



**Time to Hear Your Voice  
Survey Findings  
Young People's Voices in Supported Housing  
Winter 2018 / 2019.**

**Engagement Report:** Time to Hear Your Voice  
Survey Findings

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The Engagement Team provides consultation and engagement support to colleagues across County Council services.

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YPSH = Young People's  
Supported Housing

SH = Supported Housing

Young people in the context of this  
report refers to young people who  
have given feedback

*"Quotation marks and text in italic"*  
are direct quotes from young  
people. Spelling has been  
corrected.

## **The story so far**

The council has money from the government to spend on supported housing in Oxfordshire. Supported Housing (SH) is for homeless young people between 16 to 24 years old. Every year, young people have supported housing in over 200 units; like a room in a shared house or a bedsit or a small flat. Help is on hand from staff on housing and support to reach independence.

The council runs one service and has contracts with five organizations to run other services. We need to start new contracts in April 2020. The companies who have the contracts now or new companies can put in a bid when the time comes. It takes time to plan and work out how to spend the money in the best way. We started thinking ahead in good time and ran a survey for young people in Winter 2018/19. Additionally, council staff listened to feedback from young people during contract monitoring visits and outreach survey work took place to hear views from unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as well. In total we had feedback from nearly 70 young people (roughly a third of the young people).

Thank you to everyone who took part and to the staff who helped young people have their voice heard. Their voices give us insight into the support they felt they got before moving in and once they were living in supported housing. We asked about when things get fixed and how safe they feel. We wanted to hear about what would make their experiences better. We tested the survey and asked some young people 'what shall we ask?' and they said to ask about health and friendship, so we did. And finally, we asked about moving out and moving on.

## **Who we heard from**

Young people aged 18 – 20 replied more than anyone else. In the main the young people say they are 'mostly healthy / OK most of time'. Three people declared a disability; (no comparison data available). The ethnic mix is broadly representative. Over half have been in supported housing for over a year so the findings need to be viewed with that in mind. Before coming into supported housing, a quarter of the young people were rough sleeping or sofa surfing, another quarter from a family home, a quarter were in care (foster care and children's homes) and the remaining living in temporary accommodation, in social housing or with a partner.

***“I am happy in the house.  
The staff come to check  
on me.”***

## Summary

### 1. Headlines

- ▶ Majority **‘healthy mostly’** or ‘OK most of the time’ and **broadly report feeling safe**
- ▶ **Nearly half are happy.** Half report having friends at SH. Females are half as likely to say they have friends in SH than males.
- ▶ **Half feel safe all the time**, and a quarter some of the time.

Half said what would help them feel safe:

- a. **Security** was most mentioned i.e. working locks, CCTV and security staff.
- b. **Staff who were on call** and moving out were equally mentioned.
- c. **Residents following rules** and specifically –*“no parties that have alcohol should be allowed as its really not the right environment”* was also mentioned a few times.

***“I feel safe within myself, not being hurt, however I do not feel secure.”***

Feedback tells us that there are problems and tensions between residents and the impact of living with others in a shared house or sharing a building has.

There is a link between feeling happy and feeling safe. If you feel safe you are more likely to say you are happy. Interestingly, **young people can say they feel happy but don't feel safe at SH.**

(18% say they feel happy, but they only feel safe some of the time).

Half of the young people told us that when something **is faulty or broken, things get fixed slowly.** A quarter said things get fixed quickly.

***“Drunk residents and visitors on weekends, I can't go directly to some residents to resolve situations due to their behaviour”***

## 2. Support

Before moving into SH nearly three quarters said they had help to understand their choices and there was someone to talk to about living in supported housing. Males are more positive in their answers to the questions about support before they move in.

A third didn't have support with the move or about a transition plan.

Roughly half say **'yes' they have help** with money and keeping out of debt, help with knowing tenancy rules, getting into education / training / work, learning to shop and cook and other specific support in the contract.

Just under half say **'no' they don't have help** with those things.

- ▶ Three quarters had something to say which helps them:

a. Individual help with booking and keeping appointments / form filling / making plans

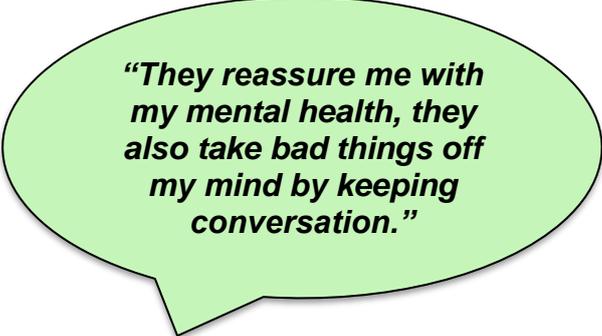
b. Key working and talking [discussing and "*addressing concerns*"] comes in second

c. Moving on and help with housing

d. Emotional support including "*checking up on me*" and mental health support is a repeated theme.

What helps and what could be better?

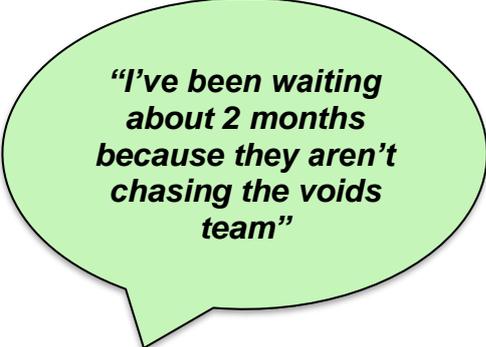
- ▶ Staff – staff at reception, night staff, more staff, increased interaction with staff.
- ▶ The second cluster was around more involvement – more residents meeting, communal area and group activities.



***"They reassure me with my mental health, they also take bad things off my mind by keeping conversation."***



***"Talk to me, help me with housing and support me if need be"***



***"I've been waiting about 2 months because they aren't chasing the voids team"***

#### 4. Moving on and Independence

- ▶ More than half say they are very ready to move on
- ▶ Three quarters of the young people answered the question ‘what would help you feel ready’? The stand out messages form an equal triangle:
  - ✓ money management (budgeting, dealing with debt, saving for furniture)
  - ✓ specifically, “*rent skills and bill skills*” paying rent on time, saving for a deposit.
  - ✓ being independent / “*acting like an adult*”, “*making wise choices*”, “*providing for myself*”
- ▶ Feedback on getting ready to move out also pooled around cooking, cleaning, washing “*the everyday things*” as one young person called them.
- ▶ When asked ‘if living with a family member is possible’ no one had a suggestion that would make this happen.



#### Looked after young people (LAC)

##### Comparing responses between (LAC) and non-looked after young people.

There was an idea that perhaps the looked after young people might report feeling more supported, due perhaps to, a higher level of support and more professionals in their lives. If anything, the LAC responses tell us they want more help and more support. They say they are less ready to move as compared to the responses from the non-LAC population. Overall, the responses show that there is a lot of cross-over amongst the two groups and it is not possible to draw a firm conclusion or to say with any certainty differences between the experiences of the two groups.

**Question:4. Being safe. Do you feel safe where you are living now?** – Very little difference in overall positive or negative responses between looked after and non-looked after young people. There are safety concerns and suggestions for improvement whether LAC or not.

**Question:9. Making supported housing better...tell me: Something staff do which helps you is...** Similar responses across both groups – mostly positive help and support.

**Question:10 Something that could be made better about supported housing is...** More staff and difficulties with other young people in SH cited in both groups.

**Question:12 Something that staff could do more to help me is...** ‘More support’ and ‘getting the right support’ seems to be said more in the non-LAC group.

**Question:14 What would help you feel more ready?** Money, rent, managing appointments, life skills are all said in both groups.

**Question:13. Moving on...if you are going to be moving out soon: Do you feel ready for moving on?** ‘Very ready’ had a greater response in the non-LAC group.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (USAC)**

All UASC young people who replied say they are ‘mostly healthy’, compared to non-UASC where there was more variation. UASC young people tell us they are less ready for moving on compared to the main cohort of responses. Those two areas were the only variations. They are broadly getting support. The focus on help with rent, managing a tenancy, cooking and shopping is in common with non USAC. The evaluation of the Orientation Programme let’s us know how valuable the programme is.

### **What happens next?**

The findings were presented to two workshops in January 2019. This report will be published on the council consultation portal in March 2019. All managers of supported housing will be sent the report by email. Where we have a young person’s phone number or email we will contact them to say thank you and to give the link to the report online.

We have lots of information to help us make a plan which will help make sure young people can thrive when they are in supported housing. We have survey findings from support staff and other professionals working with young people, plus a range of data about the young people who live in supported housing. All of the information gives us a good picture to check over how the service is running, if it’s the best it can be and what to plan for in the next 5 years. In Spring 2019 we will group together everything we know about supported housing and a manager will make a detailed plan for the future. Then we ‘go shopping’ for companies who want to put the plan into action and run supported housing for the money we have. Then we decide who is best for the job and they will start in April 2020.

### **Thank you**

To all the young people who took part and to staff who supported young people.

### **For further information**

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## **Appendix One All the detail**

### **Introduction and background**

The council has money from the government to spend on supported housing in Oxfordshire. Supported Housing is for homeless young people between 16 to 24 years old. The council has contracts with providers to make sure Supported Housing happens. Every year young people receive supported housing in 229 'units' – like a room in a shared house or a bedsit or a small flat. Help is on hand from staff around housing. The aim is for a young person to reach independence. Other support needs are met by professionals working in other services.

We have contracts with five supported housing providers; the council runs one service too. We will need to start new contracts in April 2020 as contracts with the existing providers come to an end. It takes time to plan and work out how to spend the money in the best way. As part of planning we wanted to hear directly from young people about what they think of the service and how it could be improved. We started thinking ahead in good time and ran a survey for young people and talked to young people face to face in Winter 2018/19.

### **The young people's survey**

#### **About the survey**

We designed and tested a survey in October 2018. The survey ran during November 2018. We went into 'extra time' in December 2018 to get as many replies as possible. The data analysis refers to responses returned by December 2018. We ran some boost activity to hear from:

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)
- Young people with disability / SEN / ADHD / additional needs
- Young people with youth offending experience
- Encouraged staff to ask three essential questions and a chat to those young people who wouldn't do a survey

The UASC response is reported separately in this main report.

Even in this digital age we thought paper copies might work well and we were right. The majority of young people used the hard copy, with 5 using online. All providers got enough printed copies of the survey to give to residents. An email invitation was sent to all managers and staff associated with supported housing (PA's social workers and so on). A text with the online link was sent to all housing provider managers to forward onto staff and young people.

We heard from 49 young people who answered the survey. We offered a prize draw of 1 x £50 shopping voucher to those who completed the survey. The survey was open for eight weeks plus 4 weeks during the boost period. There was an excellent response rate of 24% with a total of 49 responses.

## **What young people tell us**

### **Safety**

Half of the young people feel safe all of the time, with the others (9) feeling safe most of the time and 7 some of the time. One said none of the time and 2 didn't know. We asked 'If you don't feel safe what would help you'? 17 people gave a reply:

- Security was most mentioned in the form of working locks, CCTV and security staff  
Then jointly
- Staff who were on call or reachable via a landline and Moving / leaving
- Followed by: residents following rules and specifically a no parties rule was mentioned 3 times.

Half of the young people told us that when something is faulty or broken, things get fixed slowly. For more than a quarter (14) things get fixed quickly. 3 people never and 3 didn't know.

### **Health, happiness and friendship**

We asked: 'Are you happy with where you live'? 17 young people said yes, 7 no and 7 not sure. Twenty young people reported having friends at supported housing, 6 said no, 1 wasn't sure and 4 young people would like more friends.

By far the majority of the young people say they are a 'healthy mostly' (14) or 'OK most of the time' (14) with 3 being poorly or unwell a lot of the time.

### **Support <sup>1</sup>**

Before moving into supported housing nearly three quarters of young people say they had help to understand their choices and there was someone to talk to about living in supported housing. Half of the young people had help with their move and enough information. A bit more than half of the young people said staff came them a plan about their future.

Once living in supported housing half of the young people say they have support to

- be part of my local community
- Get into work, training or college
- Help with money
- Learning to shop and cook

Just over half have support to:

- Get to the Dr or dentist
- Help with knowing rules of tenancy
- Knowing how to be respectful with girlfriend or boyfriend

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<sup>1</sup> Using quality contract specification as basis for questions  
Public report

## **Making supported housing better:**

### **What's going well**

Three quarters of young people who responded had something to say on the question 'what staff do to help?'. A total of 37 suggestions were given (some young people had more than one suggestion). The most mentioned were 'help' for example with booking and keeping appointments / form filling / making plans. Equal second were key working and talking [discussing and "*addressing concerns*"]. Third most mentioned were move on and help with housing. Emotional support including "*checking up on me*" and mental health support were mentioned a few times.

### **What could be made better**

Twenty-six young people made suggestions about what could be made better about supported housing. A total of 34 suggestions were given, these were more wide ranging. There was a clear cluster around staff – staff at reception, night staff, more staff, increased interaction with staff. The second cluster was around more involvement, more residents meetings, communal area and group activities. Other suggestions that get two or three mentions are:

- behaviour of residents
- getting things fixed
- good Wi-Fi
- more time with visitors
- better security / working front doors

### **Something staff could do more to help?**

19 young people answered. Half talked about wanting more support, more time and availability of staff. The rest of the replies are around skills for independence (cooking, "*necessities of life*", finding work).

### **Moving back with family. Moving On and Independence**

Twenty two young people wrote something in response to the question 'If living with a family member is possible for you. What could help make this happen?' All 22 said that it wasn't possible. Some giving reasons why but no suggestions as to what would help.

We asked: 'what could you do to become ready to live on your own?'

Three quarters of the young people answered and they had 33 things to tell us. The stand out messages which form an equal triangle are around:

- money management (budgeting, dealing with debt, saving for furniture) and
- specifically, "*rent skills and bill skills*" paying rent on time, saving for a deposit.
- being independent / "*acting like an adult*", "*making wise choices*", "*providing for myself*"

Feedback also pooled around cooking, cleaning, washing "*the everyday things*" as one young person called them.

When asked 'do you feel ready to move on'? More than half say they are very ready to move on, 10 are a little bit ready and 5 are not ready. For those that say they are very ready (23) 9 still have something they need help with, the majority of those identifying rent, debt and bills as where they need help.

### **Who we heard from**

Forty young people replied; slightly more female than male replied (18 / 13 split). The people aged 18 – 20 replied more than anyone else. Eight people were under 18 and six were 20 years plus. In the main the young people say of themselves as 'mostly healthy / OK most of time'. Three people declared a disability; no comparison data available. The ethnic mix is broadly representative.

Over half have been in supported housing for over a year so the findings need to be viewed with that in mind. The other other half are roughly split between some weeks or some months. A couple of the young people had recently moved out.

Before coming into supported housing, a quarter of the young people were rough sleeping or sofa surfing, another quarter from a family home, a quarter were in care (foster care and children's homes) and the remaining living in temporary accommodation, in social housing or with a partner.

We would have liked to have heard from more young people who are supported by the two largest providers, Homegroup and Key2, in order to get a more even spread of young people's voices.

### **Demographics:**

Forty-nine responses in total.

- Health warning – not all cohorts are represented (none out of custody and probably lower number of returns from people with complex needs and disabilities).
- Even spread of female and male replied.
- The people aged 18 – 20 replied more than anyone else.
- Three people declared a disability (no comparison data available).
- The ethnic mix is broadly representative.
- Ideally, we would want higher returns from the largest provider, which we didn't get.
- Over half of the young people have been in supported housing for over a year so the findings need to be viewed with that in mind.
- There are gender variations; females less likely to report having friends at SH and males reporting more positively about support they received

before moving in. There are no other significant differences between the genders and there are no differences within ethnicity.

- The sample is not large enough to draw firm conclusions.

## **Appendix Two**

### **Summary of Feedback from YPSH Visits Conducted Quarter 2 2018-19**

A total of 18 young people contributed feedback during visits by a contract monitoring officer. 12 gave feedback from houses supporting young parents, 4 feedback from 'singles', 1 feedback from service for people with complex needs and 1 feedback was from an unaccompanied asylum seeking child. No further demographic detail available.

The majority of feedback (12) was from supported housing from young parents, their feedback is split fairly evenly (7 negative and 5 positive). The feedback from the other types of accommodation is overwhelmingly positive. In summary all the young people who provided feedback were stating that they felt ready to move on, this is seen positively as that is main purpose of the contract. For the young people who expressed frustration at their situation was because they felt there were barriers to achieving that goal. Rent arrears, benefit system which restricts, the already limited, housing options. Oxfordshire is considered favourably due to employment options.

See table below for summary comments.

### Summary of Feedback from YPSH Visits Conducted Quarter 2 2018-19

Key: 1 = Families (young parents) 2 = Young singles 3 = Complex needs 4 = Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Service Package	Positive	Negative	Comments
1		√	Poor accommodation, high rent arrears preventing Move On, overdue maintenance
1		√	Poor accommodation, poor quality furnishings, unacceptable wait time for repairs
1		√	Poor accommodation, inaccurate information given re benefit claims
1		√	Poor accommodation, high rent, do not feel safe here. White goods need replacing
1		√	Accommodation too small, lack of storage Move On process seems too complex
1		√	Inconsistent support, lack of communication, feel opportunity to Move On has been impeded
1		√	Poor standard of accommodation, waiting for repair works to flat for far too long, facilities poor
1	√		Good accommodation, great support. Delighted with flat and facilities and have plan for Move On
1	√		Good support, maintenance delays frustrating. Staff work hard to empower young people
1	√		Good support, service offers opportunities to socialise and build networks so not isolated
1	√		Great support from staff and the right amount of help to build skills and confidence
1	√		Good support but some issues with maintenance have taken too long to resolve.
2	√		Fantastic support, good standard of accommodation, feel needs are well met
2	√		Good support, feel safe here and motivated to find work and Move On
2	√		Good support, feel listened to and think accommodation is great
2		√	Unacceptably poor standard of accommodation, lack of communication, minimal support
3	√		Good accommodation, excellent support through periods of extreme personal challenge
4	√		Great support, feel welcome and am enjoying living in Oxford