

# CALL FOR EVIDENCE

## Homeless young people affected by gangs and criminal exploitation



**Centrepoint is currently conducting a piece of research looking at the impact of criminal activity, exploitation and gangs on young people's experiences of homelessness. We know that crime and violence affects young people at every stage of their experience of homelessness: from leading to family breakdown to impacting on young people's ability to access services and move on accommodation in particular areas.**

We are looking to understand some of the reasons that can lead young people to become involved in or exposed to gang and criminal activity, the experiences and risks faced by homeless young people, and any work that is currently being done to identify, protect and divert young people affected by homelessness away from criminal harm.

### Who should respond?

All organisations and individuals are welcome to respond. We particularly welcome responses from:

- Homelessness organisations
- Supported housing providers
- Youth Offending Teams
- Youth services
- Police, prisons and probationary services
- Social service departments and children's services
- Local authority housing teams
- Housing associations
- Youth, Voluntary and Community organisations
- Young people and adults who have experienced homelessness
- Health professionals
- Specialist gang intervention/ exit teams

You are welcome to respond to this call for evidence in the best way you see fit. Case studies and examples from your work are particularly welcome – but please ensure that your responses do not risk identifying any particular individual.

### How the evidence will be used

A review of this evidence will be published later in 2019 as part of a full report exploring the links between youth homelessness and exposure to criminal activity. This piece of work will be used to influence policy and campaign for change to better support homeless young people at risk from gangs, criminal activity and criminal exploitation.

### About Centrepoint

Centrepoint is the leading national charity working with homeless young people aged 16 to 25. We are a registered social housing provider, a charity enterprise and a company limited by guarantee. Established 50 years ago, we support more than 10,000 young people every year with housing, health and learning to enable them to get their lives back on track.

### Deadline for responses

The deadline for submissions for this call for evidence is **Friday 19 April**.

### How to submit your response

Please send your response by email to:  
Billy Harding, Policy and Research Officer  
[B.Harding@Centrepoint.org](mailto:B.Harding@Centrepoint.org)  
020 7423 6811

**The following questions are intended to help guide your response. Feel free to answer any that are relevant to your work.**

**1. What can lead young people to become involved in gangs and criminal activity?**

- Are any groups of young people at particular risk of becoming involved in criminal activity and exploitation, for example looked after children, care leavers or migrant and refugee young people?
- Is there any crossover between the drivers of youth crime and gang activity and the factors which lead to young people becoming homeless?
- Is gang activity and youth violence a factor leading to youth homelessness?
- What support exists for families and parents of young people at risk of or involved in criminal activity and exploitation?
- Do difficulties accessing employment have any impact on young people becoming involved in criminal activity or exploitation?
- Have cuts to local services, particularly local youth services, had any impact on young people becoming involved in criminal and gang activity?

**2. How do gangs, criminal activity and criminal exploitation affect homeless young people?**

- What risks do homeless young people involved in criminal activity face?
- What role, if any, do gangs play?
- How do you define what a gang is?
- Are there criminal gangs operating in your area?
- Are homeless young people at increased risk of being targeted by gangs?
- What role, if any, does organised crime play in the exploitation of homeless young people?
- What signs are there that a homeless young person may be involved in criminal activity or gangs?
- How does criminal exploitation or involvement in criminal activity affect young people's access to employment, education and other services?
- How can criminal exploitation or involvement in criminal activity affect young people's access to accommodation and their move-on from homelessness?
- If you work in an organisation that supports several young people (such as a hostel or day centre), are young people affected by gangs and criminal activity, even if they are not directly involved themselves?
- What, if any, are the links between drug and alcohol dependency and exposure to criminal and gang activity?
- Are young people in hostels and supported accommodation at increased risk of involvement in criminal and gang activity, violence and criminal exploitation?
- Do homeless girls and young women face particular risks from criminal activities, gangs and violence?
- Are young people living in independent accommodation at risk of criminal exploitation?
- Do young people leaving prison face additional risks of becoming involved in criminal activity?
- Do you see any difference in the treatment of over and under 18s by the police and statutory authorities?

**3. What can be done to support homeless young people affected by gangs and criminal activity?**

- Does your organisation currently operate any policies around identifying young people at risk and preventing them from getting involved in criminal activity?
- If not, is this something you have considered?
- Do you have any experience in working with gang exit programmes or programmes involving moving young people away from risk?
- Are these programmes effective?
- What challenges are there in encouraging young people to move away from gangs and criminal activity?
- Do funding pressures affect your organisation's ability to respond to and tackle criminal activity and exploitation?

- Can access to stable accommodation help young people to move away from gangs and criminal activity?
- What role can housing providers play in safeguarding young people and reducing youth violence?

**Centrepoint is also looking to speak to a small number of practitioners in more detail as part of this research. If you are interested in taking part in an interview or supporting this research further, please indicate this in your response.**