



roundabout
YOUR LOCAL YOUTH HOUSING CHARITY

Changing the Narrative

Preventing young people from becoming homeless in Sheffield.

An evaluation report of National Lottery Funded Work in Roundabout.

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List of abbreviations:

MHCLG – the Ministry of Housing , Communities and Local Government

PSHE - Personal, Social, Health and Economic education: the part of the National Curriculum through which education work on housing and homelessness usually takes place.

RSE - Relationships and Sex Education

H-CLIC – the Homelessness Case Level Collection, the data specification and system which local authorities use to record statutory homelessness case level data.

HSS - The Housing Solutions Service – A Sheffield City Council service, including statutory homelessness , rough sleeping, access to supported housing and re-housing options

SAR – Shared Accommodation Rate – the housing costs/benefit payable to most single under 35 year olds living in the private rented sector on low incomes unless they are exempt from this. The SAR is intended to cover the cost of a room in a shared house.



Executive Summary

Roundabout is a charity providing a wide range of accommodation and support services to support young people who are or may be at risk of homelessness in South Yorkshire. For the last 8 years or so, Roundabout has made a conscious decision to invest in services which prevent homelessness occurring amongst young people.

In July 2022 Roundabout was successful in securing 4 years of funding, totalling £343, 535 from the National Lottery's Reaching Communities England programme to support work on prevention of homelessness in Sheffield. The funding is due to end in June 2026. This evaluation report forms part of the funding agreement with the National Lottery.

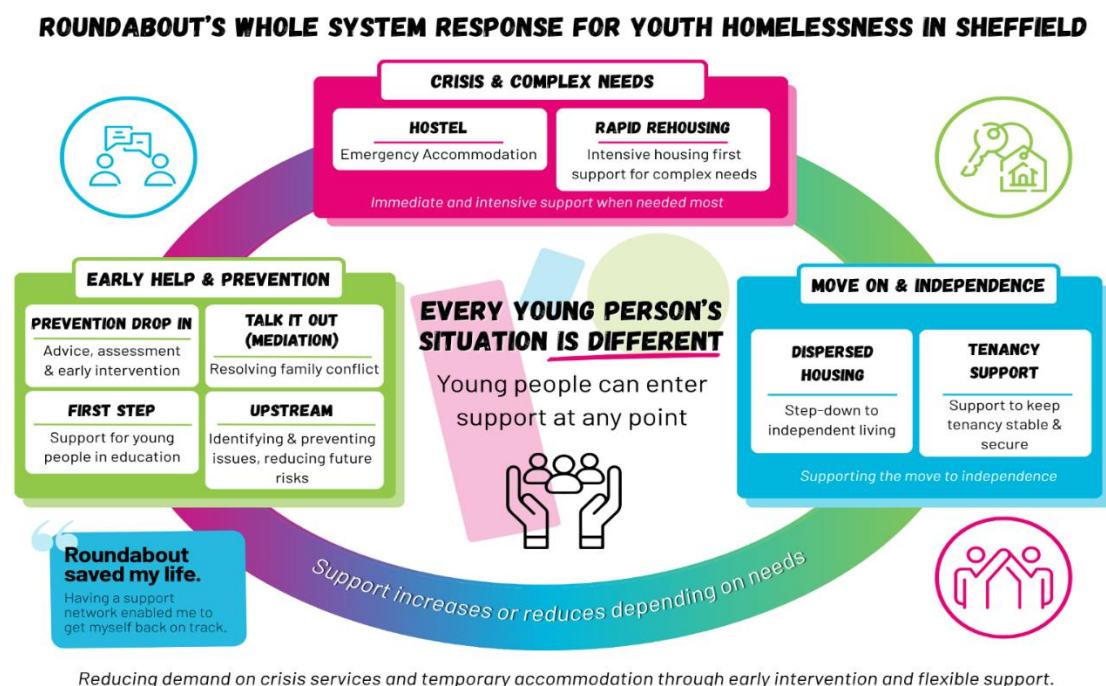
There are 3 distinct but linked services which the National Lottery grant contributes to within Roundabout. These are:

The Drop In Service, open 5 days a week providing advice, information, and support to prevent homelessness amongst young people and find immediate solutions if young people are already homeless.

Talk It Out, the mediation service, working with young people and their families to resolve the difficulties usually within the parental home, which can lead to young people becoming homeless.

The Peer Education Programme, which delivers interactive sessions, usually in school settings, to raise awareness and provide local information on the realities of homelessness.

The 3 prevention services which are the focus of this report form part of a much wider portfolio of services which Roundabout provides. Because of their interconnectedness, and the way in which young people can access these services seamlessly, the Prevention Service and the other accommodation and support components of Roundabout provide a comprehensive resource which is far greater than the sum of its parts.



When both statutory homelessness and rough sleeping numbers are higher than ever nationally, big statutory services which are geared to responding to continual crisis, can find it hard to shift to delivering improvements in prevention of homelessness. Smaller, and often more agile Third Sector agencies like Roundabout, can have a critical part to play in supporting local prevention of homelessness work.

In Sheffield, the outcomes achieved within Roundabout's prevention services are impressive. Despite a rise in demand of over 45% in the Drop In Service, and more complexity within casework, Roundabout's prevention work has led to a wide range of other positive outcomes for young people.

All of the targets and outputs agreed with the National Lottery have been exceeded, alongside other outcomes which have been secured for young people:

- Well over 1,600 young people have accessed the Drop In Service or Talk It Out Mediation Service for advice and support.
- No young people who were at risk of rough sleeping before coming to the Drop In Service have left with no option but to sleep rough.
- Based on a group of 762 young people who came to the Drop In Service for help, 100% had an accommodation outcome – none were left with no option but to sleep rough. Of these, 24% were already homeless¹.
- Around 40% of young people who were homeless or threatened with homelessness remained or returned to their parents/family or friends. The other 60% all had accommodation outcomes which comprised of a tenancy (private rented, with Roundabout's Future Builder's Scheme or social housing); supported housing; or Temporary Accommodation (provided by the Council).
- The Talk It Out Mediation Service prevented homelessness amongst 94% of the 145 mediation cases, which is exemplary.
- Young people who had mediation sessions feel more resilient, better able to deal with family conflict and far less likely to leave home in an unplanned way.
- Over 8,000 young people attending a peer education session, with around 90% of participants citing much greater increase in awareness and knowledge about homelessness and its causes – and where to go for help before a crisis.
- Young people with lived experience who become peer educators having more self-confidence, self-belief, and new skills.

The evidence set out in the report outlines the breadth and depth of the work and the outcomes achieved, which point to the importance of Roundabout's prevention services in Sheffield. There are also significant challenges, including a lack of short stay and emergency accommodation for young people and access to the private rented sector.

Roundabout has responded to a sharp rise in homelessness, including amongst young refugees, through knowledge, a focus on prevention. partnership working and an underlying organisational commitment to

¹ These are young people who needed more than 'light touch' advice, information or signposting, and were already either homeless or imminently homeless and came to the Drop In Service asking for help. Figures are over a 3 year period (April 2022 – March 2025).



prevent youth homelessness. Without the provision of Roundabout's services, it is reasonable to assume youth homelessness, including rough sleeping, in the City would be significantly higher.

In late 2025 a new strategy, '*A National Plan to End Homelessness*,' was published by the Government, setting out a clear ambition to increase success rates in preventing homelessness. This directs local authorities and their partners towards stopping homelessness occurring in the first place – for both single people and families. Funding to councils has increased with the expectation that there will be more resource targeted towards the avoidance of housing crisis.

There is much that can be learnt by other agencies, not least local authorities, in terms of the work of the prevention services provided by Roundabout and where and how investment in youth homelessness services can make a real difference.

At the moment Sheffield City Council is under-performing on preventing homelessness (for all age groups), with a lower prevention success rate than, for example, the national or regional averages and all but 1 other 'core city' outside London. This is based on nationally published statutory homelessness data from April 2022 up to the end of September 2025. Despite progress in some other areas of performance, prevention of homelessness is not yet showing signs of significant improvement. The Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out an ambition to significantly increase performance on prevention, but whilst some work is underway in the Council, and with partners, progress is slow.

A Youth Homelessness Group, led by the Council's Housing Solutions Service, is made up of a range of stakeholders and works to try to improve outcomes for young people through partnership working. Whilst this is to be welcomed, the report finds that no one in the Housing Solutions Service really 'holds the ring' on young people on a day-to-day basis, with the exception of care leavers. There are no specialist Youth Housing Solutions Officers in the Council, which is unusual for a large city. With the exception of care leavers, joint working with external partners is largely unstructured, resulting in inconsistency and some misunderstanding.

In Sheffield, Roundabout's commitment to young people means their services are in effect masking the extent of demand, and significant gaps in statutory services. Whilst both laudable and highly effective, this organisational drive to assist young people perhaps puts off the question within the Council about the need to realign resources so there is more dedicated focus on this age group.

Because of a renewed Government commitment to improve prevention outcomes, there is an opportunity ahead to build on what is already happening in Sheffield. Local authorities now have the opportunity and the motivation to tilt services and resourcing much more towards prevention work. In Sheffield, to learn from 'what works well' in youth homelessness, the City Council's Housing Solutions Services need look no further than Roundabout, one of the highest performing youth homelessness services in the country. There are of course other operating models, different partnership arrangements and ways of working to explore in other areas, but the hard outcomes achieved by Roundabout speak for themselves.



Structured partnership working, with adequate core resourcing, is the only way to end youth homelessness and Sheffield really does have the opportunity to *'change the narrative'* for this group of young people.

As well as meeting and exceeding all of the agreed outcomes with the National Lottery, the report highlights other positive outcomes and also areas for development. These are set out as observations and recommendations relating to the 3 different prevention services.

The Drop In Service observations:

- The Drop In Service is a well- established and trusted part of the City's offer to young people who need housing advice or help if they are at risk of homelessness.
- The numbers of young people accessing the Drop In Service have increased by 45% in the last 4 years.
- A significant proportion of young people seek help from the Drop In Service before they are in crisis and have an outcome of 'advice only.'
- The Drop In Service is performing well on preventing and relieving homelessness.
- On the 16/17 year old age group, the Drop In Service plays a key role in work to prevent and relieve homelessness, but Sheffield City Council's housing pathways and joint work are not as developed as they need to be.
- Some care leavers do come to the Drop In Service but structured joint working and housing pathways within Sheffield City Council mean this group is less likely to need the support of Roundabout – this is very positive.
- Roundabout has been exemplary in its response to young refugees who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Roundabout has played a key role in keeping rough sleeping low amongst young people in Sheffield, despite the lack of Council- funded emergency accommodation in the City for this group.
- Prevention work and outcomes for young people could be significantly improved in the Housing Solutions Service with improved work with the Drop In Service, but currently joint work is largely unstructured, inconsistent and crisis focussed.

Talk It Out Mediation Service observations:

- The mediation model used is very flexible in its approach to working with families.
- The Service reaches young people in different settings and situations, but a lack of staffing capacity means it is difficult to proactively promote the Service widely with schools in particular.



- The outcomes for young people are outstanding.
- Feedback from parents and young people, indicates the experience has led to lasting insights and learning that positively change how families communicate - they have changed the narrative about themselves.

Peer education observations

- The reach of the Peer Education Service could be extended, but it would take more time to engage and build relationships with new schools and academy trusts.
- By training a pool of young people with lived experience as peer educators, there have been other impacts on the organisation, including having a group of youth ambassadors and employing young people with lived experience.
- The impact on young people who become peer educators is likely to positively influence their life outcomes, in particular their career paths.
- There are very few other examples of youth homelessness peer education work, but some youth housing agencies in England are doing other types of related work, like anger management, dealing with conflict, peer relationships and independent living skills, in school settings.
- There is no way to directly evidence if peer education work helps to prevent homelessness, but students and their teachers are better informed as a result of the peer education sessions.

A summary of recommendations

A series of more detailed recommendations are set out within the report but in summary these relate to:

- Improving understanding amongst partners of the impact of Roundabout's Prevention Services and how outcomes are achieved. This would be through the Youth Homelessness Group and meetings at a strategic and operational level within the Council.
- Developing more structured processes and better resourced partnership working between the Housing Solutions Service and Roundabout on youth homelessness prevention, including some specialist Youth Housing Solutions Officers.
- Improving casework recording in the Drop In Service so it better follows the flow of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- Reviewing and developing more suitable emergency accommodation specifically for young people - there is no ringfenced commissioned provision currently in the City.



- The City Council should develop as a matter of urgency a bespoke private rented sector offer, to give more confidence to landlords to let to single under 25 year olds who cannot readily access social housing on leaving supported housing or need a housing option to prevent homelessness.
- Committing more time/resource to promoting the work of the Peer Education Service and Talk It Out Mediation Service to schools and academy trusts.
- Considering ways to involve young people with lived experience in other work in Roundabout and the Youth Homelessness Group.



Introduction

1.1 Overview

This evaluation report has been commissioned to look at the effectiveness and learning from a set of homelessness prevention service which are targeted at young people in Sheffield. The services are provided by Roundabout, a specialist youth homelessness charity which works across South Yorkshire, providing supported accommodation and more 'upstream' prevention services to young people.

In July 2022 Roundabout was successful in securing £343,535 of funding over a 4 year period, from the National Lottery's Reaching Communities England programme. This was specifically to support work on prevention of youth homelessness through 3 services: the Drop In Service; the Talk It Out Mediation Service and the Peer Education Programme. This funding is due to end in June 2026. This evaluation aims to outline what works well, what the learning has been, any new or unexpected developments and what could be done in the future to improve prevention of youth homelessness in Sheffield.

The 3 prevention services which are the focus of this report form part of a much wider portfolio of services which Roundabout provides. Because of their interconnectedness, and the way in which young people can access these services seamlessly, the Prevention Service and the other accommodation and support components of Roundabout provide a comprehensive resource which is far greater than the sum of its parts. All the elements within the Prevention Service and the wider Roundabout accommodation and support services, play a specific role, adding value individually and collectively, in terms of outcomes for young people and savings to the public purse.



Roundabout's prevention work in Sheffield is almost entirely funded through short term grants from charitable trusts, including the National Lottery's grant of £343,535. The total cost of the services provided is around £650,000 per annum. The City Council provides £22,000 of funding towards prevention work, which is for the mediation service, Talk It Out. At the point of drafting this report, there was some uncertainty in Roundabout about future funding, as the Housing Solutions Service may commission mediation services more generically, for all age groups.

Successful prevention work with young people at risk of homelessness relies on joint working with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary. This report therefore looks at the work in Roundabout but sets this within the wider context of tackling youth homelessness in Sheffield with other partner agencies.

1.2 Changing the narrative - the Government's drive to refocus on prevention of homelessness.

The rising levels of homelessness in England, including youth homelessness, is a key concern for Government, local authorities and Third Sector agencies across England.

A symptom of rising homelessness is that tangible prevention work is not taking place consistently within statutory homelessness services. In part this is because over the last 6-8 years local authorities have been increasingly managing homelessness crisis to the detriment of prevention work, and the basics of good prevention work practice have been lost or the focus has shifted in many areas of the country.

The Government has recently reiterated that prevention of homelessness is a priority, and has developed a new national homelessness strategy, *A National Plan to End Homelessness*, setting out the rationale, the vision and cross-Government actions².

Alongside the new national homelessness prevention strategy, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has committed significant additional funding in the 2025 Spending Review to local housing authorities, with a 3 year settlement aimed at making all councils refocus on prevention work³.

The Government is mindful of how hard it is to divert funding and energy from crisis to prevention, but their new funding formula and guidance aim to drive councils down the route of undertaking more practical prevention and relief work⁴.

'*Changing the narrative*' is a direct quote from a young person who is a peer educator in Roundabout. She was talking about how agencies could be much more effective in preventing youth homelessness if they

² See here for the National Plan to End Homelessness: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness#introduction>

³ See here for the allocation by local authority area of the ringfenced Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant from 2026/27 to 2028/29: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allocations-tables-for-all-consolidated-grants-from-2026-2027-to-2028-2029>

⁴ The Government issued '*Supporting Guidance for the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant*' to all housing authorities in December 2025 setting out how the new ringfenced grants should be used and that the grant cannot be spent on temporary accommodation, except in very specific circumstances. Amounts to be used to fund Temporary Accommodation costs are now within the main local authority 'Revenue Support Grant' and is not ringfenced.



helped young people earlier and if they listened to and cared more about young people. But it is also what the Government are wanting local authorities and their partners to do – move away from crisis and invest in prevention work. How achievable this might be is a question for Roundabout but also for statutory partners in Sheffield.

It is very positive that there is a Youth Homelessness Group, led by Sheffield City Council and attended by partner agencies. A city-wide drive to improve joint working and outcomes around youth homelessness prevention is led and overseen by this group, and it could play a pivotal role in changing the narrative and the practical work on youth homelessness, from crisis to more joint work on prevention.

1.3 The case for young people and homelessness prevention

There is a compelling economic reason to invest in preventing youth homelessness: young people who become homeless are significantly more likely than their older counterparts to experience repeat or entrenched homelessness, if their housing crisis cannot be resolved successfully.⁵ There is direct evidence of this in Sheffield, where in 2024/25, 17% of the 582 single young people who were accepted by the Council as either homeless or threatened with homelessness had previously been homeless⁶.

Most young people who become homeless do so from the family home. Young people are particularly disadvantaged if they become homeless or have to leave home or care in an unplanned way. They experience a sudden shock or change in their economic circumstances and social networks. Often alone, they are not experienced or equipped to cope with the world of adult systems and how to navigate them.

They are at higher risk of destitution due to reduced welfare entitlements, lower minimum wage and a lack of employment experience. Landlords, including social landlords⁷ are concerned about letting to younger people, who have little or no experience in managing a tenancy and generally have less income than their older counterparts. All this reduces their housing options and increases other risks, including repeat homelessness and rough sleeping.

A shift towards more prevention work means proactive investment in what works well for young people, before the point of actual homelessness.

Therefore, learning from different delivery models which prevent youth homelessness, coupled with investment in ‘what works’ should be an essential focus for local authorities; combined authorities; voluntary agencies; and housing associations across England. If Sheffield City Council wants to drive up

⁵ Based on 500 interviews with single homeless people in 2014, 50% of them were first homeless aged under 20. See Crisis 2014 report on single homelessness across Great Britain: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/nations-apart-experiences-of-single-homeless-people-across-great-britain-2014/#:~:text=Nearly%2050%25%20of%20respondents%20first,people%20first%20became%20homeless%20from>

⁶ Taken from information provided for this report by the Housing Solutions Service, Sheffield City Council

⁷ For example, discretionary local lettings policies can place age restrictions on some social housing in areas within local authorities, which means no one under the age of, for example 45 years old, can be offered a tenancy.



positive outcomes in prevention, it has learning from local youth homelessness work literally on its doorstep – the different prevention service which Roundabout deliver.

1.4 The National Lottery Reaching Communities funding.

The funding awarded to Roundabout through the Reaching Communities programme has contributed to the following areas of prevention work:

The Peer Education Programme, which delivers interactive sessions, usually in school settings, to raise awareness and provide local information on the realities of homelessness. The Programme is delivered by young people with lived experience of homelessness who are trained and supported by the full-time Peer Education worker. Sessions are usually delivered through the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) part of the National Curriculum.

The Drop In Service is open 5 days a week and provides advice, information and support to prevent homelessness amongst young people. It has a base in Sheffield city centre, conveniently located opposite the main reception point for all statutory homelessness work in Sheffield. It operates in an environment of high demand and complexity, and so partnership working is essential to achieve positive outcomes.

Talk It Out is the mediation service, working with young people and their families to resolve the difficulties usually within the parental home, which can lead to young people becoming homeless.

Table 1: The outputs and outcomes associated with the Reaching Communities funding.

| Agreed service /activity funded through Reaching Communities | Agreed outputs or outcomes from the service/activity |
|--|--|
| The Talk It Out mediation service and the 'Drop In' advice service | <p>400 young people a year (or 1,600 across the 4 years) access advice and/or mediation</p> <p>Young people engaging with the Mediation Service feel more resilient, better able to deal with family conflict and 'far less likely' to leave home in an unplanned way.</p> <p>The project will prevent every young person engaged with from sleeping rough.</p> |
| Delivery of peer education work in schools and other youth provision | <p>2,000 young people a year have peer education session (or 8,000 young people across the 4 years)</p> <p>Young people who become peer educators have more self-confidence, self-belief and new skills.</p> |



1.5 A theory of change for youth homelessness prevention

The evaluation draws on the St Basils' Positive Pathway Framework – a theory of change set in a national toolkit for improving young people's housing journeys and support⁸. Roundabout have based their prevention work on the theory and practice within the Positive Pathway toolkit over at least 8 years. The Positive Pathway takes a systemic approach to tackling homelessness -it aims to help councils and their partners to design homelessness out of young people's lives.

The Positive Pathway framework is about '*changing the narrative*' - it aims to move services and some of the resource away from the deficit model of youth homelessness crisis – which is where most of the focus on youth housing policy tends to lie - into prevention and more positive housing options, aligned with employment, education and training activity and health and well-being outcomes.

The framework has been promoted by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)⁹. There is a suite of three nationally recognised 'Positive Pathway' frameworks.

- The generic '*Positive Pathway*' framework, which applies to 16 – 25-year-olds.
- The '*Care Leaver Accommodation and Support Framework*' has been developed to assist joint working around those young people who will not be leaving a parental home but be leaving care.
- The '*Youth Justice Accommodation Pathway*' which applies to young people, including care leavers, if they have some involvement with the criminal justice system.

The 'generic' model is set out in Appendix One.

It is based on a 'whole systems' approach, underpinned by partnership working, youth voice and real examples of what works well in different areas. There are five elements of the Pathway:

Universal Prevention – protective activity that provides good quality information and generic advice/help on housing options/choices and what it takes, in terms of skills, knowledge, support and resilience to leave home, care or custody successfully, without the crisis of homelessness being a factor. *The Peer Education Programme fits into this area.*

Targeted Prevention – Individual advanced planning, including contingency planning, with vulnerable young people and their family or carers to avoid a risk of future homelessness. *The Talk It Out mediation service fits here, as well as in element 3 below.*

Crisis Prevention and Relief – what happens when a young person is homeless or is at very high risk of becoming homeless. *The Drop In Service and Talk It Out mediation service fit here.* Other services, like emergency accommodation also fit here.

⁸ See page 30 of the Parliamentary Briefing for a summary of St Basils and the Positive Pathway: [https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10421/CBP10067-\(July-2024\).pdf](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10421/CBP10067-(July-2024).pdf)



Commissioned Accommodation and Support – the range of options locally for young people to live in accommodation with some support as needed.

Sustainable Housing – the longer-term options which enable young people to move on by entering and sustaining employment, education or training.

1.6 Methodology

This report has been drafted using two main sources of information:

1. Relevant data and information sources:

- Data collected by the Homelessness Prevention Service over the last three-and-a-half years, relating to the case-level work through the Drop In Service, Talk It Out mediation service and the Peer Education Programme work in schools and colleges.
- Reports and strategy documents available in the public domain, published by Sheffield City Council
- Data from a 4 week 'snapshot' exercise in the Drop In Service.
- Data provided by Framework, the rough sleeping outreach service in Sheffield.
- Data available in the public domain relating to local and national statistics on statutory homelessness, often called H-CLIC data.
- Data available in the public domain relating to local and national statistics on rough sleeping.
- The funding agreement with National Lottery's Reaching Communities programme and annual reports submitted by Roundabout to the National Lottery outlining the work each year against the agreed outcomes.
- Youth homelessness prevention models from other areas of England.
- The 'Positive Pathway' youth homelessness prevention toolkits published by St Basils.¹⁰

2. Interviews and group discussions with key informants:

- Individual and small group interviews with Roundabout staff from the Homelessness Prevention Service.
- Individual and group discussions with young people who are trained as peer educators.
- Interviews with external stakeholders in Sheffield
- Interviews with a youth homelessness agency delivering some similar work on prevention of homelessness through work in schools and mediation.

1.7 The Sheffield position on young people and homelessness prevention.

Sheffield City Council's Housing Solutions Service (HSS) delivers work on statutory homelessness, rough sleeping and the management of admissions into supported housing as well as re-housing options - social housing and private rented accommodation.

¹⁰ St Basils (2019). See here for the 3 different Positive Pathway documents: <https://stbasils.org.uk/about-us/the-positive-pathway/>



Some councils, particularly larger more urban ones, have a 'youth hub' or single front door which aims to prevent homelessness through specialist youth housing services, delivered by a partnership of the local authority (Housing and Children's Services) and sometimes the Third Sector. These are co- located in a single place. Others have a version of this, or simply designated specialist homelessness prevention officers who work only with young people. Examples include Birmingham, Bristol, Hull, Kirklees, Newcastle and most of the London boroughs.

Sheffield does not have this operating model, although for some other groups at risk of homelessness there are designated specialist roles in the HSS, for example, work with refugees and people being discharged from hospital. Children's Services in Sheffield fund a social worker for 16 and 17 year olds at risk of homelessness, but there are no equivalent specialist roles in the Housing Solutions Service. This means Sheffield City Council see all young people through the same 'front door' and process them in the same way as older adults. The detail of how the local authority statutory homelessness service works alongside the Roundabout 'Drop In' Service is covered later in this report.

Sheffield City Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan for 2023-2028 was updated in 2025¹¹ to reflect local and national priorities, the significant increases in Government grant for homelessness and the work with The Royal Foundation through the Homewards Programme in Sheffield¹². There is no significant focus on future priorities for young people aside from care leavers. But the strategy sets out clear targets on prevention and describes an ambition to be 'pro-actively' preventing homelessness:

'We will see at least 75% of people when they are at risk of losing their home and we can work with them to prevent homelessness. As we will be seeing them earlier, we will aim to successfully prevent homelessness for at least 80% of these people.'

These are ambitious targets, given the current position, which is that 50% of households (all ages) are already homeless when they come to the Council for help, and of those that are not yet homeless, only 39% are helped to 'secure' accommodation for at least 6 months¹³. Partnership working will be critical to drive up performance.

The HSS has recently revised the criteria against which single people access supported housing. With few exceptions, only people who are homeless and are assessed to have a 'priority need' for Temporary Accommodation will be offered supported housing. This is a way of trying to ensure those who most need the accommodation and support access it.

¹¹ See the Policy Committee Decision report here:

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s80383/Form%2020%20HPRS%20Strategy%20Action%20Plan%202025.pdf>

¹² Sheffield is one of 6 areas selected by The Royal Foundation as part of the Homewards Programme, to trial new ways of preventing homelessness amongst people of all ages. Roundabout is a partner in this initiative and is delivering targeted work in schools with under 16s who may be at risk of homelessness in the future, and work with young people who are already homeless, to avoid repeat homelessness.

¹³ Taken from the statutory homelessness Quarter 2 (July – September) 2025/26 HCLIC statistics.



This local change on access to supported housing should sharpen the focus of the City Council on prevention of homelessness for single people with support needs in particular – without doing this, there is a high risk of increased single homelessness and potentially rough sleeping, as not everyone, in fact relatively few people, will be deemed to have a ‘priority need’.



2. Peer education work

2.1 Primary prevention work:

Roundabout’s peer education programme is ‘primary’ prevention work, delivered in universal services, schools and colleges. This is not ‘targeted’ work aimed at children or young people who are more likely to be at risk of homelessness than their peers but is the provision of general information on housing options and awareness raising about homelessness for everyone¹⁴. The peer education programme fits in the first element of the St Basils’ ‘Positive Pathway’ (See Appendix One for the framework). The Programme has met all of the outputs and outcomes agreed with the National Lottery, which are shown in the Table below:

Table 2: National Lottery agreed outcomes and progress to date for the Peer Education Programme

| Agreed activity or outcome with the National Lottery | Metrics used to determine impact | Progress to date |
|--|---|---|
| 2,000 young people a year attend a peer education session. | 8,000 young people to attend peer education sessions by the end of the 4 years of funding. | Number of young people attending a peer education session: Year 1 1,981 Year 2 1,356 Year 3 2,921 Year 4 to date: 1,452 Likely to meet the 8,000 target by the end of June 2026. |
| Peer education will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give young people a greater awareness of homelessness. • Enable young people to recognise when they are at risk of homelessness within the family home. • Give young people the knowledge to know how to access housing advice and family mediation if needed | Young people attending a session self-report better understanding, awareness, and knowledge about homelessness. | Average over 3 years: 98% reported a greater awareness of homelessness. 96% reported they would be able to recognise if they were at risk of homelessness in the family home. 94% reported an understanding of how family mediation could help them if they had problems at home. 89% said they would contact the Drop In Service if they were unhappy at home. 90% said they were more likely to remain at home as a result of the session. |

¹⁴ Note that Roundabout also delivers targeted work in schools with young people at higher risk of homelessness through the Royal Foundation Homewards programme: <https://www.roundabouthomeless.org/who-we-are/homeless-prevention/upstream-england/> . This is a completely separate programme within Roundabout.



| | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------|
| Young people who become peer educators have more self-confidence, self-belief and new skills. | Peer educators self-report more confidence, self-belief and new skills as a result of becoming a peer educator | Self-scoring 0 – 10 averages based on 4 peer educators: | |
| | | Before | |
| | | After | |
| | | Self -confidence: | 3.2 8.1 |
| | | Self-belief: | 2.0 7.5 |
| | | New skills | 4.7 8.2 |

Some young people who have lived experience of homelessness reflect that if they – and their teachers - had known more about the consequences of being homeless and had an idea of where to get help, they might not have ended up homeless in the first place¹⁵. For some, who could not have remained where they were, knowledge and/or youth friendly information could have routed them towards advice earlier if they faced a threat of homelessness.

As noted in Section 1, young people generally are particularly disadvantaged in the housing market and at higher risk of homelessness than older counterparts, by virtue of their age, inexperience and their comparatively low incomes. As the cost of renting or buying a home has increased, more young people are remaining in the parental home much longer than they did 10 or 20 years ago¹⁶.

Councils are required to provide accessible general information to the public on housing options, but this tends to focus more on homelessness than provision of general housing per se¹⁷. Typically, local authority websites set out the kinds of help that might be available generally and for some groups at high risk of homelessness, like victims of domestic abuse and care leavers, the Homelessness Code of Guidance sets out that bespoke information should be available.

In most council areas, there is not enough information specifically for young people and their parents/carers, which is easy to understand, sets out the realities of the housing market and signposts young people and their parents/carers to agencies which can assist with issues which can cause youth homelessness, such as conflict in families. There tends to be more information about housing options once young people are homeless. There are a few ways that some local authorities and other agencies try to plug that gap:

- Local youth friendly pages of information and advice on local authority or local voluntary agency websites
- National websites, but these often start from the premise that a young person is already at risk of homelessness, and they do not always help with understanding the range of realistic available options, local services and where to go for help.

¹⁵ A message about work in schools has come across consistently over the several national Youth Homelessness Parliaments which Roundabout have participated in, for example: <https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/YHP-Report-2018.pdf>

¹⁶ See the Office of National Statistics 2024 report: <https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2024/04/12/our-changing-population-is-there-for-all-to-see/> and <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2024>

¹⁷ See Chapter 3 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance Section on requirements under Section 179 of the Housing Act 1996: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-3-advice-and-information-about-homelessness-and-the-prevention-of-homelessness>



- Theatre groups performing plays to large groups of young people, which deliver a clear prevention message – what leads to homelessness and how to avoid it.
- Educational resource packs, often including on-line films, sent to teachers, youth workers and other professionals who work with young people.
- Local authorities and/or voluntary agencies working directly with young people in schools, colleges, and other youth settings .

A local authority could have more than one of the above happening in their area, but the reality is increasingly that there is a paucity of upstream activity in the ‘universal’ space of homelessness prevention - the first ‘element’ of the St Basils’ Positive Pathway.

2.2 The peer education model in Sheffield:

Roundabout has been delivering peer education work in secondary schools and colleges since 2015, with young people who have lived experience of homelessness taking a key role in delivery of sessions to students, which are almost always in classroom settings.

The peer-led sessions on homelessness try to address the gap in information and knowledge on housing options and homelessness through:

- Challenging the stereotypical view of the profile of a homeless person, aiming to send the message that homelessness can happen to anyone, including young people.
- Raising awareness about the different causes of homelessness
- Giving clear information about where to go for help and advice if there is a possible risk of homelessness.

Practical, local information is introduced at various points and in accessible formats during the sessions. Young people are given Roundabout’s contact details. The issue of affordability is explored, to make students aware of how difficult managing alone financially would be. They are also told about and shown photos of Roundabout’s ‘Drop In’ building in the city centre, so it’s easier for them to find it if they do need advice.

Peer educators talk about their own experience of using the Drop In Service, in order to give students an insight into their own experience.

The Peer Education workers also introduce the ‘Talk It Out’ Mediation Service to students through looking at the main reason for youth homelessness - family breakdown. The role of mediation is simply set out and photos of the Mediation Workers are shared to de-mystify the Service. In some schools, the Mediation Service has had a regular presence as well as the peer education work, and where this is the case, this is also shared with students.

The sessions, which typically last between 45 – 60 minutes, end with one of the peer educators sharing with the class their story, what happened to them, why, how they coped, the impact it’s had on them. This is a particularly powerful part of the lesson.



2.3 Observation: The reach of the Peer Education Service could be extended, but it would take more time to engage and build relationships with new schools and academy trusts.

Building relationships with schools continues to be a core part of the work of the Peer Education Co-ordinator. The Peer Education programme's reach is currently 14 secondary schools and the 2 largest Further Education colleges, which is a third of all the secondary schools and colleges in the City, but there is some capacity within the Service to work in more schools if opportunities to do so arise.

With most of the 16 schools and colleges, there is a long-standing relationship. However, if a lead teacher leaves (often head of faculty for Citizenship, Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)), there is a risk that the relationship will not continue, unless the teacher passes on details prior to leaving. This reliance on a personal contact in a school is somewhat precarious and requires the Peer Education Co-ordinator to be communicating with the schools continually.

This risk has been reduced in 2 of the academy schools, which have used their flexibility to develop their own curricula to include the Roundabout Peer Education sessions on homelessness into their teaching programmes. This indicates not only that these schools both value and trust the work of Roundabout, but they wish the work to continue for the foreseeable future.

Given the number of 'secondary schools in Sheffield which are part of multi-academy trusts, the Peer Education Co-ordinator is trying a different approach to try to extend the reach of the programme, through talking directly to the multi-academy trusts which operate within Sheffield. This is a new approach to widening the reach of the Peer Education Service, and its impact is not yet known.

Finding space in an already congested timetable for students is difficult but the Peer Education Co-ordinator has found that schools are amenable to arranging sessions at different points the school year, rather than fixing all the sessions through the year at the beginning of the new term in September.

2.4 Observation: By training a pool of young people with lived experience as peer educators, there have been other impacts on the organisation, including having a group of youth ambassadors and employing young people.

All the peer educators have lived experience of being homeless and bring this to the fore of the work with students in schools and colleges. Recruitment and training take time and inevitably some young people who sign up do not complete the training, or if they do, they do not go on to become peer educators.

The number of young people who are actively working as part of the peer education programme fluctuates. At the point of gathering information for this evaluation there are 7 active peer educators and a training programme for new peer educators is planned for the end of March 2026. Recruiting and then training and supporting peer educators is a major part of the work of the Peer Education Co-ordinator.



"It's always challenging around training for young people, for example the last time I had 11 young people signed up for the training and only 4 finished. It always takes time for young people to see what they can get out of it - it's so much more than just going into schools". Peer Education Co-ordinator.

The Peer Education Co-ordinator is doing more groundwork prior to signing up for training, to see if this encourages more young people to become peer educators - and also help to reduce the rate of drop out. They are developing more organic ways into becoming a peer educator, for example, 'walk and talk' sessions with current peer educators, other young people living in Roundabout accommodation and Roundabout staff.

Young people who may be interested but not yet signed up are being encouraged to watch a session, to de-mystify what is involved. This works well and can be the catalyst to signing up for the training:

"It was a bit of a slow one to get me going – I didn't feel confident enough to do it, and I finally went in to watch a session. I then had a full day in college with Will [the Peer Education Co-ordinator] and signed up. I have said to other young people thinking about it, it's good to sign up for a day or a few sessions".
Peer Educator.

In addition, they have widened the remit of how the peer educators might share their insights and expertise by finding other opportunities to share their lived experience beyond sessions in schools and colleges – for example through Roundabout fundraising events and speaking at conferences in South Yorkshire. There has not been any link so far with the young people and the Youth Homelessness Group.

The peer educators in Roundabout are offered the option of working towards a Level 2 qualification in Further Learning and Employment through Open Awards. This supports the aspirations and plans of many of the peer educators to get qualifications. In September 2025 4 young peer educators achieved Level 2.

2.5 Observation: The impact on young people who become peer educators is likely to positively influence their life outcomes, in particular their career paths:

The impact on the peer educators that were interviewed is significant. The young people interviewed were all initially drawn to being peer educators to both learn new skills but also to 'give something back' to Roundabout and to try to prevent other young people from becoming homeless:

"If it can help other young people, I thought I would give it a go – I would not want anyone else to have to go through what I did, to be honest."
Peer Educator



Understandably young people were nervous about stepping into a new, unfamiliar role:

"The only part I was worried about - was about being an asylum seeker and now a refugee. I had no idea what I was meant to be doing. Even though I used to speak in debates at school and had some English, I could not imagine doing it."

Peer Educator

As part of their interviews for this evaluation report, young people were asked to 'score' where they were in terms of confidence and self-belief before and after becoming a peer educator. They noted a wide range of positive impacts on their lives, in terms of self-confidence and self-belief through being involved in peer education:

"It's quite isolating being homeless.... I could feel myself slowly feeling like the stereotype that people had created - but Roundabout helped me to challenge that stereotype."

Peer Educator

"I am not at the finish line yet, but it's [the score] high up there now thanks to Peer Education giving me structure. That little thing, being part of Peer Education, can make everything worthwhile."

Peer Educator

"Roundabout has helped me so much. Even though I tried my best to look perfect, I felt at times I should not exist, but they [the Peer Education Co-ordinator] supported me. They tried to make my mind shift".

Peer Educator

All the young people were working to improve their skills and career prospects, and cited the Peer Education Programme as instrumental in this:

"I didn't think I was gonna make any career changes and I was going to be on benefits all my life and I would never make anything of my life."

Peer Educator

Young people were clear about the skills they had gained as well:

'Time management - much better with this. Motivation. Punctuality. Academic'

2 peer educators

"Day by day I am getting better skills – time management, communication skills, critical thinking, learning about boundaries".

Peer Educator

Others describe it as simply life altering:



"It's been a gateway to a lot of things for me."

Peer Educator

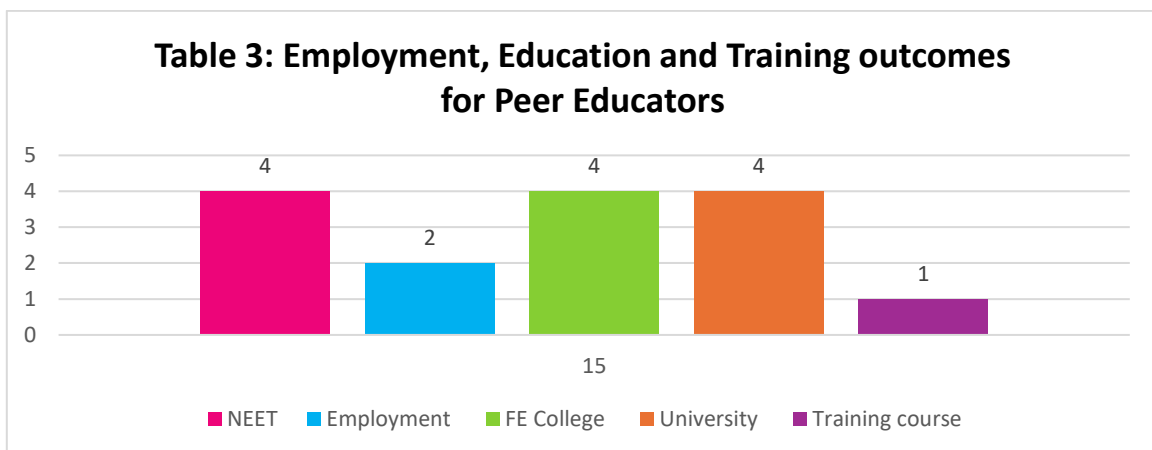
"I'm so grateful to her [a member of Roundabout staff] for telling me about it as it's made me a completely different person. It's sparked up so many different things I could do now. Like I have always wanted my own business and I think I could do that now, some time in the future."

Peer Educator

There is a strong link between being a peer educator and being in employment, education, or training. Some young people who are peer educators may already be at college or working at the point they sign up to being a peer educator. But most are not, and their feedback indicates that the experience of being a peer educator not only builds confidence and self-belief, but for the majority, it opens up new possibilities for the future.

"I'm in uni now and I don't know what I will do exactly but I know where to go for help. The one thing I was lacking was structure in my day and myself, I would have struggled with uni without the structure - to set my day up".

Peer Educator



The monitoring information by itself does not tell the story of the Peer Education Programme over the last 3 and a half years, it cannot reflect the profound impact the Programme has had on some of the peer educators.

The combination of peer education training, being part of a team, having responsibility, needing to build structure to a day, co-delivering sessions, having a sense of purpose – of making an important contribution – and getting support from the Peer Education Co-Ordinator and other young people have all made a difference to individual young people who have experienced homelessness themselves. There are other aspects which are not recorded or easily measurable, and are perhaps nebulous, but contribute to enriching young people's lives.



“All of us have helped other young people, who aren’t peer educators. it [peer education] is a domino effect when friends see us succeeding - it rubs off on them, you can either drag each other down or motivate each other.”

Peer Educator

The net effect of becoming a peer educator is significant not only for the individuals, their personal well-being and career prospects, but also for other young people:

One recent example is a former peer educator, who now has a full-time paid trainee role within the Prevention Service, working in the Drop In Service alongside the other Drop In Service staff. She cites the Peer Education Programme as the gateway into that role. Other peer educators talked about this in their interviews and were proud of what she has achieved. One other young person with lived experience, is also some part-time cover work in Roundabout.

2.6 Observation: There are very few other examples of youth homelessness peer education work, but some youth housing agencies are doing other types of work in school settings.

There are very few other examples to directly compare Roundabout’s work to, as very few local areas have a comprehensive peer education model in place, although some areas do have schools-based workshops.

One comparable example is Broxtowe Youth Homeless, an organisation working across Nottinghamshire, where peer education work has been delivered for over 16 years¹⁸. Their approach is very similar, with training, a Level 2 qualification option for young people, and work in classroom settings. As an agency they are funded through 2 district housing authorities (Rushcliffe and Broxtowe) and Nottinghamshire County Council, as well through some Lottery funding.

Another agency, Herts Young Homeless, is not directly comparable, as they do not deliver peer education work, in part due to the logistics of supporting and co-ordinating young peer educators across a large county. They have a team of 2 full time and 1 volunteer member of staff, who work in every secondary school in Hertfordshire and deliver sessions on raising awareness about homelessness but also deliver other related sessions, so their offer to schools comprises of:

- 1) Home Truths – homelessness and myth busting the stereotypes.
- 2) Tipping Point - anger management.
- 3) Your voice your choice - looks at unhealthy peer relationships.
- 4) SiRI (‘Solve It, Resolve It’) - covers conflict resolution.
- 5) ‘Next Steps ‘ - independent living, including financial skills/managing money and tenancy agreements.

¹⁸ See here for more information about BHP’s peer education work in schools: https://broxtoweyouthhomeless.org.uk/what-we-do/?doing_wp_cron=1771932196.4816091060638427734375



The programme delivered by Herts Young Homeless is not comparable but included here to highlight examples of some supplementary sessions covering some of the drivers of homelessness amongst young people.

It may be that some other types of session could compliment what is already being delivered in schools and colleges, drawing on learning from Herts Young Homeless. This may not need to be all delivered by Roundabout but through a wider partnership following some mapping of what is already being delivered. For example, in Sheffield the Foyer is beginning to deliver some sessions in schools on independent living.

2.7 Observation: There is no way to directly evidence if peer education work helps to prevent homelessness, but students are better informed as a result of the peer education sessions.

Like much of the health related 'primary' prevention work that takes place, it is not possible to empirically 'prove' the impact of peer education work on homelessness rates without an in-depth longitudinal study. Sensibly most funders and local authorities understand this and support this kind of work on the basis that it can only be a good thing to raise awareness about homelessness knowing that the cost of homelessness far outweighs the cost of much earlier upstream prevention activity.

Even if it is not possible to directly attribute any reductions without a longitudinal study, it is reasonable to assume a greater level of awareness will prompt some young people to understand the ramifications of homelessness, and to ask for help earlier than they might otherwise have done. As will be outlined in Section 4 below, a high proportion of young people accessing the Drop In Service are self-referrals, well over 30% each year. They may have been told about the Service from friends, family, or they, or someone they know might have attended peer education sessions in school or college. Most young people who come to the Drop In Service do so because they are threatened with homelessness from their parental home, and as will be outlined in the next two Sections of the report, Roundabout has a high success rate in resolving situations with families and avoiding a repeated threat of homelessness.

It is therefore very likely that a small investment in that 'universal space' helps to reduce the numbers seeking help at a later stage, when they are already in crisis and homeless. This can have a profound impact on young people's life chances, as well as on a local authority and other public sector agencies, in terms of duties and costs: for example, 16 or 17-year-olds would potentially become looked after children on this basis and others would be owed a 'relief' duty, often resulting in moving to supported housing, or for some, into Temporary Accommodation, and then into social housing. People who have several episodes of repeat homelessness through their adult lives, are often first homeless when they are young¹⁹. Avoiding homelessness is a key objective which the Peer Education Programme contributes to.

¹⁹ See 2015 report, Hard Edges Mapping, by Glenn Bramley and Suzanne Fitzpatrick, published by the Lankelly Chase Foundation: https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/files/7906947/Hard_Edges_Mapping_SMD_FINAL_VERSION_Web.pdf



2.8 Recommendations:

- Roundabout could consider how to better embed peer education work within schools, so delivery is not so reliant on single points of contact with 1 teacher. For example, by encouraging other academy schools to write the Peer Education sessions on homelessness into their curriculum.
- Review with young people who are peer educators the current format/content of the sessions and if they think any changes might be useful.
- In addition to Peer Education, Roundabout could table at the Sheffield Youth Homelessness Group a proposal to develop work as a partnership which widens the offer in schools/colleges, including mapping what is already happening in schools to reduce young people's vulnerability to homelessness. Gaps to be filled may be on conflict; anger management; peer relationships and skills in living more independently. Learning from Herts Young Homeless and other agencies would be a key part of developing this work.
- Roundabout to consider if the peer education programme could form part of wider lived experience opportunities (both volunteer and trainee/employment based) for young people. This is already happening informally, but there may be an opportunity to review and re-shape work which promotes lived experience opportunities in the organisation and beyond, including the City-wide Youth Homelessness Group. If so, are there resource implications?



3. The Talk It Out Mediation Service

3.1 Overview of mediation work and the Talk It Out Service

Mediation work fits into the second element of the ‘Positive Pathway’ model (see Appendix One for the basic diagram). This is more ‘targeted’ upstream prevention work. Mediation work can also be used effectively as a prevention tool at the point of homelessness crisis.

There are other sorts of targeted prevention work, often led by Children’s Services through Early Help work with families. In Sheffield, as part of the Royal Foundation’s Homewards Programme, Roundabout is delivering some different targeted work which focusses on 3 secondary schools, in partnership with Centrepont. Using a model based on the Australian Geelong Project, this work identifies students in Year 9 who may be at risk of future homelessness and targets support to them and their families. Whilst not part of this evaluation report, the potential of this upstream targeted work is significant.

The Talk It Out mediation service works with around 50 young people and their families per year. Funding from a mixture of the Reaching Communities National Lottery funding and £22,000 from Sheffield City Council cover the cost of the Service, which employs 1 full time and 1 part time member of staff.

The Service is performing very highly, using a flexible model around conflict coaching, underpinned by specialist training and external supervision.

The Government recently recognised the Talk It Out Service, highlighting the Service as a good practice example in the national homelessness strategy ‘A National Plan to End Homelessness’.²⁰

Referrals or self-referrals can be made for young people aged between 13 and 24 years old. Over the last 3 full years of work, Talk It Out has seen 145 young people in total, of which 46% were under 16.

Table 4: National Lottery agreed outcomes and progress to date for the Talk It Out Service :

| Agreed activity or outcome with the National Lottery | Metrics used to determine impact | Progress to date |
|---|---|--|
| 400 young people a year access advice and/or mediation (Note this is across both the ‘Drop In’ Service and Talk It Out Service. | 1,600 young people by the end of the 4 years | Each year between 40 -50 young people with their families access the Talk It Out service. This, when added to the young people accessing the ‘Drop In’ prevention service as well adds up to over well over 400 young people a year. |
| Young people engaging with the Mediation Service feel more resilient, better able to deal with family conflict and ‘far less likely’ to leave home in an unplanned way. | Self-reporting through feedback from young people and their families. | Very positive feedback from young people and family members. |

²⁰ See Pillar 2: Targeted Prevention, in the national homelessness strategy ‘A Plan to End Homelessness’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness#pillar-2--targeted-prevention>



| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | Records kept by the 2 mediators of the starting points and progress made for each young person. | Outstanding performance in supporting young people to stay within their parental home or wider family networks. |
|--|---|---|

3.2 Observation: The mediation model is very flexible in its approach to working with families.

The mediators have significant experience and training in using a ‘conflict coaching’ model for their work with families. They are highly skilled and knowledgeable, and their expertise is the foundation for the success of the Service.

Conflict coaching is about helping people to be future focussed and finding solutions to often long-standing and difficult dynamics in a family. People tend to take away an understanding of themselves and how they operate in conflict situations – and how to change some of how they respond to challenging situations with family members.

Each family can have up to 13 sessions with a mediator. The sessions do not always bring families together – around 80% of the work is on an individual basis. As well as looking at managing conflict, the mediators will do some work with young people who think they want to move out of the family home, providing information and discussion on the realities of leaving home at a young age.

The fact there are up to 13 sessions gives families the time to get to know the mediator and meet in different ways, with parents/other family members and young people only meeting together if the time is right and if it is assessed as likely to be helpful to the work with individuals on management of conflict.

The Service does not do home visiting or work in the family home at all, as their experience is that more neutral settings work much better. But other than not working in young people’s homes, there is a very flexible offer. This has developed as a result of adapting the way mediators made contact with and ran sessions with families through the period of 2020 – 2022 when office or school based face-to-face work was affected by Covid-19.

The current delivery of mediation is based on flexibility in:

- Timings - being available at times that suit working parents.
- Being able to cover costs/expenses so parents can attend e.g. transport and childcare.
- The use of communication tools – e.g. WhatsApp,/Facetime, Teams/Zoom, text messages
- The location of face-to-face sessions e.g. a coffee shop, schools, the Drop In Service, going for a walk together

“...there is a lot of flexibility to see students and families wherever suits them and during holiday periods too.”

Pastoral lead for a secondary school



The mediators both noted that The Drop In Service office is welcoming, but it is very small, and often interview rooms are busy, so this is not ideal as a location. Despite this, a room has recently been refurbished to provide a more calming and comfortable environment for mediation and other work with young people.

3.3 Observation: The Service reaches young people in different settings and situations, but a lack of staffing capacity means it is difficult to proactively promote the Service widely with schools in particular.

Whilst the overall numbers are low, given there are only 1.2 full time equivalent mediators, the numbers of families that can be working with at any one time needs to be guided by capacity to deliver a high quality service.

There is more that could be done to raise awareness of the offer of mediation to schools and other agencies, but the mediators are constrained by the amount of time they have to promote the mediation offer and their capacity to take on more work.

To have an offer to schools for both the Mediation Service and the Peer Education Programme is a valuable combination in terms of universal and more targeted early prevention work. The work on homelessness through the Peer Education programme always promotes mediation as an option to students. But perhaps more could be done to promote both peer education and mediation in discussions with academy trusts, as well as in schools through pastoral leads and the lead teachers for PHSE and RES.

It may be that by combining more with the Peer Education Co-ordinator's work to promote peer education, particularly with academy trusts, there may be some more traction from schools. Even so, relationships take time to build.

"In schools –we are only as successful as the pastoral lead for this. It's about building relationships – face to face, and trust in us."

Roundabout Mediator

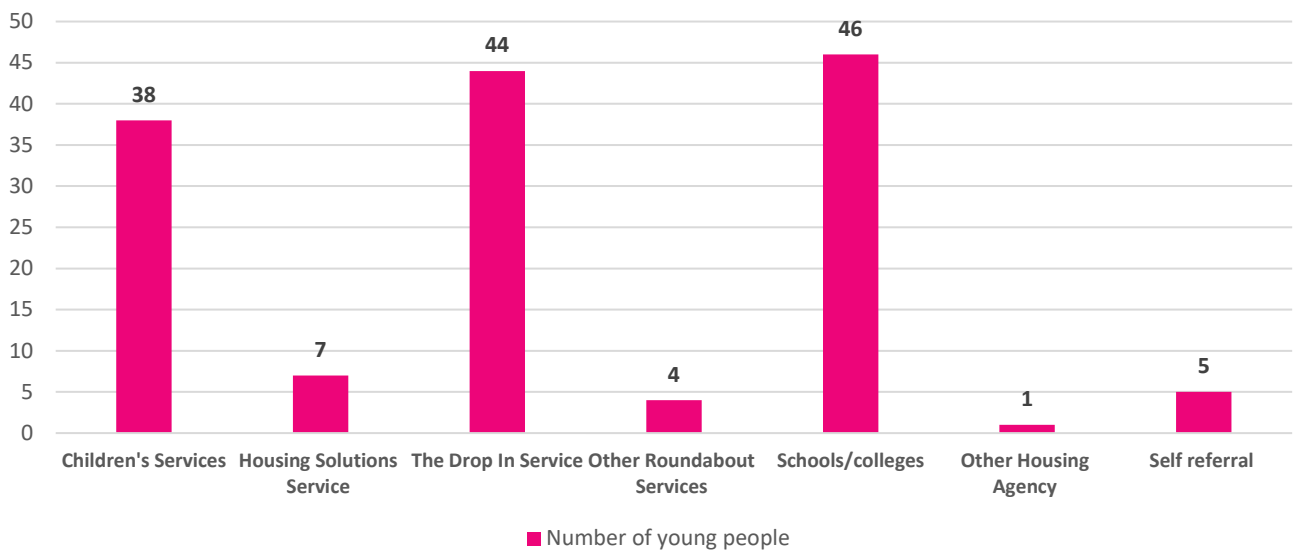
Once working relationships with pastoral leads are established, the referrals tend to follow on, with some schools making regular contact because their experience of working with Talk it Out mediators and feedback from students and parents is positive.

"Finding rooms is difficult sometimes, but overall, it is positive - a lot of good work with families. Parents come in, it's not just conversations with young people. For us, we welcome anything that doesn't cost us anything and where a good, helpful service is provided."

Pastoral lead in a secondary school

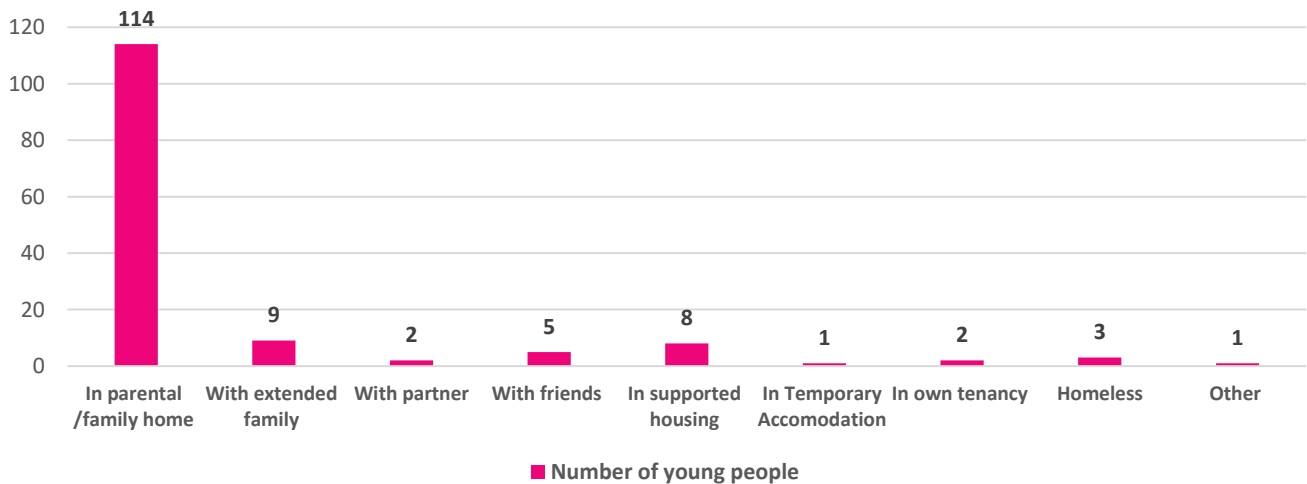


Table 5: Sources of referral to Talk It Out 2022 - 2025



Of the young people the Service worked with, 79%, (114) were living in the family/parental home at the point the mediation began. The other young people lived in different types of accommodation and 3 were street homeless or sofa surfing.

Table 6: Accommodation type when mediation sessions began 2022 - 2025



3.4 Observation: The outcomes for young people are outstanding.

The outcomes have been divided into 2 age groups:

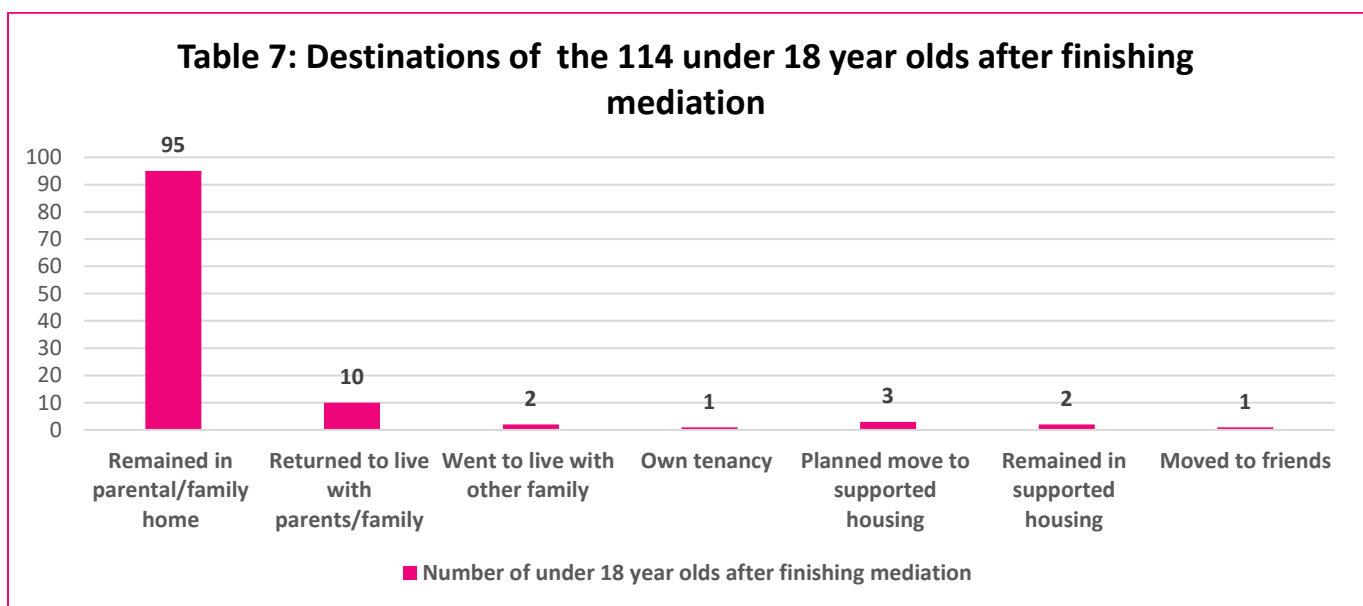
- Under 18s – still legally children
- 18-24 year olds – young adults.



The reason for this is the different starting points for young people, in terms of their accommodation. 87% of under 18s were still living at home with parents or with extended family when they began mediation sessions, but for the older age group, only 58% were living with family at the start point of mediation.

Whilst a generalisation, and mindful that every case is different, it is arguably usually harder to achieve an outcome for a young person to return to the parental or family home than it is for a young person to remain within the family home.

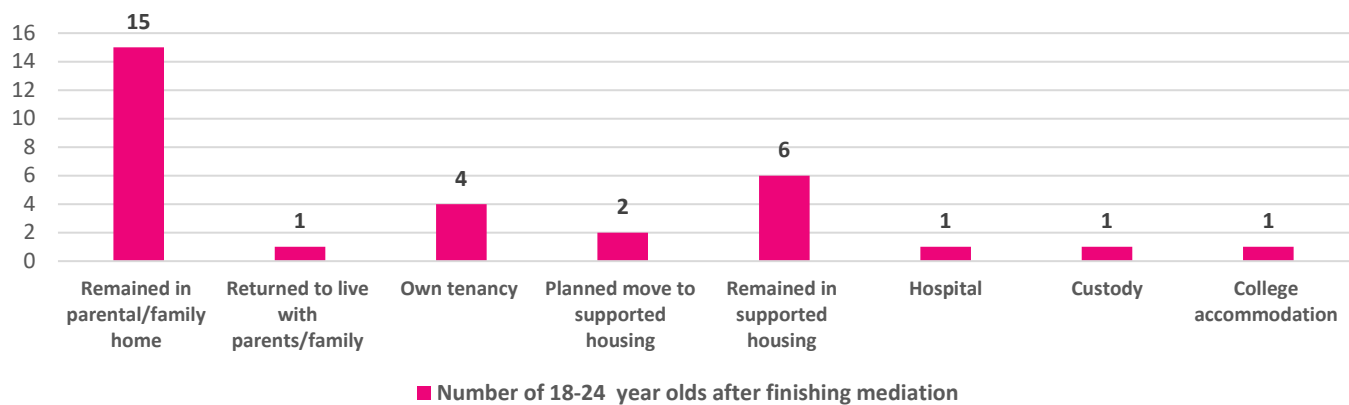
Based on the 114 young people aged under 18, there is a 94% success rate of young people remaining or returning home or to other family. This is an exceptionally high performance and has been sustained over a 3 year period. The mediators reported 1 or 2 instance of young people asking for help again, once their mediation sessions had ended, but there was rarely a repeat request for help.



The outcomes for the older age group are also very strong, at 93.5% success rate. There were 18 (58%) of young people aged 18-24 living with parents or extended family at the point they began their mediation sessions. Of these, 5 moved out to different types of housing, but 13 (72%) remained or returned to parents/family. A further 26% remained in their supported housing or planned a move to supported housing.



Table 8: Destinations of the 31 young people aged 18 - 24 after finishing mediation



There are other mediation services in England that can be compared to Roundabout’s Talk It Out Service. One high performing service is provided by Herts Young Homeless. They offer up to 6 sessions to 10 – 24 year olds in neutral settings and do bring families together more quickly. They see around 100 young people a year, and have 3 full time mediators and a manager, as well as a volunteer role. This compares to the 1.2 full time equivalent resource that Roundabout has.

Herts Young Homeless can offer young people a wraparound of well-being support and counselling as well. The Talk It Out Service does this as well, through the Prevention Service post of Mental Health and Well-Being Co-ordinator.

Most referrals come from Children’s Services not housing authorities in Hertfordshire. They see fewer older people, with most being under 18. The outcomes are that conflict was resolved in 82% of cases and young people remained at home in 93% of cases.

3.5 Observation: Feedback from parents and young people, indicates the experience has led to lasting insights and learning that positively change how families communicate - they have changed the narrative about themselves.

The mediators collect feedback routinely which is overwhelmingly positive. The statements provided reveal a depth of insight and understanding from both young people and parents.

The family members wrote about being better able to understand and manage their own emotions, the impact of their communication and talk more constructively when things are difficult. The learning for some families reflected in feedback is quite profound. It is likely that the combination of up to 13 sessions, which gives time to build trust, a flexible approach to delivery, a model that looks at communication and the future, underpinned by the skills of the mediators are the ingredients that result in such positive changes.



"I am able to better regulate my emotions and I now have a better understanding of who I am, and it has allowed me to develop a better relationship with my mum. I understand that my family will support me, and I don't have to do things solo."

"I'm handling my emotions better and not shouting or swearing. I'm calmer and more rational. I take time to think about things before I act. I listen and say how I am feeling and listen to other people even if I don't agree. I am more confident and have learned how to process things."

I have found my experience of this service really helpful because it has allowed me to reconnect with my family and get my life back on track".

"The family argue a lot less, and if an argument does blow out of proportion, we are now able to talk through what happened, instead of ignoring it."

"The mediation I had was excellent. It has helped the relationship with my daughter improve 10 fold. I have felt I could trust mediation and spoken in confidence. I have felt understood and accepted which helped me to take the steps towards improving how I communicated with my daughter."

"It has made me think about my choices and whether they were impulsive, and I have a more meaningful conversations taking both viewpoints into consideration."

"It really helps to make you think about your actions and that of the people around you and how and why they might act a certain way."

"We've been able to step back and look at ourselves individually and as a family to see what has not been working and why it hasn't been working. Importantly, at a dark time it allowed us to see that not everything was bad. We are all in a much more positive place."

3.6 Recommendations:

- **Review how to extend the offer more widely to schools, with other colleagues in the Prevention Service, in particular the Peer Education Programme.**
- **Present the outcomes for young people and families, and some of their feedback, to the Youth Homelessness Group.**
- **Make a business case for additional funding to extend the reach of the Mediation Service, targeting young people under the age of 18.**
- **Seek more neutral options for meeting with young people and families or expand the space in the Drop In Service in order to have a dedicated mediation room.**



4. The Drop in Service

4.1 The design and purpose of the Drop In Service

The Drop In Service fits into element 3 of the Positive Pathway (see Appendix One for the model). It is a service which pre-dominantly works with young people who are at high risk of homelessness or who are already homeless, and it also gives more ‘light touch’ general housing advice and information to young people where there is no imminent risk of homelessness.

Table 9 : National Lottery agreed outcomes and progress to date for the Drop In Service

| Agreed activity or outcome with the National Lottery | Metrics used to determine impact | Progress to date |
|---|--|---|
| 400 young people a year access advice and/or mediation | 1,600 young people by the end of the 4 years | 2,469 young people seen through the Drop In between 1 st April 2022 and 1 st March 2026. Mediation sessions with 50 young people and their families per a year over the last 4 years 200 young people. |
| The project will prevent every young person engaged with from sleeping rough. | Outcomes recorded as rough sleeping. | No young person that has worked with the Drop In Service has slept rough because they had no other accommodation. 2 young people were counted sleeping rough in the Rough Sleeping Council undertaken by the local authority in November 2025. |

Roundabout’s Drop in Service is open 5 days a week and housed in a shop-fronted building in the city centre of Sheffield , directly opposite Howden House, where Sheffield City Council’s Housing Solutions Service is based.

The Drop In Service aims to:

- provide general housing advice.
- prevent homelessness through offering housing and related advice, signposting and referrals to other agencies and practical assistance.
- relieve homelessness through assisting young people to find suitable accommodation, which could be a return to family or friends, or other types of accommodation.

Targeted at 16-25 year olds, the Service has recently changed its criteria, so the focus of the work is predominantly with young people who have a local connection to Sheffield, or who are fleeing violence or domestic abuse from another area.



The Service has been designed to be welcoming to young people. There is a comfortable and warm waiting area and a newly refurbished interview room. There is also a kitchen with food and drinks available free of charge, which young people can help themselves to.

The Drop In Service has a staff team of 5. It is funded through a mixture of the National Lottery Reaching Communities grant, which expires in June 2026 and Roundabout's own unrestricted income. There is no public money component of funding.

When young people contact the Drop In Service, the Homeless Prevention staff will take personal details and undertake a short assessment of their circumstances and needs. Work with young people can be over several weeks or months, or may just be a one-off visit or phone call.

The range of tools and options the Drop In Service have available mean Roundabout is well equipped to prevent or resolve homelessness. The options include:

- Advice on housing options for young people
- Advice on housing law
- Referrals to Roundabout's internal services:
 - The Talk It Out Mediation Service
 - The Employment and Skills Service
 - The Mental Health and Well-Being Practitioner
 - The Private Rented Service
 - The Supported Tenant Service, to stop accommodation from breaking down
 - The Future Builder accommodation, providing apprenticeships in the building trades and low rent housing for those in employment or training
 - The Rapid Rehousing Service, a Housing First model for young people who are rough sleeping and in a cycle of repeat homelessness
- Helping young people claim welfare benefits
- Helping make applications to the local authority for Discretionary Housing Payments²¹
- Help to apply to the Council for social housing
- Referrals to the Housing Solutions Service to make a homelessness application
- Referrals to the Council's Supported Housing Pathway, the single point of access for supported housing
- Access to the crash pad emergency bed in Roundabout's supported accommodation
- Referrals to other forms of accommodation provided by or through other partner agencies, if there is no legal duty for the Council to provide Temporary Accommodation
- In emergencies, using Roundabout funds to pay for a hotel room for a young person who has no accommodation options and is at high risk of sleeping rough that night

²¹ These are discretionary payments from DWP, administered through housing authorities, which may be made to those who already qualify for housing benefit, in order to top up short falls in rent or for other purposes to assist people to keep accommodation or access accommodation.



- Referrals to specialist agencies, including Children’s Services, primary care, mental health and substance misuse services

4.2 A note on the data used in this part of the report

In this section of the report, in order to try to understand more about young people’s circumstances, the kinds of interventions and assistance and outcomes, 2 sets of Roundabout data were drawn on:

- 1) The anonymised case recording of 1,741 cases from April 2022 to March 2025. The start date does not quite correspond with the beginning of the 4 years of Lottery funding, which started in July 2022. This is because for there to be any attempt at commenting on performance or trends, using Government and local authority statistics, whole years of data starting in April need to be looked at.
- 2) A ‘snapshot’ over 4 weeks of 59 new cases of young people who approached the Drop In between mid-December 2025 and mid-January 2026. The snapshot was designed to gather information on each case which was more aligned to the national statutory homelessness reporting system, H-CLIC.

In addition, the following have been used:

- 3) The statutory homelessness (‘HCLIC’) data and rough sleeping data for Sheffield and other areas, published by the Government.
- 4) Some breakdown of the Sheffield Housing Solutions Service H-CLIC data on single young people aged 16-24, provided by the Housing Solutions Service.
- 5) Rough sleeping data provided by Framework, the local provider of outreach services in the City.

4.3 Observation: The Drop In Service is a well- established and trusted part of the City’s offer to young people who need housing advice or help if they are at risk of homelessness.

There is strong evidence that the Drop In Service is a well-respected and valued part of the core offer for young people in the City. Over many years, awareness across the City about the services of Roundabout has developed, including the Drop In Service. This is not limited to young people, but families and other members of the public as well as public and voluntary agencies.

This means young people can hear about the Drop In Service from a wide array of agencies, as well as by word of mouth. Amongst agencies there is no standout source of referral or signposting into the Drop In Service. Most young people hear about the Service from family, friends, or other word of mouth. This is evidenced in the 3 years of Drop In Service case recording data and in the snapshot of 59 young people, undertaken recently.



The routes into the Service for new callers, who make up around 80% of the cohort at any time, are a mixture of:

- recommendations from trusted sources
- the internet
- the Council (mainly Housing Solutions Service, but also Early Help and Children’s Social Care)
- other public bodies e.g. the Police; the A&E department; mental health services
- schools and colleges
- voluntary agencies which give advice and support within the City

Around 20% of young people are repeat callers, who have previously had advice or help from Roundabout.

More recently, agencies working with refugees, including Mears, the local contractor providing housing to people seeking asylum, are key referral agencies.

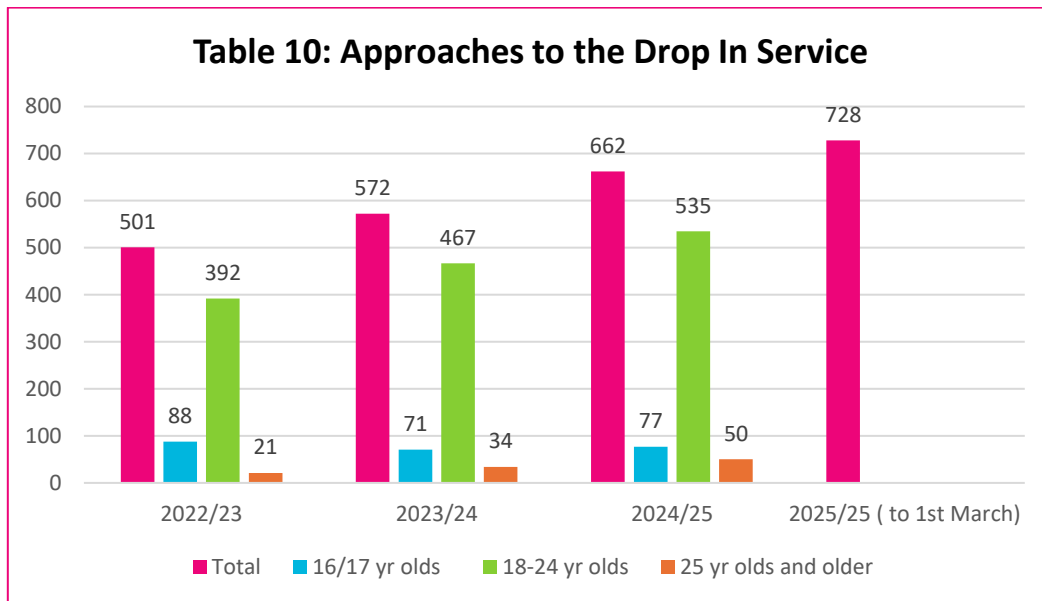
The different ways young people end up at the Drop In is a core strength of the Service. It is a reflection of the diversity of work and reach of the agency across the City, the quality of the offer and the trust in the ‘brand’ of Roundabout, including from members of the public, to deliver high quality services to young people.

4.4 Observation: The numbers of young people accessing the Drop In Service have increased by 45% in the last 4 years.

Numbers of young people coming to the Drop In Service have increased over the last 4 years. From April 2022 to the 1st March 2026 there has been a 45% increase in the number of young people approaching the Drop In Service.

One of the contributing factors resulting in the increase is the growing number of young refugees who are seeking help because they are imminently or actually homeless. Although numbers are small, there is also a rise in the number of people who are aged over 25 seeking help from the Drop In and again this is also attributed to the rise in refugees in the City. More detail on the work of the Drop In Service with young refugees is covered later in this Section of the report.



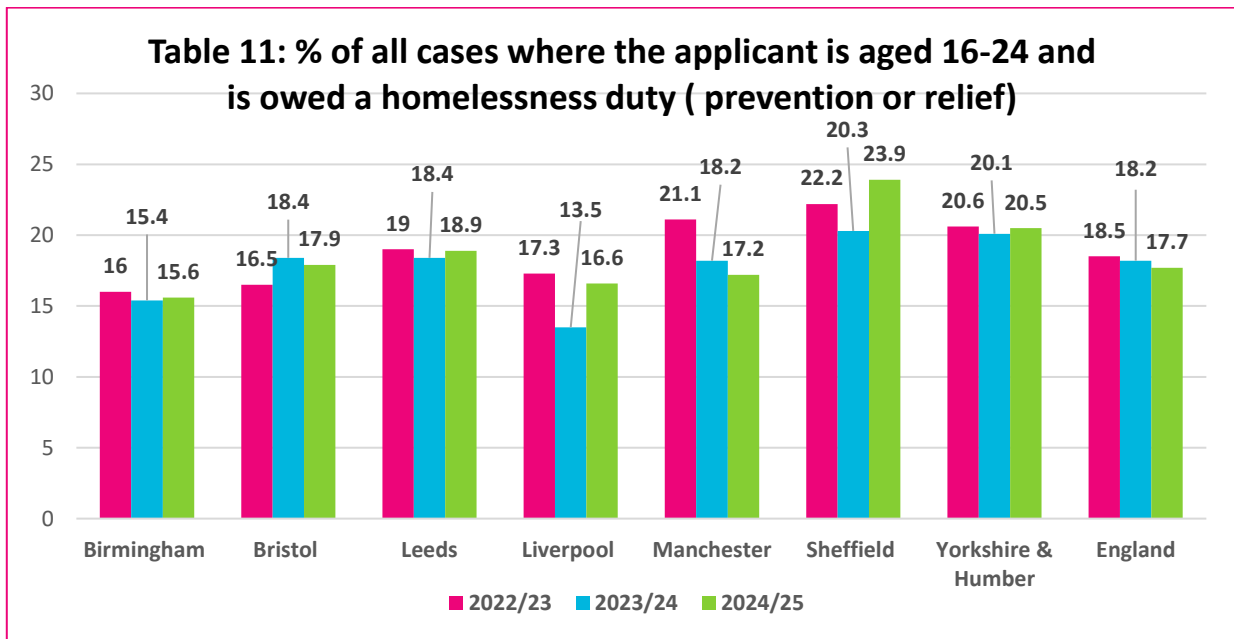


There is no straightforward way to cross-reference the Drop In Service figures against the Sheffield City Council figures on young people. This would help to understand overall demand through highlighting the extent of joint case work which results in double counting, but as it is, there is no reliable recording and reporting of cases which are jointly worked by either agency.

In addition, the national recording used by the Housing Solutions Service (HSS) in the Council starts at the point a homelessness application is taken and not all of the young people who contact Roundabout would reach the threshold for an application (defined as a 'reason to believe' they may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days).

HSS data for 2024/25 shows a higher percentage of prevention and relief cases amongst 16-24s, including young families, than the regional and England averages. Table 11 below shows that this pattern continues when compared against other core cities.





When the households with children are removed from the 16 - 24 age groups, leaving only single young people, they make up 19% of all prevention and relief duties owed in Sheffield in 2024/25 , or 582 young people. In the national homelessness statistics, single young people, including care leavers and 16/17 year olds as well, made up around 16% of all case²².

4.5 Observation: A significant proportion of young people seek help from the Drop In before they are in crisis and have an outcome of ‘advice only’

Young people with lived experience often reflect that it is daunting to ask for help on housing issues including potential homelessness, but there is strong evidence young people may be more inclined to go to the Drop In Service than the local authority.

Seeking help earlier than the point of crisis, just for advice and perhaps some information or reassurance, may reduce the risk of homelessness for a proportion of young people and take the risk away entirely for others.

The snapshot of 59 young people (taken over a 4 week period in December 2025 and January 2026) showed that 14% of young people had one off enquiries on housing advice, using a definition of: *“just wants some housing advice today - not homelessness or not at imminent risk of this”*. Of these young people, they all had an outcome of no further action, except information and advice.

²² The proportions of single young people nationally are taken from the Government’s H- CLIC flow tables on statutory homelessness, which enable breakdown of approaches and outcomes by different types of household.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2024-25>



The snapshot showed a little more detail and insight into what might happen in an ‘advice only’ case to assist a young person to stay at home : One young person, a care leaver, wanted advice only about their social housing tenancy. She was advised to remain in her tenancy and the following actions were recorded in the snapshot:

“Put her in touch with PA [Personal Adviser] and Local Housing Office and referred to Roundabout Supporting Tenant's Service for additional support.”

The proportion of ‘advice only’ cases was less clear cut in the 3 years of casework recording. Currently Roundabout has no field which specifically defines and captures why the young person is asking for help (e.g. because they want one-off advice/information or because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness).

A significant proportion of young people, (780, or 45% of the 1,741 young people) who contacted the Drop In Service had an outcome of ‘advice only’, but some caution should be given to this figure. Of these, 283 young people were already homeless or living in accommodation associated with homelessness (e.g. supported housing, Temporary Accommodation). If these are taken out, the proportion of more preventative ‘advice only’ outcomes fall to around 30%. As noted above, of these, it is not possible to distinguish which might be ‘*threatened with homelessness within 56 days*’ (the threshold for a prevention duty being accepted) and which would be a pre-56 days situation, which could involve more low level advice and information.

Changes to the way the housing needs and circumstances of young people are recorded is needed to better understand the proportion of young people who want one-off housing advice, what their queries are and how many of the cases are actually homelessness preventions that have occurred due to advice and information.

This could help to inform the work in schools which Roundabout does already, and what could be developed in future, including the kinds of information that would be useful on websites and social media.

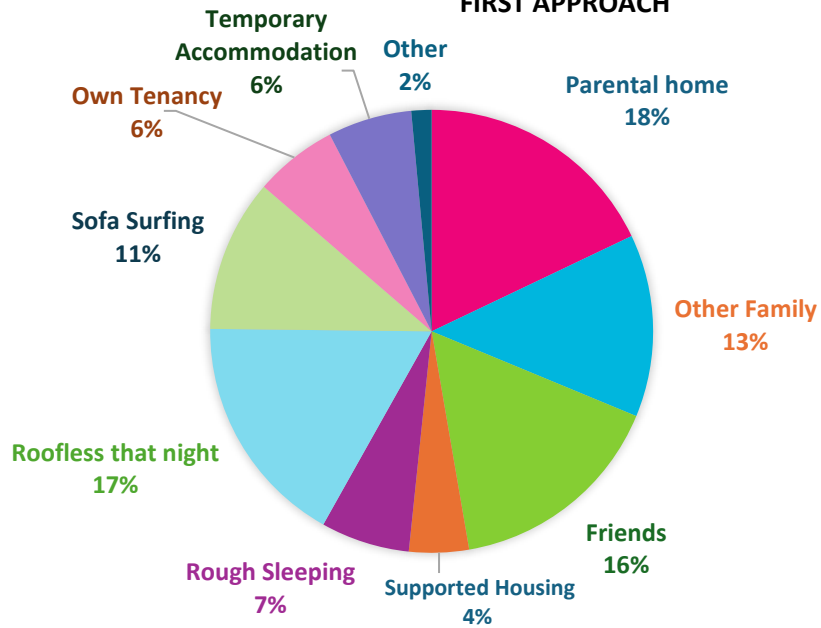
4.6 Observation: The Drop In Service is performing well on preventing and relieving homelessness

Young people come to the Drop In Service for different reasons- when they want advice only, when they might be threatened with homelessness or already homeless. Some come to the Drop In Service when they are already living in accommodation associated with homelessness but may need additional advice and information about housing options.

The chart below outlines where the 1,741 young people recorded between 2022 – 2025 were living when they contacted the Drop In Service.



TABLE 12: CURRENT ACCOMMODATION OF ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE POINT OF FIRST APPROACH



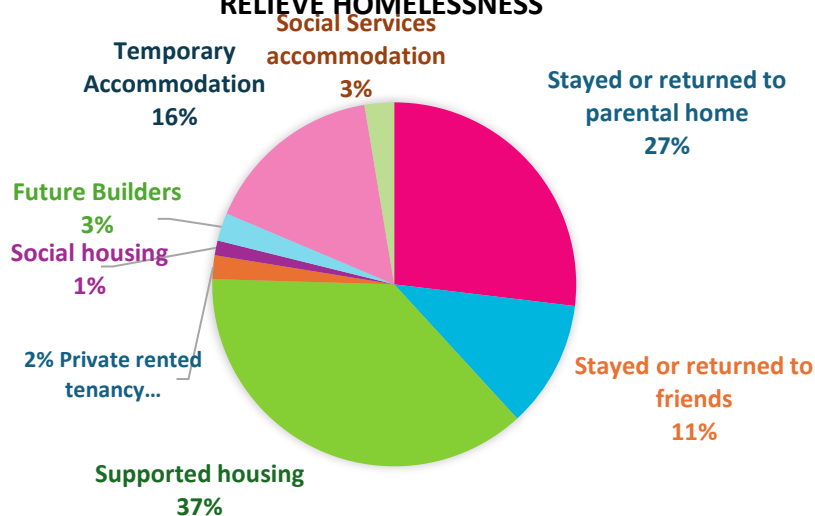
The chart below is based on some of 1,741 young people over the last 3 years, with this smaller sub-set of 762 young people being recorded as:

- Not already living in any form of homeless accommodation (e.g. not in supported housing or Temporary Accommodation).
- Having secured a specific accommodation outcome (that is, none of these cases were more light touch 'advice only' outcomes or 'on-going casework' outcome).

Some caution should be given to the outcomes in the chart below, as it is likely that the Drop In Service is actually under-recording successful prevention cases. This is because some 'advice only' outcomes, which are not included, are likely to be for young people who did meet the statutory threshold of being threatened with homelessness within 56 days. It is not possible to estimate with confidence what proportion of young people this might be, so they have been factored out.



TABLE 13: ACCOMMODATION OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO APPROACHED ROUNDABOUT AND HAD INTERVENTION TO PREVENT OR RELIEVE HOMELESSNESS



Based on the statistics in Table 13 above, very few young people are moving into their own tenancy in social housing or the private rented sector as a result of assistance from the Drop In Service. A high proportion of young people - 38% - have an outcome of remaining or returning to friends or family. But a high proportion were also moving to supported housing or Temporary Accommodation, so whilst their homelessness was being resolved, they were not able to stay or return to their accommodation.

It is not desirable or possible to directly compare Roundabout's outcomes with the Housing Solutions Service prevention and relief outcomes. As noted earlier, a significant proportion of the cases will have had intervention or support from both the Drop In Service, the Housing Solutions Service as well as other agencies - in order to secure a positive outcome. A more detailed snapshot across both the Drop In Service and HSS combined with some dip sampling of cases would help partners to gain a much better insight into the extent of joint working of cases and its impact.

Without a comparison to Roundabout, but just looking at the national statutory homelessness figures, Sheffield City Council's performance on prevention of homelessness work across all age groups is significantly lower than the national and regional positions, at 38%, compared to 56% regionally and 53% nationally²³.

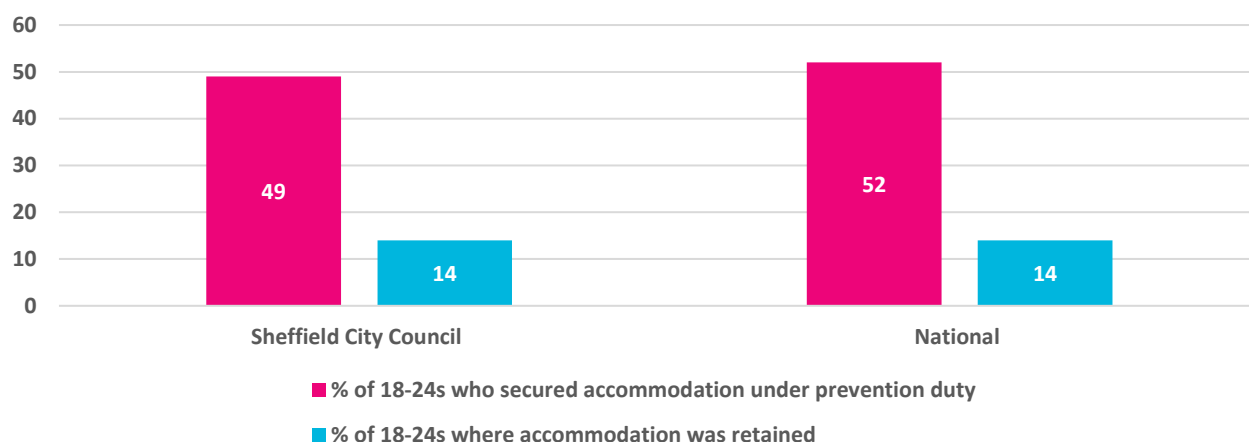
But on youth homelessness prevention outcomes, the performance is much better. Whilst only 27% of all 18-24 year old acceptances in 2024/25 were prevention duties in Sheffield, the overall prevention rates in Sheffield were just slightly lower than the national average for young people.²⁴ How much of this could be attributable to joint work with the Drop in Service is not possible to calculate.

²³ Based on the most recent publication of H-CLIC statistics, Quarter 2 of 2025/26.

²⁴ The national data is taken from flow tables which form part of the statutory homelessness data sets for England and provide a breakdown of circumstances and outcomes by different types of household, including single females and single males aged 18-24. These show that young single people were more likely than older counterparts to be owed a relief duty. Of the 130,800 relief duties accepted in England to single



Table 14: Sheffield City Council and National prevention rates by % for single 18-24 year olds



Most of the positive outcomes achieved by the Housing Solutions Service on prevention are based on people moving out of their current accommodation and securing housing elsewhere. Across all age groups only 23% retained their accommodation in 2024/25. This is well below the national average of 34%. Looking at the flow tables on H-CLIC and the data provided by Sheffield City Council, the HSS performance on ‘retaining’ accommodation for single young people is 14%, which is in line with the national average for this age group.

Whilst not directly comparable for the reasons outlined earlier, it is clear that the Drop In Service sees most young people before they are homeless and then, through pro-active assistance, are assisting a high proportion – at least 38% - to remain or return to family or friends. Note that this is likely to be an under-estimation, as the cases marked with an outcome of ‘advice only’ have not been factored into this and some of these will have been prevention cases.

The high level of retaining of accommodation by the Drop In Service should be of significant interest, given the poor performance on this generally by local authorities, including Sheffield.

4.7 Observation: The Drop In Services plays a key role in work to prevent and relieve homelessness amongst 16/17 year olds, but Sheffield City Council’s housing pathways and joint work are not as developed as they need to be.

If young people aged 16 or 17 come to the Drop In Service at Roundabout seeking help with a housing issue or homelessness, they will be referred to the Housing Solutions Services. However, the work with 16/17s often continues beyond this and might include:

households, 28% were to single 18-24 year olds. See the Government’s national statistics for 2024/25, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2024-25>



- Prevention work with young people and their families, including the Talk It Out mediation service.
- Use of Roundabout's Drop In interview rooms by the social worker to meet with young people due to a lack of space elsewhere.
- Advocacy - there is no formal contract with an advocacy agency, which is a gap that the local authority should address. In the absence of this, Roundabout do provide advocacy and attend meetings with young people.
- Support work through the Drop In Service staff.
- Short stay emergency accommodation in the 'crash pad'. This is in the 1 non-commissioned bed which Roundabout fund independently.
- Escalating cases of 16/17 year olds if there is a concern that they are not being picked up by statutory services.

There is well-established joint working for this group in Sheffield:

- A 2023 OFSTED report noted that there was a responsive service, and that young people's housing needs are met.
- There is a dedicated 16/17 year old social worker.
- HSS have an Under 18 rota –with a designated Team Manager on duty every day to pick up any 16/17 year olds who approach.
- Young people can be referred to and access all the services within Roundabout.

Despite the above features, the reality on the ground in early 2026 is that joint working is not as developed or structured as it could be. It would be too easy to point to the lack of a working joint protocol as the reason for this, as it has been in abeyance for well over a year, although it is now being worked on again by Housing and Children's Services.

On a day to day young people are being seen. The dedicated social worker is active with referrals and managing a caseload of around 9 -15 young people at any time. But she noted that the Housing Solutions Service is not consistently taking part in the joint assessment process, so she is doing these by herself on a regular basis.

High levels of home working in the Housing Solutions Service and not enough interview space in Howden House (the location of the Housing Solutions Service) combine to make it difficult to get assessments done and often the social worker goes with a young person to the Drop In Service to use space there.

It is the case that there is always a Team Manager in the Housing Solutions Service assigned on duty to pick up any 16/17 year olds cases. But despite this, there no real sense of 'grip' on this age group from the Housing Solutions Service. The social worker noted that *"the way things are is making more work."*

Sheffield Housing Solutions Services does not have a dedicated officer to do casework with this age group and newly recruited Housing Solutions Officers are unlikely to understand the unusual interplay of the legislation for this age group.



The social worker is responsible for undertaking child in need assessments and short term casework with 16/17 year olds who do not already have an open case with Children’s Services. The numbers she works with do not represent the wider cohort of 16/17s who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness but are already open cases with Children’s Services, usually with local neighbourhood teams with assigned social workers or Early Help workers.

There is a lack of shared understanding on numbers and outcomes between Housing Solutions Service and Children’s Services. It is not difficult to pull this sort of information together to gain a much better overview, but it was not clear that anyone in the local authority was leading on this.

The Housing Solutions Service provided the following information on the 73 young people who were aged 16/17 in 2024/25 and had a homelessness duty owed:

| Table 15: Homelessness duties and outcomes for 73 young people aged 16 or 17 in 2024/26 | | |
|--|--|---|
| | % (and number) of the 73 young people owed the duty | Proportions of successful accommodation outcomes |
| Prevention duty | 33% (24 young people) | 71% (18 young people) of which only 7% retaining their accommodation |
| Relief duty | 67% (49 young people) | 80% secured accommodation |

Information provided by Roundabout was that in the same year the Drop in Service saw 77 16/17 year olds. Of these 20 were noted as ‘roofless’ and 1 was rough sleeping (noted as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child). Not all of the 77 will have been at risk of homelessness, some will have been ‘advice only’ cases. All of the cases where young people were homeless or threatened with homelessness will have been referred to HSS. But how many of those cases resulted in joint working involving Roundabout, HSS and Children’s Services, and what the sorts of interventions and support offered was, or how well it worked in terms of outcomes, is not well-understood by the partners.

The social worker estimated that around 4 or 5 young people she works with go on to become looked after each year. What happens to other young people who already have open cases in locality teams, or the rest of the young people approaching the Council who do not become looked after, in terms of outcomes is not subject to any shared discussion or analysis between partners.

Without the Drop In Service there would be obvious fault lines in the joint working arrangements for 16/17 year olds. The 16/17 year group access more than any other group the ‘crash pad’ bed that Roundabout have, with the social worker relying on this sometimes for weeks for some young people. Casework with this group is time consuming and can be complex.

It would not be accurate or helpful to say the Drop In Service does too much for this age group – they do what is needed and what is possible within the Drop In Service parameters.



“They [Children’s Services and the Housing Solutions Service] know we are here so they rely on us not on leaving young people homeless. Like using the crash pad. We stay late to make sure young people are sorted.”

But an unintended consequence of the work happening within the Drop In Service is to mask, at least to some extent, the deficit in the Housing Solutions Service.

4.8 Observation: Some care leavers do come to the Drop In Service but structured joint working and housing pathways within Sheffield City Council mean this group is less likely to need the support of Roundabout.

The Drop In Service works with care leavers when they make contact and ask for assistance, but it is not possible to evidence how many care leavers are seen each year, as currently there is not a specific field on the case recording system for noting if young people are care leavers or not. It would be helpful for this to be added in to the system in the future.

Based on the 4-week snapshot exercise, out of the 59 young people seen, the Drop In Service saw 2 care leavers, both previously looked after by Sheffield. This is around 3% of the young people.

If the low number of care leavers in the snapshot is representative of normal flow, it is clear that as corporate parents, Sheffield City Council has been effective in securing housing pathways for most care experienced young people in Sheffield. The pathway includes training flats, ‘staying put’ arrangements, supported housing and a high priority in social housing. It is also backed by shared values around corporate parenting, including giving young people several ‘chances’ if they do not succeed with living independently.

There is a joint protocol between the HSS and Children’s Services for care leavers which is currently being reviewed, and young people have been actively involved in the review process. There is a clear commitment to hold on to young people and avoid homelessness wherever possible. A senior manager in HSS is designated with responsibility for this group and the impact of this shows in both policy and in day to day working. Care leavers have the top priority banding for social housing and the ambition is to keep them away from the homelessness system, with tenancy failure amongst this group being viewed as a corporate parenting failure.

Despite the well-established joint working, there continues to be a disproportionately high level of homelessness amongst this group of young people, which reflects the national position, but the overall numbers do appear to be reducing.



Table 16: Homelessness duties first owed to care experienced young people in Sheffield over the last 3 years of homelessness data*:

| Duty first accepted | 2022/23 | | 2023/24 | | 2024/25 | |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 18–20 | 21+ | 18–20 | 21+ | 18-20 | 21+ |
| Prevention duty | 7 | 20 | 6 | 23 | 7 | 15 |
| Relief duty | 30 | 92 | 28 | 72 | 35 | 57 |
| Sub Total | 37 | 112 | 34 | 95 | 42 | 72 |

*taken from the MHCLG statutory homelessness H-CLIC tables on care leavers

The national table above does not quite tally with the information provided for this report by the local authority. This may be because on the table above some care leavers are not single but have children. Based on information provided by the HSS, there were 41 single care leavers who were owed either a prevention or a relief duty in 2024/25, which was 7% of all single homeless young people in Sheffield in that year.

There are instances of care leavers rough sleeping in Sheffield. Framework, the agency which leads on outreach and street work with rough sleepers, noted that usually care leavers who are rough sleeping are not from Sheffield. They often have significant entrenched problems and *'just turn up from nowhere'*.

The new allocations policy in Sheffield will give this group of highly vulnerable young people from other areas of the country the same priority as care leavers previously looked after by Sheffield City Council, which is extremely positive. It can only be hoped other local authorities follow Sheffield's example on this local policy.

The range of services, including the Drop In Service, combine as a partnership to pick up young people and support them to move off the street and into suitable accommodation.

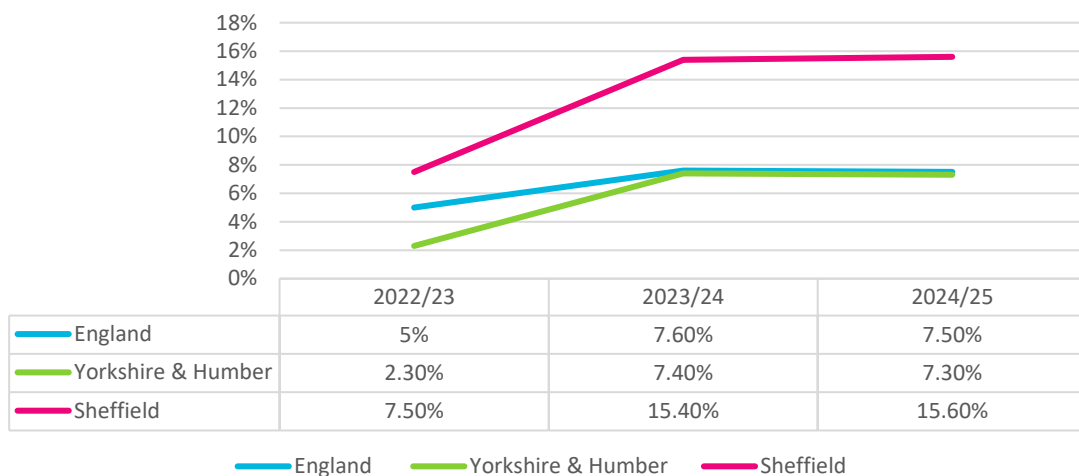
4.9 Observation: Roundabout has been exemplary in its response to young refugees who are homeless or threatened with homelessness .

The Drop In Service has seen a sharp rise over the last 3 years in young people previously living in Home Office funded accommodation with a newly granted refugee status. Based on the 4 week 'snap shot' over December and January, 24% of the 59 young people seen were young refugees. Whilst not directly comparable, for context, in 2022 only 2.6% of young people seen by the Drop In Service were recorded as refugees.

This increase is a reflection of the fact that Sheffield has a comparatively high proportion of people with newly granted refugee status in the City. The H-CLIC homelessness statistics also show a significant increase, more so than the overall England or regional positions.



Table 17: The % of cases (all ages and household types) of relief duty where leaving Home Office accommodation is the cause of homelessness



There are 3 specialist Housing Solutions Officers who work with refugees of all ages, which is symptomatic of the increased level of demand and case complexity.

In terms of young single refugees going to the Housing Solutions Service, of the 582 single 18-24 year olds seen in 2024/25 where there was a homeless acceptance (prevention or relief duty), 18% (105) of this group were young refugees.

The Drop In Service has introduced some eligibility criteria and now only works with young single refugees who have a local connection, the majority of which are young single men. The Drop In Service provides lighter touch advice to young people with no local connection to Sheffield on their housing options and will also work with those who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). However, whilst advice is offered and referrals made to the South Yorkshire Refugee Law and Justice agency, the Drop In Service is very limited in what can be done practically to assist this group.

Within the Drop In Service, all the staff work with young refugees but there are 2 specialist staff who spend around 50% of their time supporting young refugees. Each has a caseload of around 9-10 young people at any time. They also support young refugees living in Roundabout's refugee accommodation (see below).

Prevention work in the City is not as developed around young refugees as it could be. Both the Drop In Service and a key partner, City of Sanctuary, noted that the Housing Solutions Service is not consistently taking a homelessness application when a referral is received about a refugee with 28 days' notice to leave Home Office accommodation.

What could have been a prevention case then trips into a relief case, and most young single refugees are found to not have a priority need for accommodation. Young refugees who are homeless are advised to go



to The Drop In Service and/or City of Sanctuary to find accommodation. Work that could have taken place over 4 weeks through a prevention duty is compressed into a crisis response, with voluntary agencies have very little time to do basic work to stop young single refugees from rough sleeping.

A key feature of the work with young refugees is the strength of partnership working day-to-day with other agencies. It is clear that the Drop In Service, and Roundabout more widely, are highly regarded by refugee organisations and accommodation providers. There are a range of reasons for this, they communicate well, reliably do what they say they will, remain active with casework for young people once they are in accommodation, and prioritise what is required to keep the pathway for young refugees moving.

“Probably ...Roundabout is our star referral agency just because they consistently move on young people, I think that model has worked very well.”

Placement Co-ordinator for Yorkshire and Humber Region, Refugees at Home.

“Good communication is very important - and for Roundabout, the clarity of communication is really positive and also the collective voice – they are our friend and partner to stand against homelessness – we share a common cause.”

SPRING Delivery and Advocacy Manager, City of Sanctuary

There are numerous barriers to finding accommodation for young refugees. All agencies interviewed talked about management of expectations and dispelling myths about the availability of social housing. But the other option, the private rented sector, is also extremely difficult for young people to access.

For refugees, like other young people on low income who are homeless, sharing a house or flat is likely to be the first starting point in the private rented sector unless young people can afford the rent for a self-contained property. This is not well understood by many young refugees to begin with.

The changes to the private rental market under the Renters’ Rights Act 2025 are not yet known, but on balance the increased security of tenure is likely to make landlords more cautious about which groups they will consider renting to – including young people on low incomes, with no guarantor, references and with little or no previous experience as tenants. In addition, some young refugees won’t have the necessary documentation, benefits or a bank account at the point they need to secure accommodation.

In response to all the difficulties around the volume of crisis cases, sourcing accommodation at short notice and the overall increase in numbers, Roundabout and their voluntary sector partners have developed a housing pathway for young refugees which aims to eliminate the risk of rough sleeping. This comprises of:

- Early advice and referrals made by ChilyPep, a youth empowerment agency working in the main asylum hotels.



- Advice, support and help to obtain documents and a bank account from The City of Sanctuary's SPRING project.
- Input and casework from the HSS specialist refugee officers.
- Advice, support and on-going casework from The Drop In Service.
- Refugees at Home: a national hosting service matching refugees to live on a short term basis with a host.
- Roundabout funding for hotels in emergency situations.
- Provision of 27 units of non-commissioned supported accommodation ('First Step') developed by Roundabout.
- NOMAD: Non-commissioned supported housing - usually shared accommodation. The majority of tenants in their shared houses are refugees.
- A small fund held by The Drop In Service to assist young people to access the private rented sector.

The options that Roundabout and other partners have developed for this group in Sheffield have prevented and relieved homeless and provided young refugees with support at the starting point of their new lives in the UK.

4.10 Observation: Roundabout has played a key role in keeping rough sleeping amongst young people low in Sheffield, despite the lack of Council- funded emergency accommodation in the City for this group.

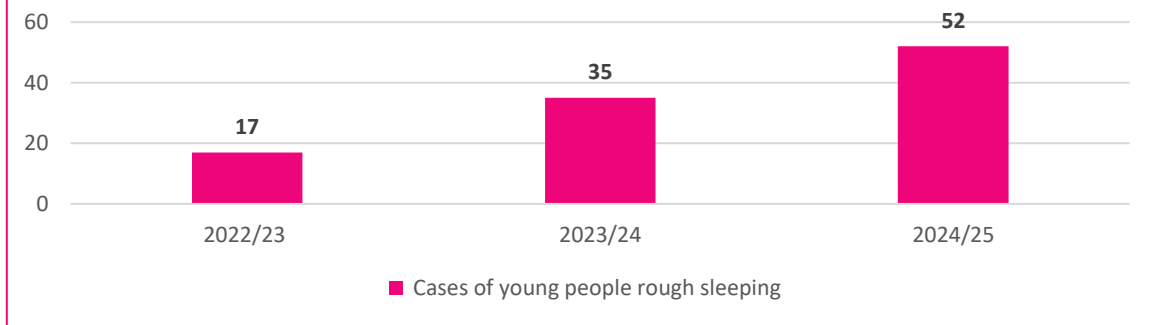
Roundabout has a long-standing commitment to preventing rough sleeping amongst all young people in contact with the Drop In Service. In order to realise the agency's commitment, the Drop In Service has been proactive in partnership, tenacious in casework and pragmatic in its' use of resources.

Over the last 3.5 years of the National Lottery funding, the Drop In Service has monitored outcomes for all young people and reports that no young person has slept rough after intervention and support from the Drop In Service.

As noted in other observations in this Section of the report, this achievement is against a backdrop of rising demand, including from young refugees, and as will be set out below, changing policy and practice within the Housing Solutions Service, which make securing accommodation for young people in crisis much more challenging.



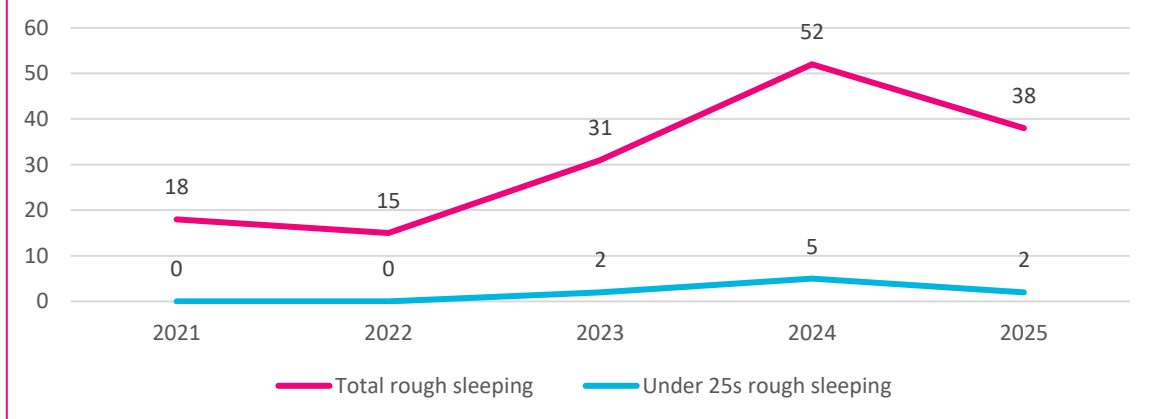
Table 18: Drop In Service cases of young people rough sleeping at the point of requesting assistance



The Drop In Service has been pivotal in the Sheffield partnership and has contributed to low levels of rough sleeping amongst young people, through prevention work and through finding housing solutions for those who are already rough sleeping.

Based on data from a key partner, Framework, the provider of outreach street services in Sheffield, in the most recent quarter there were 25 young people found rough sleeping or known to Framework to be at risk of repeat rough sleeping. Of these, there were 17 young people where there was evidence of joint work with The Drop In Service.

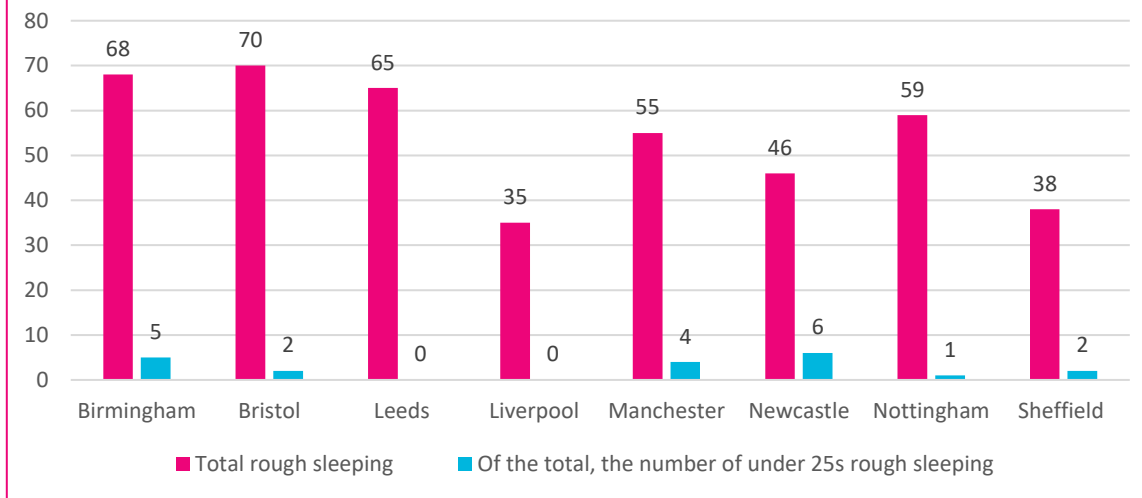
Table 19: Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot Count: Sheffield



Based on the annual 'snapshot' of rough sleeping, published by the Government, Sheffield is doing comparatively well at the moment, in comparison to most other core cities. Given the pressures, not least from the sharp increase in numbers of single young refugees leaving Home Office accommodation in Sheffield, with no housing options, this is positive.



Table 20: 2025 Rough Sleeping Snapshot for core cities in England by total and number of under 25 year olds within the total



Sheffield partners working on rough sleeping are confident there has been an overall reduction in rough sleeping over the last year in particular, not only based on the annual snapshot, but also on regularly street counts undertaken by Framework with other partners, including Roundabout. This is largely attributable to the foundations of the partnership. Other factors play into this as well, with a major one being the national policy on the length of notice periods given once people seeking asylum have had a decision²⁵.

As noted in other parts of the report, there is very strong trust and respect for the Drop In Service and Roundabout more widely. In terms of agencies working on rough sleeping, being thorough on referrals, being pro-active on casework, helping to source accommodation and clear and regular communication were all cited as features by other partners.

“When it’s a referral from Roundabout - they are thorough in their process prior to referral and the future planning and its often the case that 3 days is long enough to get done what’s needed and prevent young people coming into the longer term rough sleeping cohort. Roundabout are very good at communication of the plan.”

Street Outreach Worker, Framework

“Roundabout tenants tend to work out well. Its straightforward– they do preliminary checksI’m not sure if they are sifting the referrals and targeting young people that are suitable, but it’s not often we say no. “

Housing Projects Manager, NOMAD

²⁵ Significant pressures were experienced in 2023 into 2024 when the Home Office reduced the notice period for people seeking asylum from 28 days to 7 days which led to increased acceptances of the relief duty and use of Temporary Accommodation for households with a priority need. This was then changed to 56 days in July 2024, but reverted 28 days. In August 2025 . It moved to 42 days in March 2026.



As well as some national factors, local policy and practice changes in Sheffield may result in an increase in rough sleeping. As a result, partnership working will become increasingly critical at an operational and strategic level around youth homelessness and rough sleeping:

- The Housing Solutions Service have, over the last year or so, introduced more thorough decision making on the test of priority need due to vulnerability. Some single people who previously might have been offered Temporary Accommodation on the basis of vulnerability are now being found to have no priority need for accommodation.
- In order to access commissioned supported housing for young people – including all of Roundabout’s supported housing which Sheffield City Council commissions - young people now need to have a priority need or be very likely to. This change of the eligibility criteria is having a significant impact on options for young people with support needs who are assessed as not being *“significantly more vulnerable than the ordinary person if rendered homeless.”*
- There are also other changes, which may indirectly impact on rough sleeping, but the consequence of these is not yet known. The first is a new change to the Sheffield’s local allocations policy, removing any priority for social housing from those living in supported housing, the implication being people will be moving into private rented housing. This is likely to lead to ‘silt up’ as throughput rates slow.
- Secondly, and linked to the local change to the allocations policy is the impact of the Renters’ Rights Act regarding private landlord appetite for risks associated with tenants who are young, low income, and potentially have multiple or complex needs and have little or no experience of being a tenant.

Sourcing of emergency, short stay accommodation is becoming more difficult for young people who are rough sleeping, or at high risk of doing so. Given the policy and practice changes noted above, this may become even more challenging.

There is no commissioned emergency accommodation specifically for under 25s and the 1 ‘crash pad’ bed is continually in high demand, in particular for 16/17 year olds who are homeless.

Through Framework , the Drop In Service can access up to 3 nights of hotel accommodation for young people who are at high risk of rough sleeping. This is funded by a small charity, Stop Gap, which is Sheffield based.

Alongside Stop Gap funded hotel rooms and the hosting option through Refugees at Home, over the last 2.5 years Roundabout has started to fund hotel rooms when all other options with family, friends and other agencies have been exhausted.



Table 21: Roundabout’s use of hotels as emergency accommodation

| | Number of nights funded | Cost of hotels |
|---------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 2022/23 | 51 | £2,533.39 |
| 2023/24 | 20 | £1,067.86 |
| 2024/25 | 110 | £6,390.46 |

The main reason given for the increase in hotel use by the Drop In Service, particularly over the last year, has been the change to the way vulnerability assessments are taking place in the Housing Solutions Service. If young people arrive at the HSS later in the afternoon and they have no evidence available that day regarding vulnerability, it was noted by Roundabout staff that most are not offered Temporary Accommodation until the extent of their vulnerability has been assessed. This means that for some there is a high risk of rough sleeping, and Roundabout has increasingly stepped in to provide a room for a night.

Roundabout managers are clear that they do not want an adversarial relationship with the local authority, where the Drop In Service is continually challenging statutory decisions. The Code of Guidance sets out clearly that until a decision can be made on vulnerability, if there is ‘reason to believe’ the young person may have a priority need, then interim Temporary Accommodation should be provided.

“Section 188 (1) requires housing authorities to secure that accommodation is available for an applicant if they have reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need. The housing authority may bring this ‘interim’ accommodation duty to an end during the relief stage if they subsequently find that the applicant does not have priority need (or are not eligible or not homeless) and issues a decision that the applicant will not be owed further duties at the end of the relief duty”.

Point 8.3 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance

A strategic and pragmatic solution from partners, led by Sheffield City Council, is needed to what is an intractable problem around emergency accommodation. The extent to which Roundabout could or should continue to provide funds for hotels in emergency situations is a matter for senior managers and the Board. It is another part of the pathway where a City-wide crack is being papered over through Roundabout’s commitment to prevent homelessness, including rough sleeping.

4.11 Observation: Prevention work and outcomes for young people could be significantly improved in the Housing Solutions Service with improved work with the Drop In Service, but currently joint work is largely unstructured, inconsistent and crisis focussed.

The Drop In Service is an accepted and important part of partnership working on youth homelessness in Sheffield, but the impact of what the Drop In Service does, and how joint working could be improved is a missed opportunity for the Council.

That is not to say that relationships are poor, they are generally positive. But with only a few clear joint processes in place between Roundabout and HSS - and no dedicated specialist youth housing capacity



within the HSS - responses are somewhat ad hoc, varying considerably dependent on which HSS Officer picks up a case. Aside from care leavers, work with young people is predominantly led by crisis not early prevention work.

As set out earlier in this Section of the report. in 2024/25, the Housing Solutions Service accepted homelessness duties on 582 single 18-24 year olds. Of these, 27% (157 of the cases) were prevention cases, with 73% being relief cases. In total 17% of the young people had already experienced homeless at least once.

Of the 157 prevention cases, 49% (77 young people) had their homelessness prevented, but only 14% of these (11 young people) had an outcome of retaining their accommodation.

The outcomes of a large proportion of the Drop In Service prevention work with young people are not likely to be reflected in the HSS statistics, because the staff in the Drop In Service do not refer a young person if they think they will not get anything tangible from doing so.

The Drop In Service more readily refer cases where young people are homeless or cannot stay in their current accommodation. This of course reinforces the 'crisis' focus of joint working where accommodation is needed. This came through in the Drop In Service snapshot. There could be significant improvement in outcomes if there was joint work on practical prevention activity.

At the moment the day-to-day experience of the Drop In Service's work with the Council is about making the case for emergency accommodation by the end of the day for young people who are at high risk of rough sleeping. It is largely focussed on whether or not a young person has a priority need and would be offered Temporary Accommodation or could get on the list for supported accommodation.

As noted earlier, Roundabout's homelessness outcomes for young people are very good. In particular, the proportion of young people who resolve their housing issue by remaining or returning to family or friends, is at least 38% and in all probability a lot higher than this.

The ability of the Drop In Service to engage with young people well before they are physically homeless, combined with the high level of performance on both prevention work and in resolving homelessness, should be a cause of curiosity on the part of the Council, given the Housing Solutions Service low rate of 'retaining' of accommodation for young people and overall low levels of prevention success.

In the relentless pressure and the change within the HSS, the depth and breadth of what the Drop In does is not really understood.

"There's a perception gap about what we do and how we can help."

Roundabout Drop In Service officer.



There is no shared understanding about how outcomes are achieved by the Drop In Service or what proportion of cases never get as far as Howden House. Nor is there any analysis on the impact of different types of intervention or how many young people are cases that HSS and the Drop In Service are working on together. Anecdotally the Drop In Service Team Manager and the head of the Prevention Service overall both commented on the low number of positive referrals from the Housing Solutions Service for joint work on prevention cases.

When asked about the benefits of working with the Drop In Service, one of the main benefits cited by the Housing Solutions Service officers was the safe place that the Drop In building provides for young people whilst waiting for an assessment and the crash pad bed. These are certainly positives but there is a lot more that the Drop In Service do, particularly around prevention work which lead to positive outcomes.

The situation in Sheffield is that the work on youth homelessness between the Drop In Service and the HSS is less than the sum of its parts – it could be so much better with some dedicated capacity from the Housing Solutions Service and clearer, more structured joint processes and prevention pathways.

There are positive aspects of the current way of working, but these are not ‘nailed on’ to structured partnership working. There are monthly meetings which the Drop In Service attends, where information is exchanged and ideas are mooted, but these don’t tend to lead to anything tangible. There is no active development based on any sort of strategic plan for youth homelessness prevention. There are some examples of joint working – sometimes homelessness assessments involve the Drop In Service and vacancies in the private rented sector are sent to the Drop In Service every week. HSS now do home visits, both emergency home visits through the Access Team and also caseworkers in the Prevention Teams can do non-urgent home visits. There has been some discussion about doing joint home visits, but there is not enough capacity in Roundabout to commit to doing these.

In any large local authority, there is a strong business case for investment in specialist homelessness prevention roles to work with young people. Most core cities have some dedicated youth housing solutions officers. This has not been the case in Sheffield, perhaps because of the work Roundabout does with young people in crisis, which may inadvertently mask the extent of demand and unmet need.

There is high demand, staff turnover and constant change and challenge in the Housing Solutions Service. No one ‘holds the ring’ on young people in the Housing Solutions Service, other than the care leaver cohort. Operationally there are some officers and Team Managers who like working with young people and know more about this particular specialism, but their involvement is down to chance, and if they are on duty on a particular day.

A hypothetical question, but worth asking, is what would happen to youth homelessness levels, prevention and relief outcome, rough sleeping levels, if the Drop In Service ceased to operate?



As noted earlier, the Government expects improvements in prevention of homelessness. Sheffield, like all local authority areas, has had a considerable increase in funding through the new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse grant on that basis. Given that single young people aged 16-24 make up 19% of all acceptances of prevention and relief duties (based on 2024/25 figures) and the likelihood of repeat homelessness amongst this group is much higher than their older counterparts, (17% amongst single young people where a duty was owed in 2024/25) there is a strong business case for investment in this area.

There is a precedent in the Housing Solutions Service for specialist roles - there are very successful housing pathways, with dedicated Housing Solutions officers working in hospitals and with refugees. The Council could consider the same for youth homelessness prevention work.

It would not be that challenging to significantly improve work on youth homelessness, with more dedicated focus from the Housing Solutions Service and associated resource to support a more structured partnership. Perhaps the new focus on prioritising prevention and the associated uplift in homelessness grant from the Government will be a catalyst for changing the narrative on youth homelessness in Sheffield, with a strategic shift from crisis to being more prevention focussed. Relatively quickly this could make Sheffield a leader in this area, given the firm foundations which Roundabout has already built.



4.12 Recommendations for the Drop In Service and partners working with young people in homelessness crisis:

- The Drop In and the Housing Solutions Service could undertake some dip sampling of a selection of recent cases where the young person was held as a prevention case, in order to understand in more detail what is happening, how outcomes are achieved, how decisions are made between the partners and the point cases are 'stepped up'.
- The Housing Solutions Service should consider the benefits of designating 2 officers to work with single under 25 year olds. There is a business case for doing so, based on the current level of demand from this group (around 20% of all duties owed each year) , low rates of prevention duties owed, and poor rates of 'retaining' accommodation , combined with the likelihood of repeat homelessness amongst young people.
- Consideration should be given to larger premises for the Drop In Service to allow for more interview space with young people. Note that more office space could provide desk space for the 16/17 social worker and any specialist youth HSS officers.
- Roundabout should prioritise reviewing the recording system in place for the Drop In Service, so it is more aligned to the national H-CLIC reporting system, to including status at the point of approach (advice only, prevention or relief) , and outcomes for each type of case.
- More emergency accommodation is needed for young people in order to avoid increased homelessness, including rough sleeping. Demand is unclear currently so Roundabout should record the use of the crash pad bed and hotel beds in more detail, to capture the age, referral source, length of stay, reason for placement, alongside other partners, including HSS and Framework, doing the same.
- Weekly casework meetings should be set up and involve HSS, the 16/17 social worker and the Drop In Service, in order to ensure there is a consistent workflow across different functions and the partners where there are more complex cases.
- The Housing Solutions Service should consider investing some prevention funding into developing access to the private rented sector for single people aged under 35. This was noted as an action in the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Within this there could be a discretionary rent top up fund for young people to cover the rent shortfall where a homeless young people who does not have priority need and is not any exempt from the Shared Accommodation Rate. Assistance could be offered to young people on, for example, a 12 month basis with a conditionality around accepting additional support to secure employment or an apprenticeship.



Appendix One: The Positive Pathway model

The Generic Positive Pathway model:

