



Change The Story:

Ending Youth Homelessness All Together



Centrepoint's 2021-2026 strategy

Centrepoint, is a charity registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales under number 292411.
Registered office address: Central House, 25 Camperdown Street, London, E1 8DZ.

Introduction

Centrepoint has been supporting young people for over fifty years. Since starting out as a night shelter in 1969, our work with young people has become much more rounded – helping them to get healthy and stay healthy; to re-engage with education and training; to acquire important skills for life; to get into and stay in employment; and to move on into a home of their own.

Over the past strategic period we have grown our impact to support nearly 20,000 young people a year, compared to 8,000 in 2015. With the establishment of the Centrepoint Helpline in 2017, the support we offer directly to young people spans the whole country, and more than half of the young people we support are outside of London.

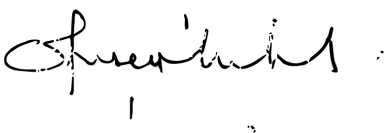
We are proud of the part we have played in giving homeless young people a future. But now we face new and even greater challenges. More than 100,000 young people approach their Local Authority every year because they are homeless or at risk. The gap between the number of houses needed to ensure everybody has a decent home and the stock of houses is over 1 million homes. Youth unemployment is rising at a greater rate as a result of the global pandemic. We are in a mental health crisis, with mental health issues reported in over half (54.1%) of homeless young people.

Centrepoint is needed more than ever before. But we need to make sure everything we do takes us one step closer to ending youth homelessness, so young people in the future do not need to go through these unnecessary and devastating crises.

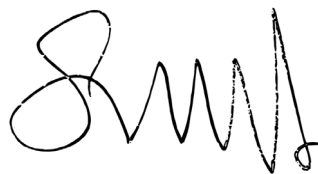
Our strategy “Change the Story: Ending Youth Homelessness All Together” sets out how we *will* end youth homelessness by 2037. Why 2037? Well, because any young person born in 2021 will turn 16 in 2037, the year in which they may need help from Centrepoint. So, we want to end homelessness for the next generation.

We cannot end youth homelessness by ourselves – we can only achieve this by working with governments, organisations and individuals across society. Through the fantastic work of our colleagues delivering homeless prevention activity in Manchester, mental health support in Barnsley, parent and child services in Sunderland, routes into employment in Bradford, and Independent Living schemes in London, we will find exemplary and innovative solutions for young people. We will then use this insight to partner, campaign, and influence others to make change across society.

Working all together, we can end youth homelessness altogether.



Seyi Obakin OBE
Centrepoint CEO



Symon Elliott
Centrepoint Chair

1. Overview

Centrepoint's 2021-26 strategy "Change The Story: Ending Youth Homelessness All Together" sets out our vision to end youth homelessness by 2037. Why 2037? Well, because any young person born in 2021 will turn 16 in 2037, the year in which they may need help from Centrepoint. We therefore aspire to end homelessness for the next generation.

The threat of homelessness can never be removed for young people due to the multiplicity of factors that cause it. However, we believe it is eminently possible to significantly reduce the number of young people facing homelessness, so that there is a clear, accessible, and effective pathway for each of those young people at the point of crisis. Therefore ending youth homelessness requires three things:

- i.** *Firstly undertaking preventative action, so that the number of young people being made homeless is negligible.*
- ii.** *Secondly, that there is a quick solution to provide a safe and stable place to live in for every young person when it happens.*
- iii.** *And thirdly, ensuring that each young person for whom a temporary safe place to live has been provided is supported and settled into a permanent home as soon as they are ready to live independently.*

Systemic change is required to meet these challenges. Centrepoint cannot end youth homelessness alone – this can only be achieved by organisations and individuals across society working together.

As the UK's leading youth homelessness charity, Centrepoint will spearhead the endeavour to end youth homelessness by 2037 by delivering exemplar services for young people, and using the insight from these to campaign, influence, and orchestrate systemic change.

For this vision to become a reality, we must:

- i. Optimise** *the way that we work to build the optimum capacity needed to deliver this strategy.*
- ii. Prevent** *those young people who face immediate homelessness from experiencing it.*
- iii. Support** *those young people who become homeless by delivering exemplary and innovative services that lead to a home and a job.*
- iv. Amplify** *the voices of homeless young people, promoting solutions that break the youth homelessness cycle so that they can be undertaken at scale.*

By working all together across society we can end youth homelessness altogether

2. Our Vision - Ending Youth Homelessness by 2037

The problem today

Youth homelessness has been a problem since Centrepont was established in 1969. Currently, over 100,000 young people approach their local authority to request homelessness support on a yearly basis.

The gap between the current housing stock and the number needed for everyone to have a decent home to live in is more than one million homes. In April 2018, there were 1.11 million households on local authority waiting lists in England and this excludes most young people as they do not have priority status in England.

Persistent youth unemployment has been embedded in our system over decades and the youth unemployment landscape has been a growing problem.

Mental health problems affect 10-15% of all young people in England at a single point in time. These include depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation, and conduct disorder, and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives.

Young people affected by homelessness often find themselves in a downward spiral that includes ill health. They are often more vulnerable to the mental health problems described above. Furthermore, they are vulnerable to truncated participation in education and training, fewer skills than their counterparts and poor access to employment opportunities.

Covid-19 impact

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated these significant challenges.

Youth unemployment, which was already worse than overall unemployment, has taken a considerable turn for the worse. 581,000 young people aged 16-24 years were unemployed in June-August 2020 – an increase of 35,000 from the previous quarter and 87,000 from the previous year. This means the youth unemployment rate was 14.1%, compared to 4.5% nationally. Furthermore, over 10% (59,000) of the unemployed young people have been unemployed for longer than twelve months.

With lockdown and the consequent social isolation it is not surprising that both the ONS¹ and Young Minds have reported deterioration in children and young people's mental health. 80% of young people surveyed by Young Minds said the pandemic has worsened their mental health and the ONS found that one in six children were identified as having a probable mental disorder.

Yet, as we stand on the cusp of the upcoming strategic period, Covid-19 has also given us cause for optimism as it has shown that great strides can be made to tackle youth homelessness when there is collective urgency. For instance, in April 2020, every rough sleeper was housed within a few days of the government launching its 'Everyone In' scheme.

The pandemic has also brought young people and homelessness into more focus for the public. Thus, the issue of youth homelessness appears to be gaining traction on the public agenda and public frustration that it still exists in the UK today is rising.

Ending Youth Homelessness by 2037

In practical terms, we understand that the threat of homelessness can never be removed for young people due to the multiplicity of factors that cause it. However, we believe it is eminently possible to significantly reduce the number of young people facing crisis and to ensure that there is a clear, accessible, and effective pathway for those who experience homelessness.

Therefore, in our view, an end to youth homelessness would mean three things. First, the number of young people being made homeless is negligible. Second, there is a quick solution to provide a safe and stable place to live in for every young person when it happens. And third, each young person for whom a temporary safe place to live has been provided is supported and settled into a permanent home as soon as they are ready to live independently.

This means youth homelessness is rare overall and very brief when it occurs. It also means no young person ever has to sleep rough and any experience of youth homelessness is short and frictional. Ending youth homelessness means reducing it to 'effective zero'.

¹ Office for National Statistics

Our vision is that a young person born in 2021 will never become homeless. **Therefore, as we enter this strategic period, our aim is to end youth homelessness by 2037**, when a person born in 2021 would turn 16, the youngest age in which they would be able to enter a Centrepoint Service.

Ending youth homelessness requires a range of services that prevent young people who face homelessness from experiencing it (prevention), services that respond rapidly to those who face homeless to give them support to move forward (support), and services that enable young people to move-on to fully independent lives (move-on).

In each of the three areas, we set out below our vision of what needs to be achieved to end youth homelessness by 2037. **This vision is achievable but requires collective action across society.**

Preventing Young people from becoming homeless

The Situation Today: Over 100,000 16-24 year olds in the UK approach their council every year as they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This doesn't take into account those that do not approach their councils and instead form part of the "hidden homeless", either staying in unsuitable accommodation which is often unsafe, or living a nomadic life from sofa to floor. In 2018-19, 57% of youth homelessness cases were not successfully prevented or dealt with in England².

To End Youth Homelessness by 2037:

- i. *Prevention advice and support is available to every young person (and their families where relevant) before, or at the point of crisis. Examples of what should be included are mediation options, respite services, family support units, bespoke support for looked after children and young ex-offenders.*
- ii. *Young people who are most at risk of homelessness are identified nationally from the age of 11 – the point of transition into secondary education. Once identified, multi-agency³ prevention interventions are put in place to safeguard them from impending homelessness.*
- iii. *The welfare system prevents young people in need from becoming homeless and does not disadvantage young people due to age.*

² <https://centrepoint.org.uk/databank/>

³ This includes those in the education, care, and health sectors

Supporting young people who become homeless

The Situation Today: The Homeless Reduction Act (2018) means that all young people should receive prevention and/or relief support according to their needs. However, a shortage of funding for local councils means that the provision of support for young people is limited, differs significantly by geographic location, is largely limited to priority need, and is rarely holistic.

To End Youth Homelessness by 2037:

- i. *An appropriate home to live in is available to all young people who have a need, not just those classed as being of priority need, irrespective of geographic location. This should include short term homes for those in crisis.*
- ii. *Services consistently equip young people to live independently (a job and a home) by providing holistic support tailored to meet the individual's needs, wherever they are living. This means that services are commissioned based on delivering outcomes for young people, including opportunities to gain employment targeted qualifications and timely access to health services.*
- iii. *The welfare system effectively supports young people to gain the skills that they need to secure suitable employment or self-employment.*

Enabling young people to move on to independence

The Situation Today: A critical lack of social housing means that young people are struggling to access a secure and affordable home. Low wages, lower rates of benefits, higher rates of unemployment and insecure employment leave many young people unable to afford housing in the private rented sector and increasingly in the social housing sector as well. Local allocations policies can leave young people in supported housing stuck on waiting lists for long periods.

To End Youth Homelessness by 2037:

- i. *Young people have fair access to affordable and suitable housing in the social and private rented sectors, and in locations where they can be employed.*
- ii. *Young people have opportunities to gain necessary skills for access to employment. Such opportunities will include mentoring, coaching, work placements and internships.*
- iii. *The welfare system provides an effective safety net that enables young people living independently quickly to get back on their feet when life events cause a setback.*

3. Our Strategy

Focusing on the role Centrepoint will play over the next five years as part of a collective effort to end youth homelessness by 2037.

As the UK's leading youth homelessness charity, Centrepoint will spearhead the endeavour to end youth homelessness by 2037 by delivering exemplar services for young people, and using the insight from these to campaign, influence, and orchestrate systemic change.

From a 50-year history of working with 16-25-year olds who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness, we know that most young people can have a positive future if provided with the right environment and support. That is why we will never provide just a temporary shelter. Our mission is for every young person to achieve a **job and a home**.

We will campaign for **systemic change** that reduces the threat of homelessness for young people, including in partnership with organisations working with young people (and their families where appropriate) to prevent homelessness.

We will **directly deliver services** that prevent young people from becoming homeless at the point of crisis; that provide the turning point for those who require support; and that improve availability of truly affordable accommodation.

We will focus our efforts on ensuring that our services and our environment deliver the right outcomes for young people, and encouraging others to deliver to the same standards.

We will seek financial **independence** so that we can do what is right for young people. To enable this, we will further increase the proportion of income that is generated through voluntary sources, engaging new and existing supporters in our mission.

We will **innovate** in how interventions are delivered. Through clear evaluation of these approaches we will show what works, and importantly what doesn't. We will lead the way in showing what is possible and encourage others to follow.

We will not deliver services directly where others are better placed to do so. Our strategy is to focus on delivering exemplary and innovative services, and **partner** with others to do the things we do not do ourselves.

Through the insight gained from delivering services, our databank (<https://centrepoint.org.uk/databank/>) and our helpline (<https://centrepoint.org.uk/helpline>), we will give a national voice to every young person at risk of homelessness. We will **campaign, influence, and orchestrate** others in this endeavour.

Many of the identified steps to end youth homelessness by 2037 can only be achieved through change across society. We will end youth homelessness, not by ourselves, but all together.

4. Our Strategic Choices

In order to deliver our Strategy, we will choose to focus on the following four areas:

- i. Optimise** - ensure we have the optimum capacity to deliver our strategy.
 - ii. Prevent** - prevent those who face immediate homelessness from experiencing it.
 - iii. Support** - deliver exemplary and innovative interventions that enable those who suffer homelessness to have a job and a home.
 - iv. Amplify** - orchestrate solutions to the youth homelessness cycle that can be scaled up.
-



Strategic Choice One - Optimise

Our Strategic Goal

Centrepoint have the optimum capacity to deliver our strategy.

How Will We Achieve This

- i.** We will invest in our people, through Centrepoint's People Strategy, to be a resilient organisation that is inclusive, efficient, productive and adaptable.
- ii.** We will become a digitally enabled organisation. Our staff will have the ability to be connected wherever they are, young people will be digitally included, services will be delivered digitally, and data will drive decision making.
- iii.** We will invest in our properties so that every residential service meets a pre-defined minimum standard.

We will pursue a financial strategy that enables us to have the flexibility to respond to opportunities and challenges as they arise.



Strategic Choice Two - Prevent

Our Strategic Goal

Those who face immediate homelessness are prevented from experiencing it.

How Will We Achieve This

- i.** We will increase the reach of the Centrepoint Helpline, working in partnership with local authorities and other organisations.
- ii.** We will partner with and support organisations that provide direct prevention advice and support, including but not limited to Local Authorities, Youth Offending Institutions, and those working in early identification of children and young people at risk, mental health of children and young people, family mediation and support for looked-after young people.
- iii.** We will orchestrate and campaign for prevention activity to be undertaken across the welfare, housing, education, and care sectors.



Strategic Choice Three – Support

Our Strategic Goal

Those who suffer homelessness are supported to achieve a job and a home.

How Will We Achieve This

- i. We will provide exemplar support and homes that are psychologically informed, including some that can be accessed directly by young people; and we will test innovative new models of housing and support provision.
- ii. We will provide specialist Learning and Employment work, focussing on securing qualifications and sustainable job opportunities for young people.
- iii. We will offer Health interventions, with a focus on providing young people with the mental health support that they need to reach their full potential.
- iv. We will build Life Skills, working with young people to help them develop the skills required to live independently.
- v. We will develop Independent Living opportunities, proving that housing for young people can be both truly affordable and sustainable by linking rent payable to jobs and income.

Strategic Choice Four - Amplify

Our Strategic Goal

Solutions that break the youth homelessness cycle are undertaken at scale.

How Will We Achieve This

- i. We will undertake and share evaluation of the interventions that we deliver both internally to improve outcomes, and externally to influence scaling of leading practice.
- ii. We will encourage and support other organisations to deliver services that are proven to reduce youth homelessness. This includes innovations in supported housing services and independent living.
- iii. We will seek partnerships with others who deliver the services that we do not deliver ourselves. Such partnerships will range from joint advocacy through to joint ventures where necessary.
- iv. We will be the national voice for youth homelessness, increasing our influencing and campaigning work.



Optimise: invest in our people, buildings and technology to build optimum capacity to deliver our strategy.



Prevent: preventing those who face immediate homelessness from experiencing it.



Support: delivering innovative and exemplary services that enable those who had suffered homelessness to have a job and a home.



OUR VISION TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS BY 2037



Amplify: partnering with others where they are better placed than us to deliver for young people; and campaigning, influencing and orchestrating solutions to youth homeless that can be scaled up to drive change across society.