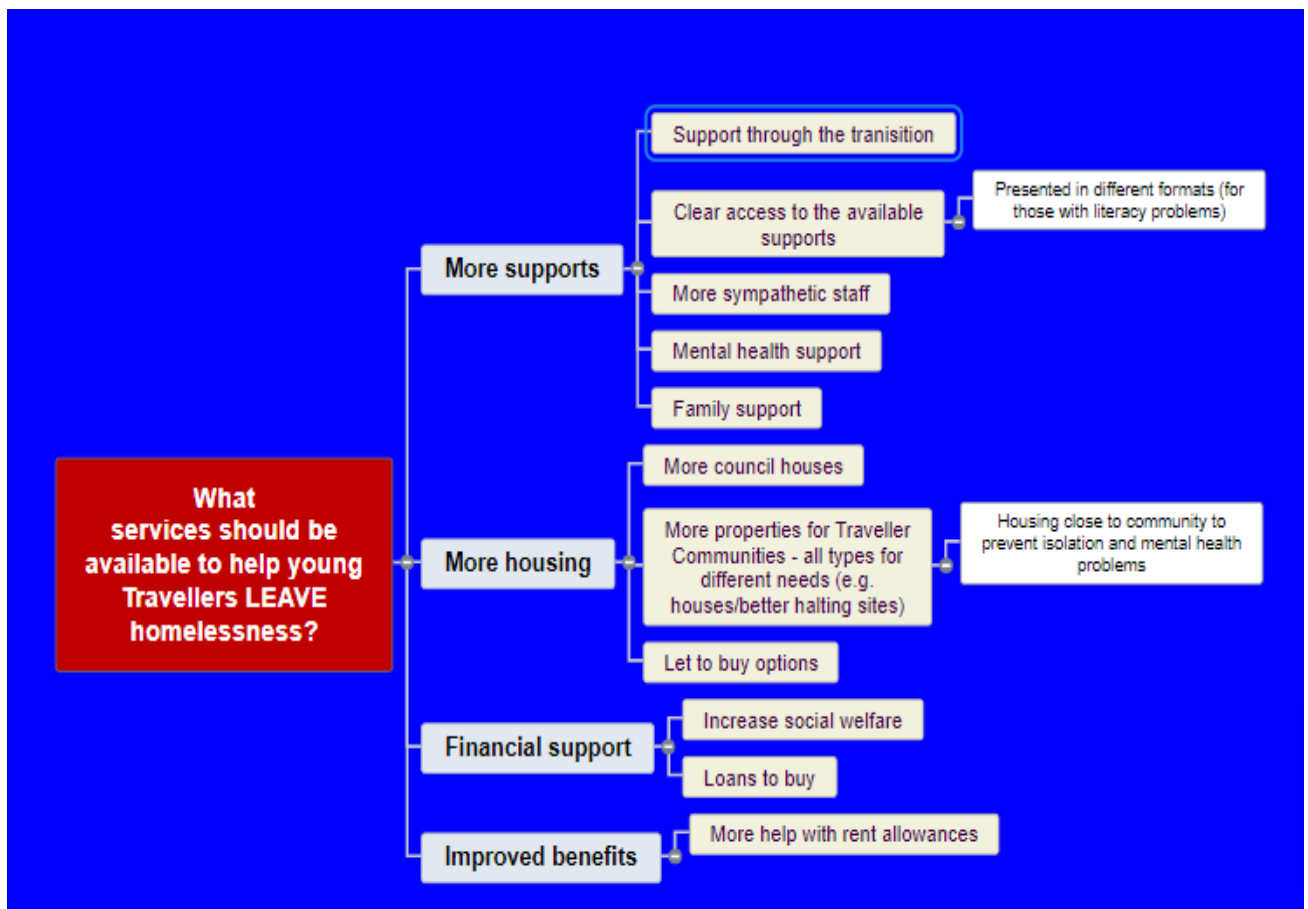
Again, the young people's suggestions on ways to help young Traveller's leave homelessness echoed their responses to the previous questions (Figure 4). The dominant messages included:

- Shorten the process from homelessness to housing.
- Support
 - Support through the transition.

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- Clear access to the supports (e.g., provide different way to access the different support to overcome literacy problems via videos etc)
- Family support – more support for young people with families.
- Staffed by sympathetic people
- Mental health support
- Financial support
 - Higher social welfare to cover rent
 - Financial support to move into house and buy necessities.
 - Loans to buy.
- Types of properties
 - Greater availability of council housing and more affordable housing.
 - Landlords not to be racist.
 - Let to buy
 - Traveller specific accommodation (e.g., more halting sites / more facilities). Close to Traveller community (to prevent isolation and associated mental health problems).

Figure 4: Summary of Young Travellers’ Suggestions on services to help young Travellers **LEAVE** homelessness.



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All tenancies should be 'let to buy' so house can be passed down for generations

More availability of the council and more affordable housing and a higher social welfare income for homeless.

Also, a lot of Travellers can't read or write so maybe more vocal information e.g., TV or videos

There should be a lot more support for people and kids that register homeless because it's hard, scary, frightening and to be honest it's all traumatizing for kids.

There should be more nicer people in the council office because they weren't very nice.

They should try working on not making the process of the homeless not years and years

3.2.5 Question 7: Priorities for the Strategy (Young Travellers)

The final question sought the young people's views on the priorities for the strategy. In answering this question some just referred to their previous answers. Among those young people who answered this question the priorities were:

- Address the shortage of properties
 - Invest in properties / lower the price
 - More council accommodation
 - More housing schemes e.g., HAP
 - More properties for Travellers.
- More financial support
 - Loans
- Family friendly accommodation
 - Help protect children e.g., don't put families in with 'all sorts of people'
- Support with education and employment
 - Help them get a job which will help them get a home
 - Help them get a home will help them get a job
- Establish group with membership/voice of Travellers.

You need to have a group (in the council/over the hostels and homeless services) to understand traveller's ways, the barriers in place for travellers, the ins and outs of what travellers face instead of their own thoughts. What's easy for them could be hard for travellers. A traveller should be facilitating this group. Let their answers be heard.

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The group should specialise within homelessness for travellers. There's an advocate for the homeless, but not for travellers. The group will help to stop the discrimination against travellers.

The majority of travellers are homeless out of homeless groups (in hotels, etc). Traveller-facilitated groups who have experienced homelessness needed to help people understand.

Make more properties available for members of the travelling community. Travellers aren't allowed pull up at the side of the road anymore. All types of properties

3.3 Findings from the Consultations with Young People in Homeless Organisations (Young homeless)

This section combines the findings from the two face-to-face consultations with young people in homeless organisations.

- 15 young people aged between 19 and 25 (9 males/6 females) currently in homeless accommodation
- Face to face consultations using *Speech Bubble Exercise* and *World Café* (recorded on the placemats).

3.3.1 Question 1: What comes to mind when you hear the word 'homeless'?

Respondents' responses to this question captured four themes:

- The experience of being homeless
- Lost in the system
- Being judged
- A dangerous environment

Figure 5: Summary of themes on the word 'Homeless' (Young homeless)



The experience of being homeless

The homeless young people's images of experience of homeless echoed those of the young Travellers. Their descriptions of being homeless captured the reality of living on the street with words such as 'cold' 'lonely' 'sad' 'not having a home'.

*Hopeless
You don't have a home.
Nowhere to stay
Broke people.*

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Lost within the system

This theme captured the young people's descriptions of the support system and the challenges of getting a home.

*No affordable housing or healthcare when homeless, even if you are working.
Wages don't cover everything due to inflation, especially feminine products.*

Lack of support for young

No secure accommodation

- Types of homelessness/No stability

Not valued / Feeling judged

Within this theme the young people described feeling judged and having lesser importance/value in society.

Taken for granted.

Looked down upon by the Government and the general population.

Not like the rest of us.

You're looked at as a black sheep.

Worthless

A dangerous environment

This theme captured words or descriptions that depicted the dangers associated with being homeless. Some of the young people provided details of the types of threats they face as homeless young people.

*No life - flight or fight – always on edge
Assaulted, robbed, sexually assaulted (especially women in homelessness). This happens in
both shelters and on the streets.*

*There's a rough crowd. It's the only life they've lived. Their sense of respect is lowered.
Been robbed because you've nowhere to keep things.*

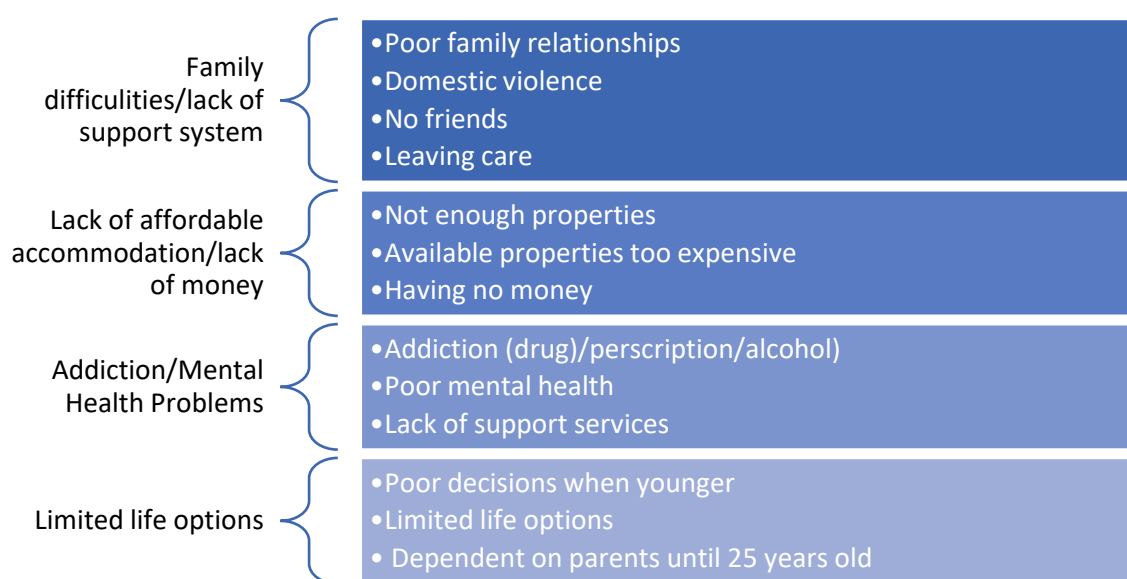
FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS CONSULTATION - FINAL

3.3.2 Question 2: What are the *causes* of homelessness?

The respondents’ opinions on the causes of homelessness reflected some of the suggestions raised by the young Travellers and covered four broad themes

- Family difficulties / lack of support system
- Lack of affordable properties/lack of money
- Addiction/Mental Health Problems
- Limited life options

Figure 6: Summary of views on the **causes** of homelessness (Young homeless)



Family difficulties / lack of support system

The young people described poor family relationships and the lack of family support/poor parenting, drug issues at home and domestic violence as causes of homelessness. Some also identified elements of the care system as contributing to an increased risk of homelessness. One young person stated simply ‘*the lack of love*’.

Support is huge. If you have support from family/friends, they can help you find a place, financially, shopping, move in together.

Leaving their family home with no money. bad situation with family.

*Not enough support – bad family background
Parents left their homes when they were young, don’t understand how it is now, times are different now*

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There's a lack of support, especially in fostering. When you turn 18, you're assigned an Aftercare Worker. They give you a list of phone numbers, but no other help. There's not much support once you turn 18.

Lack of affordable housing/Finance/income

This theme captured two subthemes

- The lack of affordable housing
- Insufficient income to cover the rents

Within the first subtheme, the young people described the shortage of housing (council) and the lack of affordable housing. They blamed the latter on landlords' 'greed' and their unwillingness to accept HAP. The reasons for not having enough money to cover rents included job losses/low income and the lack of supports available to buy homes.

*No jobs that don't feel like slave labour
Landlords (don't want us, won't take HAP)*

Addiction/Mental Health Problems

Addiction and poor mental health were identified by several young people as one of the causes of homelessness. Possibly reflecting the inter-relationship between addiction and mental health, some of the young people placed the two issues together on one post-it note. The lack of services for the two issues was also raised.

People I'm around and have been with while homeless have addiction and/or mental health issues. More support should be there. Just because you have an addiction, doesn't mean you should be pushed away. An addiction could be because of mental health issues, but they look at you differently. You can have everything, but with addiction, you can lose everything. You can be functioning, but suddenly it catches up with you. Mental health and addiction are interlinked and both can lead to homelessness.

No one sticks needles in their arms for shits or giggles, they are trying to escape their heads and their head is a dangerous place.

Limited life options

A small number identified the limited life options and poor life choices as increasing the risk of homelessness. One young person described the lack of alternatives to third level in order to

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improve life circumstances. Another referenced how poor decisions made during teenager years limit life options later on.

In this day and age, you're taught you need college to have a life you want (college, work, etc.). If you don't want this, it's hard to move up. It affects your mental health and confidence.

Mistakes made when younger.

One group discussed the challenges they faced when trying to secure benefits and/or grants to go to college. One young person noted that system assumes that parents will provide the financial support to the young adult, when parents are not willing to provide such support, it can be difficult for the young person to demonstrate their independence.

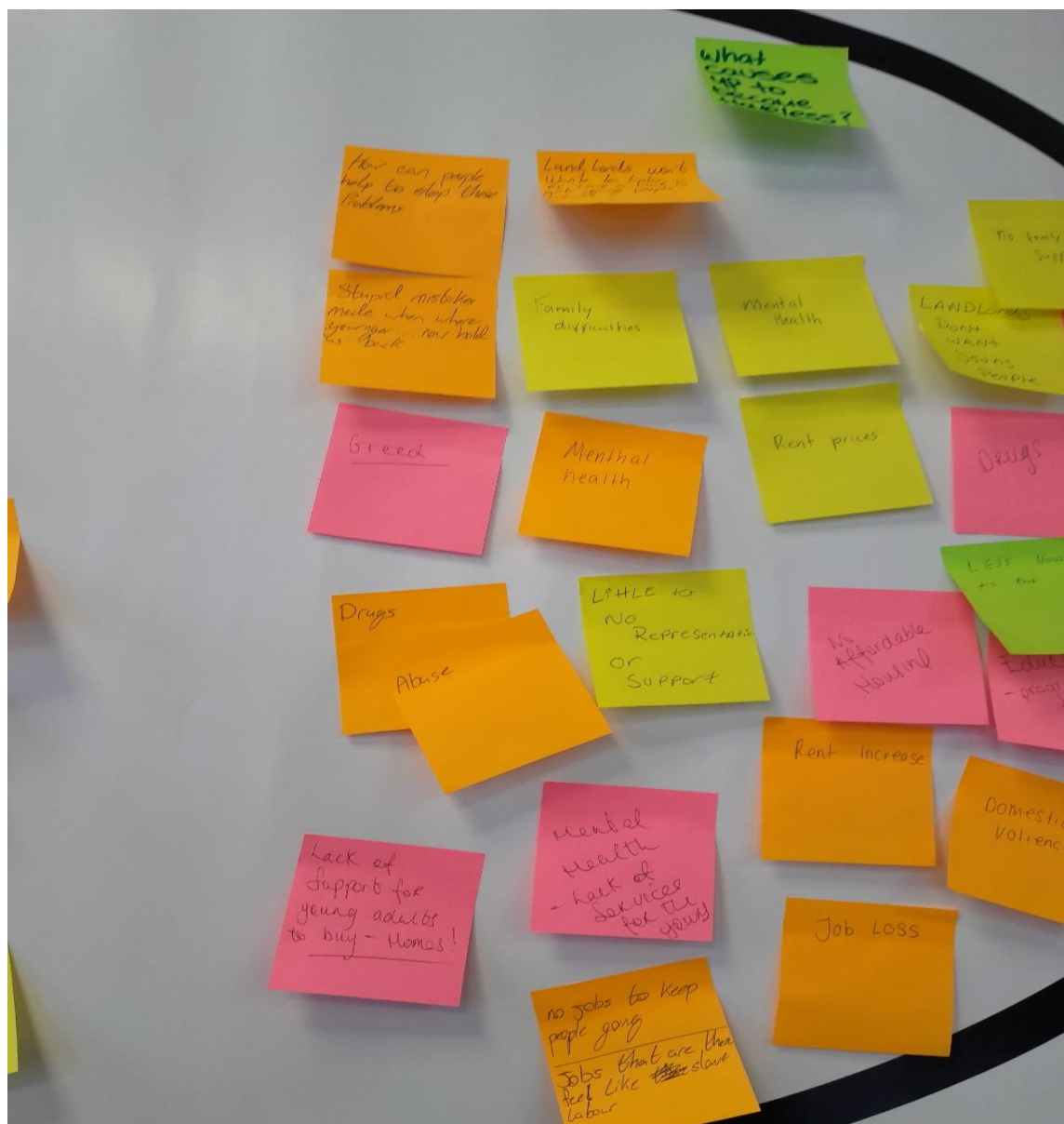
*After the age of 18 it should be based on you as an individual not your parents
Unable to claim benefits when under 25 – not seen as an adult. Asked for letters/statement
from parents despite not living with them (Individual aged 24 who moved out at home at
16)*

Couldn't afford to go to college as not given benefits

Another young person talked about the challenges to securing grants for university/college.

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Box 4: Example of young homeless' suggestions of causes YP to become homeless (Speech Bubble)



3.3.3 Question 3: The challenges facing homeless young people

Participants' descriptions of the challenges facing homeless young people reaffirmed some of their thoughts on the causes of homelessness and included:

- Insufficient funds/unemployment/poor pay
- High cost of renting/buying
- Shortage of properties/having to prove homelessness

Insufficient funds to pay rent

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Poor access to employment (full and part-time) and better incomes was raised by a number of young people as a barrier to securing a home. Other challenges included lack of life skills (e.g., to manage money and pay bills) or choosing to spend what money they have on other things.

There are less full-time jobs and more part-time jobs

You don't save money when you have an addiction

Rent, food, clothes are all too expensive. Not everyone is going to have a big job.

Billing (knowing how to do it).

Young people spending money on other things, e.g., drink, drugs, tattoos, socialising.

Saving money for no reason because there are no homes anyway!

Shortage of properties/lack of security of tenure

Similar to the young Travellers, this group of young people identified the shortage of available properties to rent as a challenge.

There are so many derelict houses they (the government) are just leaving vacant. If they do them up, then they make them too fancy and expensive.

New homes are being taken by people who are already housed.

No living options in general that are good with support, e.g., transport, shops

Where properties were available, their location, the prohibitive rents, and landlords not accepting HAP / or evicting them within 28 days created barriers to accessing a secure home.

Landlord can evict without reason in the first 28 days.

No security - moving from place to place

Going into rentals, landlords turn you down if they know you are going on HAP.

Greed by the landlords.

The majority of TDs are landlords. No Government support. There is a difference between the money they are giving homeless versus what the rent is. 12% of weekly income towards the HAP + top up to the landlord.

If you want to leave Dublin you can use your HAP, but you only live in the outskirts. If you can't drive but need to work. You're stuck.

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Having to prove homeless status (e.g., living in homeless shelters) and being low on the priority list were also described as challenges for young people.

*Won't put you into accommodation unless you are assessed.
When you present to the council, they try to push you off as much as possible.*

*There are no priorities for being given housing, e.g., pregnant, homeless, sick, alone.
Money for homes, no homes available, steps to getting a house are very challenging.*

If you don't secure a home by a certain time (housing list), you have to go into shelters.

*Having to prove you are homeless by going to hostel, but you don't want to stay in hostels
as they are not safe.*

*Being judged for being young and looking for a home. People think you're not working or
making a living.*

Some young people felt that once they reached 18 years, they no longer had a voice, and if they secured a HAP property they were forgotten about.

Once you are 18, you have no voice and are not heard.

*If you go into HAP properties, you are forgotten about. Basically housed but back at the
bottom of the list.*

One young person felt that whatever challenges facing young people, the situation is due to Government inaction.

*There's always excuses as to why people are homeless. It comes back to the Government;
they need to change.*

3.3.4 Question 4: The problems facing young people who are homeless

The problems facing young people included:

- Lack of access to basic human rights: accessing essential services
- Addiction issues
- Their experiences in homelessness accommodation
- Not enough homeless facilities
- Risk, violence, and abuse

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- Stigma
- Loneliness / lack of social Life

Basic rights – Access to essential services

Being able to access basic services was a central message among the two groups of young people. They described their homeless status (i.e., lack of permanent address) created difficulties for them to access essential services (e.g., social welfare/health services). Some described the lack of basic human rights (e.g., not being able to wash self and clothes).

*In the 21st century, there are “equal rights”, but we are not seen or treated as equal.
Basic human rights. Washing themselves, clothes, hygiene.
Can’t get the dole. You need proof of address. Have to go to the youth service to use
address.
Getting public documents without having an address.
Free health care is not possible, not unless you have a medical card for support.*

Limited access to **education**, which was viewed by one young person as important to exit homelessness, was also a dominant message across the two groups.

*You can’t go to college when homeless – you are stuck in a dark hole.
There’s no education available for homeless people.*

Two described the impact of family homelessness on the education of children. The costs associated with education (e.g., books, uniforms etc) can be prohibitive for some parents.

*No access to schooling. You’re forced to send your kids, but then there’s thousands and
thousands in costs for books, uniforms, etc. If you have 2 or 3 children, you’re stuck.
When you’re in school, you have to pay for books. They’re not free.*

Accessing **health care services** was also discussed by participants. Some referred to general healthcare services, and others mentioned the need to access more specialist services (e.g., mental health services and addiction services). Some described the need to prioritise other bills over health care.

*Dental care and mental health services aren’t available.
Doctors never want you to go down on methadone – it’s like they want to keep you on it.
Mental health – don’t know where to turn*

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The mental health service doesn't help homeless people. You get discharged due to being homeless.

Mental health. People don't see themselves coming out of it. The outside world doesn't give you enough space to get out of this.

It's very tough being homeless it's not just housing or the affordability of housing it's groceries driving travelling medical care been hit from all angles.

Let appearance go, teeth go bad, can't present for job.

Have to prioritise bills over healthcare

Gaps or deficiencies in the currently available **housing support services** were also raised. These gaps included inadequate support from keyworkers, not enough information on the supports available, not enough timely support on securing rented accommodation.

Everyone has a keyworker, but they don't do enough.

Too many people doing one job, yet the job isn't getting don.

You are told there's more supports you can receive but they never follow through.

There should be housing support, advice on what supports are available to you.

Housing supports aren't knowledgeable about renting. They print out ad from DAFT hours later when that's too late – only the first 20 people will get replied to.

Addiction issues

Drug and alcohol dependency was also an overriding concern. Some described this as a cause and effect of homelessness. When discussing addiction services, the young people described different types of addiction (i.e., prescription drugs, illegal drugs, alcohol).

Drugs have ruined many people's lives - they get dependent on it - don't look or feel yourself - homelessness can feed into drugs as it gives you something to do.

The mental health/addiction services need to get on top of helping people with these issues. Stress of a lack of money, being out of pocket, that you end up back with your addiction as it helps you to forget your issues. There are so many sides to it. A strategy for the mental health and addiction services needs to be done. You can then help separating them out.

Hostels surrounded by drugs – drinking, getting spiked.

Their experiences of homelessness accommodation

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Several of the participants described young people's experiences in the homelessness accommodation. They described the transient nature of this accommodation, the overcrowding, the different profiles of the service users, the lack of security of not having a bed each day, and not being able to stay in the room during the day.

*No security
Different age groups and people using drugs
Being kicked out of hostels first thing with nowhere to go. With no sleep as overcrowded.
Some hostels allow you to stay others kick you out*

Some talked about the physical environment in the accommodation and how they are treated by staff.

*Rooms in the accommodation are like prison cells. There are room checks, you are treated like a prisoner.
You become institutionalised.
Nowhere to store your belongings.
Nowhere to get washed or wash clothes*

One young person felt the qualities and experiences of some of the staff employed in the hostels contributed to some of the negative experiences homelessness accommodation.

Jobs in the hostel are being advertised saying 'no experience needed' but then the staff aren't trained to deal with fights, mental health issues, etc

Not enough homeless accommodation/facilities

As well as identifying the scarcity of accommodation for young people, participants identified the lack of proper facilities (e.g., showers/toilets) and sheltered outdoor areas to spend their time. Some talked about the need to have essential items (e.g., underwear, waterproof clothing, hat, scarf, blankets) as well as access to food/water which are becoming more expensive.

*No proper facilities outside (showers/toilets). Need more free facilities.
There needs to be essential bags/packs containing underwear, socks, waterproof clothing, hat, scarf, blanket, hair brush.
Not enough outdoor sheltered areas.
Prices for food and water are going up, so it is not possible to get them.*

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Risk, violence, and abuse

Related to the negative experience of using homeless support accommodation, the young people described additional risks they encountered when on the streets. This included physical abuse.

The biggest thing I had to face on the street was someone hurting me.

*Sleeping out - there is no safety – even hostels aren't safe
Abuse, like being urinated on when on the street.*

Sexual harassment and abuse, assault.

Tents in streets, urinated on, people dying in tents.

No Garda protection. Eyre Square is supposed to have 24-hour Garda surveillance, but they're not there most of the time. A homeless man got urinated on there. When he went into the police station to report it, they told him to leave.

Some described people taking advantage of situation (e.g., doing all the cleaning when couch surfing) or doing “illegal or risky things” to have money or a place to stay.

*No access to money.
Begging for money instead of making it.*

When couch surfing, I felt obliged to do all the cooking cleaning, babysitting to make up for having a couch to sleep on. They take advantage of you then.

Others described how some young people's lack of paperwork/identity papers increased their risk of kidnapping/trafficking.

*It's unsafe, anything could happen to you.
More identity needs to be given. Homeless people can be kidnapped because they have “no” identity.
Undesirables in society prey on people with less support and backing i.e. homeless people.*

Stigma

Some young people referred to the stigma associated with not having a home and talked about feeling judged by society.

*Judgement from strangers, friends, family, the public. We aren't well dressed, so people just assume things about us.
Stigma. Rejected by society.*

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'I'm lying to people. I haven't told my friend circle about my homelessness

Loneliness/lack of social life

Related to the perceptions of stigma, some young people talked about their feelings of isolation, lack of social connection, and how living in homeless hostels and shelters restricted their social lives. One young person wondered where young people go for social support if they are not linked to youth services.

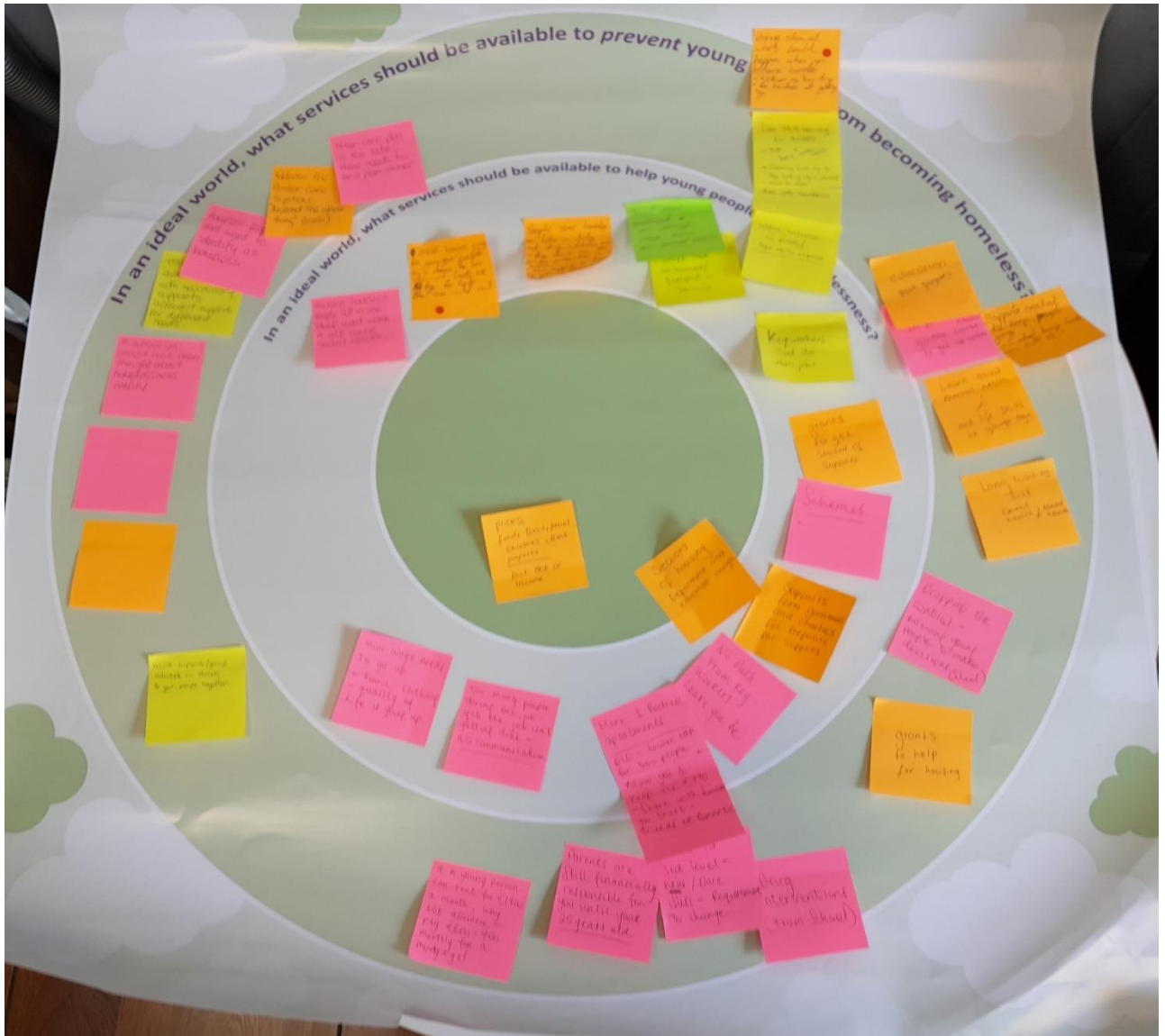
No social life – there's a curfew in the accommodation, you can't bring back friends/family. Even in homeless shelters there are restrictions. After 6pm, you have to give 24 hours-notice to bring someone over at all, but only 1 person is allowed at a time.

No group activities/things in the hostel. You're in your 2 x 2 room, sitting in your room. Everybody is in the same boat, but you feel isolated.

People who aren't linked to {name of youth service}, where do they go?

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3.3.5 Questions 5 and 6 : What services should be made available to prevent young people from becoming homeless and to help young people leave homelessness?



Preventing Homelessness

Suggestions on ways to prevent youth homelessness included actions to inform and prepare young people for independent living. This included education on the realities of youth homelessness, and life-skills training on day-to-day care and budgeting. One young person noted that schools just focus on getting young people a college place and do not set up them up for leaving (e.g. not teaching life-skills such as paying bills etc.). Other suggestions included improved access to (free/low-cost) services, especially health, mental health, and addiction services.

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Being showed what could happen when you are homeless e.g. sickness from drugs, the hardship of getting by.

Learn life skills in school at a young age how to look after yourself how to cope etc.

Money management

Classes like Real U – education on how to take care of yourself and your future.

Everyone should be linked to a youth programme so they know who to come back to if they need them.

More counselling in school. Mental health services.

Teach them there are other options out there – going to college won't buy you a house, you need to work for your money and save.

Address the housing crisis

Supporting young people to leave homelessness

Many of the young people's views on what services should be available to young people to help young people leave homelessness echoed those of the young Travellers. These included:

- Addressing the housing need
- More support services
- Opportunities for work/education and improve wages

Address the housing need

Similar to the young Travellers, the young homeless' suggestions of ways to help young people leave homelessness centred on addressing the housing crisis. One young person commented on how homelessness had become normalised in today's society.

The institutions have normalised homelessness. It is not normal, it shouldn't be normalised

Suggestions to address this included having more houses available to young people by having age as one of the criteria to get on the council list and having options for people to share accommodation on HAP.

Other suggestions included having different types of accommodation e.g., more one-bedroom apartments, housing for young people, mixed gender accommodation, and more supported

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accommodation. One group discussed the idea of the Government taking unused buildings and doing these up.

More houses going to young people to see who will last and try to help the ones who can't.

Mixed gender housing should be more common.

Rentals are often shared with older people (30's/40's). You don't feel safe or comfortable. They might be more controlling. They have women with women and men with men. Should be more mixed gender housing.

There should be a priority list for people without homes, even if they're in the service. If you're doing all the right things, why don't you deserve a home?

Waiting lists (housing) should be categorized by age group. There should be a separate housing list just for 18–25-year-olds

Flats / houses that are boarded up. They should be going to the Gov., but they are left abandoned. Houses and apartments this case which have been seized by the CAB should be given to the Government (who could then use them for providing homes/accommodation), but they are instead being left abandoned.

Another suggested allowing the housing allowance being used for a mortgage, and one mentioned the Rent to Buy scheme as a way of improving security.

*A young person can rent for €1700 per month. Why are they not allowed €600-€700 a month for a mortgage?
Rent to Buy scheme – everyone should jump on this – security.*

More support services

Similar to the young Travellers, the homeless young people suggested having specialised support services for young people e.g., housing departments, social work/after care. One young person highlighted the importance of having staff with an understanding of youth issues.

Someone in the Department of Housing who works with young people for housing, instead of it being chosen by how many years you have been on the list.

Not enough services to get us out of the situation.

Keyworkers who do their job

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Social Workers that support people out of care to provide a voice for young people to prevent homelessness

More services and support, such as budgeting.

Having full after-support payment to help you pay the first month's rent.

Aftercare plan is too late, it needs to happen earlier.

More support to leave shelters

Specific support from housing services included offering life-skills training (e.g., budgeting), providing after-support payment for the first month's rent, and grants to cover expenses of setting up a home.

No money given to help once you have a house (e.g., furniture, necessities, etc.) Need more grants to get you started off.

Within the services theme, suggestions also called for improved access to health care, particularly mental health, and addiction services.

Health Service Free/cheap walk-in GPs

More mental health services

Different supports for different needs

Opportunities for work/education and improve wages

In addition to addressing the housing situation, some of the young people identified the need to support young people improve their life options by accessing further education and / or to earn more to pay for accommodation. Suggestions included improving wages and providing more opportunities to secure employment by encouraging businesses to offer opportunities to less experienced people.

More courses for further education to get up the ladder.

Higher minimum wage / higher wages.

Hire people with less experience and give them more work experience to get jobs.

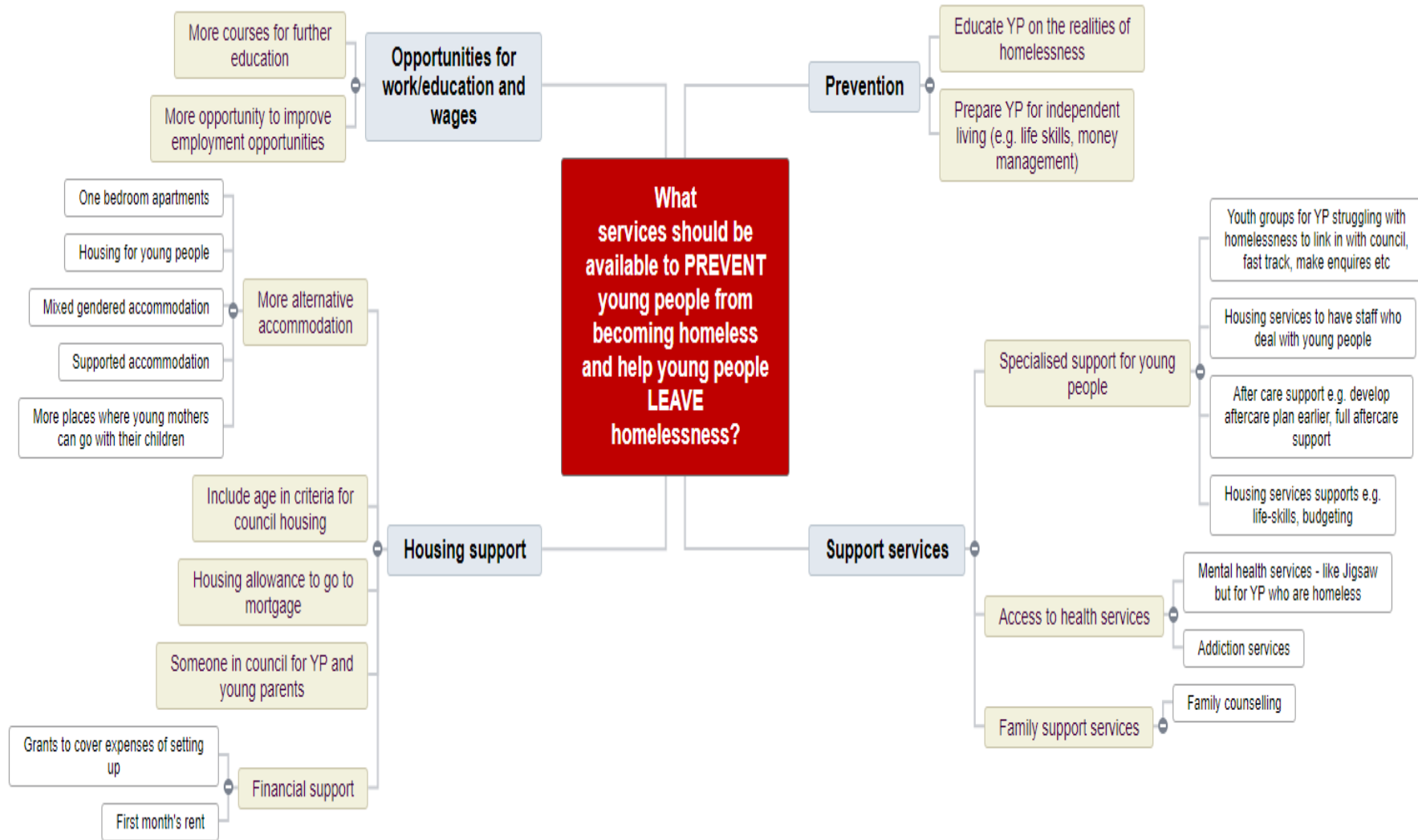
More shops/businesses taking on the homeless. Give them jobs.

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Minimum wage needs to go up – the cost of food, clothes and life is going up.

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Figure 7: Summary of Young Homeless' suggestions on services to prevent youth homelessness and help young people leave homelessness (Young homeless).



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3.3.6 Question 7: Priorities for the Strategy

In the final session, the young people were asked to consider their suggestions on ways to prevent young people becoming homeless and to support them leave homelessness, and to prioritise the suggestions made by the group (using sticky dots). Table 1 below provides the summary of the prioritised suggestions by consultation group.

Table 1: Summary of prioritised suggestions from the two young homeless groups and pilot interview.

Group 1	Group 2*	Pilot
<p>1. More mental health services.</p> <p><i>“There should be a priority of young people in the Department of Health”</i></p> <p>2. A category for 18–25-year-olds for housing.</p> <p><i>“I’ve never seen someone get a house at 21 or so. You’re waiting for years.”</i></p> <p>3. Shelter. More accommodation. More outdoor shelter and facilities.</p> <p>4. More suitable housing/rental options for younger people.</p> <p>5. More Garda protection.</p> <p><i>“Bullying, abuse, violence, being urinated on – the Guards do nothing.”</i></p> <p>6. Higher wages.</p> <p><i>“Minimum wage, especially when working part-time, is so low, that it is better to be on the dole. There’s no drive or incentive to get a job.”</i></p>	<p>1. Address the housing problem</p> <p>Reduce rent prices Address the discrimination by landlords (not accepting HAP/rejecting YP from viewings) Address corruption among landlords Shorten waiting lists for council housing Have young people as priority group</p> <p>2. More services</p> <p>More services to help young people get young people out of homelessness delivered by skilled keyworkers More addiction/mental health services</p> <p>3. Prevention</p> <p>Education about the realities of homelessness on health and mental health More life-skills education (e.g., looking after self, paying bills)</p>	<p>1. More support</p> <p>Support – schools, youth clubs, dedicated council staff.</p> <p>2. Rent to Buy scheme</p> <p>3. Better mental health services for young people</p> <p><i>‘like Jigsaw but for young people who are homeless’</i></p> <p>4. Family counselling</p>

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3.4 Summary

3.4.1 Causes of youth homelessness

During the consultations the two groups (young Travellers and young homeless) shared similar views and experiences in their responses to the seven questions (see Table 2 for summary). All groups identified family difficulties and lack of family support as one of the main causes of youth homelessness in both the settled and Traveller communities. The lack of money and affordable properties, combined with discrimination by race and/or age, were offered as reasons for not securing available properties. The young people also described limited life options as a result of poor access to education or lack of alternatives to college.

3.4.2 Challenges of youth homelessness

Reflecting the responses to the causes of youth homelessness, both groups described challenges which included getting on the council list (as not priority group), the lack of affordable housing, not having financial support from family, and having to prove homeless status by staying in homeless shelters/hostels. Young Travellers described not having a bank account as a challenge.

3.4.3 Problems facing young homeless

Without a permanent address, both groups talked about the difficulties they experienced in accessing essential services e.g., social welfare, education, and health services. Those with experience of living in the streets/hostels talked their need to access somewhere to wash themselves and their clothes. All described the negative experiences of living in homeless accommodation, the overcrowding, lack of security of a bed each night, nowhere to keep their belonging, the need to leave every morning, and the strict rules and regulations which limited social contacts. Some talked about the risks and dangers of being homeless. These risks ranged from abuse, to violence, and to an increased risk of trafficking due to the absence of paperwork. Across a number of questions, both groups talked about addiction and poor mental health, and the need for support for these. Both groups also talked about the stigma and the loneliness of being a homeless young person.

3.4.4 Preventing Youth Homelessness

Suggestions of services to prevent youth homelessness including improved education and life-skills (e.g., budgeting etc). The need to improve access to support services was identified in both groups, this included the provision of specialist housing support (for young people/people from the Traveller community), as well as access to improved services for young people leaving care, and mental health/addiction services. Young Travellers talked about the importance of LGBTI+ support services, and domestic violence services. The young people also raised the importance of having staff who

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were understanding, knowledgeable and who follow through on their promises. Young Travellers talked about the need for better housing benefits to be able to afford the available properties.

3.4.5 Support to leave homelessness

The young people's views on the services required to support young people to leave homelessness included the provision of more alternative housing options that meet the needs of or specific needs of young people. This included accommodation for young people, specific accommodation for Travellers (close to Traveller community), one-bedroom apartments suitable for young person or couple, more mixed gender accommodation, family friendly accommodation). Both groups identified their low priority on the council waiting list as causes of homelessness and suggested having age as one of the priority criteria for the list. Having good access to support services from understanding and knowledgeable staff was viewed as important to help young people secure accommodation. Suggested support services included family support, mental health services, and support with education/employment. Related to improving employment opportunities, young people highlighted the need to increase wages to meet rising rents and the cost of living. Some suggested having more financial support to leave homelessness including grants to move to new accommodation (e.g., rent in advance, money to buy supplies). Both groups raised the importance of removing discrimination and to protect young people from violence/aggression. The young Travellers suggested setting up groups to inform plans/services, with input from the Traveller community.

Table 2: Summary of themes/subtheme for each question by population group (Young Travellers and Young homeless)

Question	Theme	Young Travellers	Young homeless
Causes of youth homelessness	Family difficulties /leaving care	✓	✓
	Lack of affordable properties	✓	✓
	Lack of money	✓	✓
	Discrimination (e.g., age/race)	✓	✓
	Limited life options (e.g., education/work)	✓	✓
Challenges of youth homelessness	Getting on the council list	✓	✓
	Lack of affordable properties	✓	✓
	Not having a bank account	✓	
	Not having available supports	✓	✓

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Question	Theme	Young Travellers	Young homeless
	Having to prove homelessness status	✓	✓
Problems facing young people	Lack of basic rights (e.g., access to essential services)	✓	✓
	The experience of homeless shelters (e.g., overcrowding, no security of a bed, not being able to stay during the day)	✓	✓
	Lack of safety and risk of theft/ violence/abuse or trafficking	✓	✓
	Addiction/poor mental health	✓	✓
	Stigma/Loneliness	✓	✓
		Education/Life skills (e.g., budgeting, caring for self etc)	
Services to prevent youth homelessness	Specialist housing support services (e.g., for young people, for Travellers)	✓****	✓****
	After care support services (e.g., aftercare plan etc)		✓
	Mental health/addiction services	✓	✓
	Health care		✓
	Other support (e.g., LGBTI+ services, domestic violence support services)	✓	
	Understanding and knowledgeable staff	✓	✓
	Improve housing benefits	✓	
		Investment in alternative housing options (e.g., youth housing, Traveller accommodation, 1 bed apartment, mixed accommodation, family friendly accommodation)	✓****
Support to leave homelessness	Prioritise young people in criteria for council housing	✓	✓****
	Clear access to support services	✓	✓
	Family support	✓	
	Financial support to move home	✓	✓
	Support to buy home	✓****	✓

**FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS
CONSULTATION - FINAL**

Question	Theme	Young Travellers	Young homeless
	Support with education/employment and better wages	✓***	✓***
	Mental health services	✓***	✓***
	Address discrimination by age/race	✓***	✓***
	Provide more protection from violence		✓***
	Establish group with membership/voice of Traveller community	✓***	

*** Priority for action/dominant message