

Summary Report

UNTAPPED RESOURCE:

Homeless young people's
employment experiences
and aspirations

"We've got an
untapped resource
of young people
who really want to do
something, improve
their lives, access
a career that's
sustainable and that
they can develop in"



Summary

Young people experiencing homelessness face unique barriers to employment including issues with the benefits system and a lack of local jobs. These barriers can mean that homeless young people are often unable to access employment, resulting in diminished self-confidence and limited resilience.

This summary report explores the employment aspirations of homeless young people, as well as the barriers they regularly face and the support that can help them to realise their goals.

The report examines data from a national poll of 1,000 young people living in the UK; a survey of 246 homeless young people; and interviews with young people, charity sector stakeholders, department for work and pensions staff and employers.

Barriers

43%

of homeless young people had to turn down a job or more hours because of the effect it would have on their benefits.

Benefit rules prevent young people from working more hours and becoming financially independent.

Two thirds of homeless young people reported that they had struggled or currently struggle with their **mental health**.

National poll and survey respondents said that they expect **age, disability, ethnicity and gender** to negatively impact on their ability to achieve employment goals and get the kind of job they want.

“We need to look at benefits and the trap that it places on young people and especially young people in supported accommodation.”

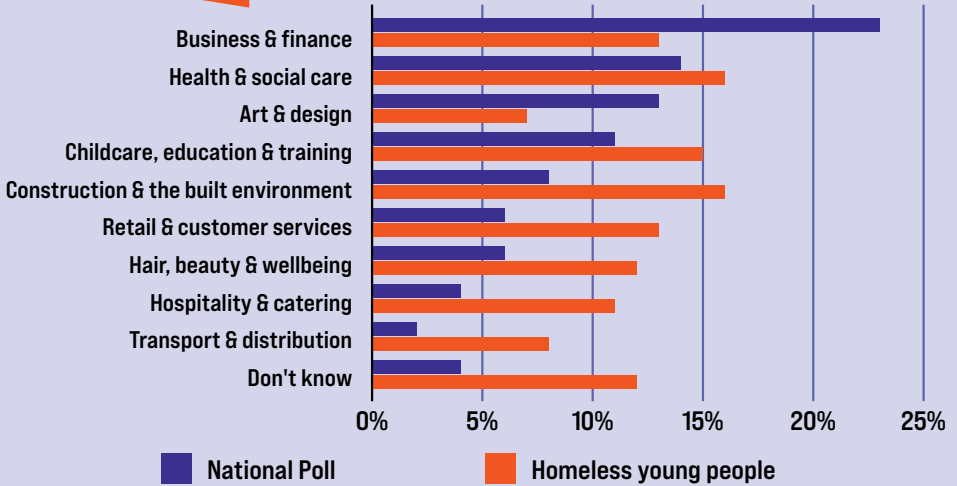
– Employment support worker, London

“I feel like with me and work, I would have to work for an employer who understood my mental health.”

– Chiara, London

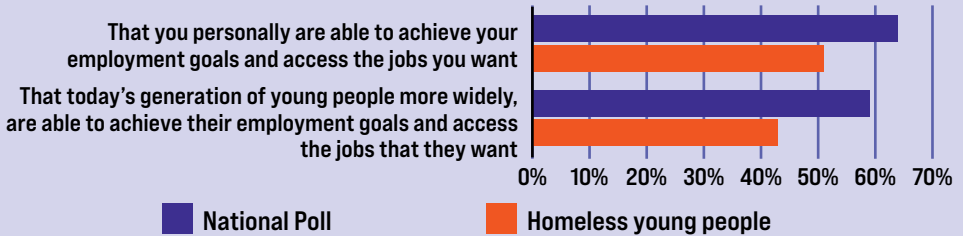
Aspirations

Employment aspirations



Homeless young people were **less likely to be confident** that they will achieve their employment aspirations than their peers in the general population.

Confidence to achieve goals



The national poll found that three quarters (75 per cent) of respondents identified **the availability of local jobs** as a barrier to them achieving their employment aspirations.

Young people on **low wages** struggled to cope with the rising cost of living:

So if my wages don't go up, I'm not going to be able to carry on like this. I'm just struggling every month to live... Because I'm not earning enough for me to be able to be sustainable.

– Connor, Yorkshire and the Humber

Support

The national poll found that young people value practical support such as **flexible hours** and **equipment** being provided.

Young people who were interviewed expressed **mixed experiences of Jobcentre support**. Several homeless young people highlighted that they had experienced difficulties when explaining their limited work capacity to Jobcentre staff.

“ I also got very fortunate with the job coach that I had at the time, being someone who is ready to understand and to have an open mind about the sort of situation as it was. Because not every Jobcentre worker is going to be the same. There is a little element of luck. ”

– Sam, London

Stakeholders and employers emphasised the importance of **recognising the potential in a young person rather than their experience**.

Recommendations:

- **Make work pay for young people living in supported accommodation** by reducing the Housing Benefit taper rate to bring it in line with Universal Credit; and increasing the applicable amount in Housing Benefit.
- **Make apprenticeships pay by extending the National Minimum or Living Wage to apprentices of all ages** after their first year to reflect increased skills and experience gained.
- **Introduce innovative employment schemes and apprenticeships** specifically designed to suit the needs of young people living in supported accommodation.

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