

Audit of accommodation provision for young people who offend



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www.yjb.gov.uk

National Youth Agency
Eastgate House
19-23 Humberstone Road
Leicester
LE5 3GJ
Tel: +44 (0) 116 242 7350
Fax: +44 (0) 116 242 7444
www.nya.org.uk

Perpetuity Research & Consultancy International Ltd
148 Upper New Walk
Leicester
LE1 7QA
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)116 222 5555
Fax: +44 (0)116 222 5551
www.perpetuitygroup.com
prci@perpetuitygroup.com

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Executive summary

The Youth Justice Board's priority in relation to accommodation is to ensure that more young people in the youth justice system have access to suitable and supported (where necessary) accommodation in order to improve their transition to adulthood. As such, youth offending teams (YOTs) have several responsibilities in relation to housing issues for young people.

Against this backdrop, Perpetuity Research¹ and the National Youth Agency² were commissioned by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in October 2009 to undertake an audit of accommodation provision for children and young people who offend (hereafter referred to as 'young people'). The audit had the key aims of providing a body of evidence drawn from local practitioners across England to:

- lead negotiations (nationally and regionally) with the aim of having a real impact in increasing access to accommodation supply for young people
- better target stakeholder influencing activities at national level in relation to accommodation for young people.

The audit involved a three-stage approach: a Rapid Evidence Assessment of the key literature, an online survey of YOT Accommodation Officers supported by more detailed telephone interviews, and a series of case studies with five YOTs which included consultation with local stakeholders and young people.

This report makes recommendations in the following main areas: the supply and demand of accommodation for young people, the role of the YOT Accommodation Officer, the processes and performance of accommodation provision, and systemic relationships and accountabilities in partnership working.

¹ Perpetuity is spin-out company of the University of Leicester that specialises in crime, community safety and security research and consultancy.

² The National Youth Agency is a Leicester-based developmental agency, and registered charity, and the national expert and development organisation in youth policy and in youth work.

Section 1. Background

- 1.1 Research evidence indicates a clear relationship between housing need and the use of custody. Estimates suggest that 1,000 young people per year are remanded in custody or secure accommodation (at a cost of £5 million) because they lack somewhere suitable to live (Audit Commission, 2004). Decisions concerning remand rests with the Court and are made on a case by case basis - but if a young person is homeless, some aspects of bail support packages may not be feasible or appropriate. In addition, a further 9,000 young people are placed in unsuitable accommodation each year, such as bed-and-breakfast or unsupervised tenancies (Audit Commission, 2004).
- 1.2 Research carried out on behalf of the YJB in 2004 found that:
- 15% all of young people had a housing need
 - 26% of those were in bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation
 - 20% of those were staying with friends
 - 13% of those were 'sofa-surfing'
 - 5% of those were sleeping rough³.
- 1.3 The study found that around half (48%) of young people in housing need were on community penalties and 12% in custody.
- 1.4 The study reported a number of triggers that often lead to a housing need for young people including, most commonly, a relationship breakdown with parents or relatives (42%). Other common triggers included concern that existing accommodation put the young offender at risk of harm or that the young offender puts others at risk of harm (10%); leaving a young offenders institution (YOI), secure training centre (STC) or secure children's home (8%), and leaving care or a foster home (6%). The findings echo earlier research into the risk factors that make young people vulnerable to housing difficulty. Studies by Nacro have long reported the links between family disruption, relationship breakdown and a background of local authority care as precursors to housing need (Nacro, 2005).
- 1.5 The YJB's 2006 accommodation strategy was developed in recognition of the fact that that stable accommodation can result in a reduction of more than a fifth (20%) in reoffending rates (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002)⁴.
- 1.6 The YJB's priority in relation to accommodation is to ensure more young people in the youth justice system have access to suitable and supported (where necessary) accommodation in order to improve their transition to adulthood and to reduce reoffending.
- 1.7 As such, YOTs have several responsibilities in relation to housing issues for young people. The first is to appoint a nominated Accommodation

³ Patel, N. (2004) *Accommodation Needs of Young Offenders*, YJB: London.

⁴ Social Exclusion Unit: Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners, July 2002

Officer whose role would encompass mapping local provision, identifying gaps in services and providing information to planning forums about the needs of young people.⁵

- 1.8 Additionally, YOTs are required to pursue and report on a range of performance indicators including National Indicator 46 – young offenders' access to suitable accommodation. This indicator measures the proportion of young people aged 10–17 on relevant youth justice disposals who have access to suitable accommodation when the disposal closes or when transferring to the community element of a custodial sentence.
- 1.9 YOTs are not, however, funded to provide accommodation for young people. Statutory responsibilities to young people in need of accommodation fall to local authorities or social services departments through the Children Act 1989, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and housing legislation.
- 1.10 Because of resourcing pressures within local authorities and recent legislative challenges, YOTs can find it difficult to secure accommodation for young people. The recent verdict in the case of G vs. Southwark has provided more clarity in respect of the legislation; whether this will, however, resolve the difficulties remains to be seen.
- 1.11 Generally speaking, the research evidence so far suggests that greater availability of and access to accommodation specifically for young people is needed, including accommodation for young people. The YJB's focus has not previously been on increasing the availability of accommodation but more on influencing the priorities of others, to ensure young ex-offenders are accommodated.
- 1.12 The YJB wishes to gain a greater understanding of how housing supply and availability is likely to influence outcomes for young people and to understand the efforts of YOT Accommodation Officers to advocate for young people and influence the strategic priorities of others.
- 1.13 Against this backdrop, Perpetuity Research and the National Youth Agency (NYA) were commissioned by the YJB in October 2009 to undertake an audit of accommodation provision for young people. The audit offers an evidence base drawn from local practitioners across England. This work covers England only – in Wales, a similar piece of work has been commissioned focusing on current provision, good practice and current and potential developments.
- 1.14 The audit had two primary key aims:
 - To provide a body of evidence to lead negotiations (nationally and regionally) with the aim of having a real impact in increasing access to accommodation supply for young people

⁵ Advice note on vulnerable young people, Youth Justice Board, February 2001.

- To provide a body of evidence to better target stakeholder influencing activities at national level in relation to accommodation for young people

1.15 The audit set a number of clear research objectives:

- To identify the key drivers in any shortfall of accommodation supply, the availability of research (local and regionally), and what role the YJB could play nationally and regionally to support local performance improvement.
- To better understand the relationship between performance levels against the national indicator (NI46), the capacity and effectiveness of the YOT Accommodation Officer provision and the local supply situation around accommodation and support placements for young people under 18.
- To assess the extent to which Accommodation Officers are performing the role prescribed in the YJB's accommodation role description and why there may be a gap between expectation and delivery.
- To better understand the relationship between improving performance and YOT engagement with Children's Services and Supporting People locally including the referral processes involved.
- To highlight areas of excellence and articulate the factors that influence it.
- To obtain evidence of any Local Housing Allowance issues that may prohibit access to accommodation.

Section 2. Methodology

2.1 The methodology involved three key delivery stages:

Stage One: Rapid Evidence Assessment

2.2 Part of the evidence base has been informed by a review of existing research, data and documentation. In order to source and review such information the research team undertook a Rapid Evidence Assessment of the literature examining accommodation needs and provision for young people. In order to accomplish this, relevant electronic databases were searched and articles identified and assessed as relevant were obtained and analysed.

Stage Two: Online survey with YOT Accommodation Officers and supplementary telephone interviews

2.3 In order to ensure that the research accessed the views of a sufficient number of YOTs in the time available, the research team administered an online survey of YOTs. The survey, initially piloted with members of the YJB's National Accommodation Chairs Forum, was online and available to complete between 2nd and 16th November 2009.

2.4 In order to maximise the response rate, the YJB publicised this research in the fortnightly YJB bulletins to YOTs and via a letter to YOT managers to explain that the research was underway and indicating where and how the questionnaire would be made available.

2.5 The survey was open to a total of 157 named contacts across 139 YOTs in England. A total of 93 responses were received. Five respondents from five separate YOTs (3% of the total sample and 4% of all YOTs) stated that they were unable to complete the survey because they had no Accommodation Officer. Of the remaining 88 respondents, four were removed from analysis due to being incomplete⁶. The remaining 84 respondents from 78 separate YOTs completed the online survey as fully as possible. This represents 53% of the total number of invitees and a response from 56% of YOTs invited to respond.

2.6 A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A and this report describes the detailed findings.

2.7 Basic analysis of the survey responses was initially undertaken and the survey data was then transferred in to a statistical software package (PASW – formerly SPSS) and additional analysis was undertaken to identify any relationships between variables. For all such analysis, tests for statistical significance were run. This was to establish whether there was a statistical likelihood that the variables were related, and that the relationship did not merely occur by chance.

⁶ After completing their name and area, none of the survey questions had been answered.

2.8 Where the findings are statistically significant, they have been detailed in the report. There were, however, a number of areas in which the findings were not statistically significant and it is not therefore possible to include analysis of the following survey questions:

- by region
- by whether the role was full-time, part-time, an additional responsibility or a shared/joint responsibility with another member of staff
- by whether an accommodation strategy is in place
- by Quarter Two 09/10 (July to September 2009) NI 46 performance.

2.9 To collect more qualitative data, the research team undertook a series of telephone interviews with a sample of 30 Accommodation Officers and other key practitioners including those working in youth offender institutions, secure training centres and secure children's homes. Data from the telephone interviews was analysed thematically to explore key themes. The sample was selected purposively to ensure the interviews represented a cross-section of YOTs including high and low performers against the national indicator 46 and was representative of different local authority structures (county, unitary, metropolitan and London Boroughs). The 27 interviews were with YOTs covering all government office regions as follows:

Table 2.1: Breakdown of YOT interviews by region

Region	Number of interviews undertaken
North East	2
North West	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	2
East Midlands	2
West Midlands	2
East	1
South East	5
South West	6
London	4

Stage Three: Case studies

2.10 The research team planned to undertake a series of five YOT case studies. The locations for these was sampled using a purposive sampling strategy in order to ensure a mix of high and low performers against the national indicator for accommodation and a mix of YOTs from different 'family' groups. The selection was made in consultation with the YJB.

2.11 Four of the five case studies comprised a visit to the locality by a nominated researcher who formed the main point of contact for each

YOT. The fifth case study had to be rearranged at short notice and as such involved telephone interviews and a review of local reports, data and other supporting material, including DVDs produced by young people benefiting from the accommodation services.

- 2.12 For the remaining four full case studies, the first stage of the case study involved the collation and review of any relevant data and documentation from the site in advance of any visit in order to gain an early understanding of the approach, processes and difficulties to accommodating young people in each area. The documentation reviewed included local plans and performance reports.
- 2.13 Having developed an understanding of accommodation issues for young people in each of the case studies, the fieldworkers made visits to the sites to engage and consult with local stakeholders involved in accommodation management and implementation.
- 2.14 In each site, a series of interviews were held with key agencies. Given the time available, a sample of interviewees was drawn from each location to include both strategic and operational staff from a number of different agencies including YOT, local authority and other housing providers, homelessness teams, Supporting People commissioners, and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS).
- 2.15 In addition to the consultation, each fieldworker worked with the case study YOT manager to access and review *Asset* needs assessment data to explore the prevalence of accommodation as an issue for young people. In order to get a sense of the local supply or potential supply of housing and accommodation support the fieldworker liaised with local Supporting People team and the YOT Accommodation Officers to explore the current supply of Supporting People funded units.
- 2.16 Of equal importance to the review was the consultation with young people including offenders. Interviews with current service-users were carried out in four of the five case study areas⁷. Two young researchers were recruited through an organisation called User Voice⁸ to work on this project. The two young people took part in a training session prior to commencing work on this project. This training focused key aspects of the research process, such as research ethics, different methodologies, analysing and disseminating results, etc.
- 2.17 Both young people have previously been through the criminal justice system and were able to draw on their own experiences to help develop the research tools (e.g. questions schedules) for this project. The young researchers were of a similar age and background to those young people participating in the interviews and this was seen as an important aspect of engaging participants in a meaningful and honest dialogue about the issues.

⁷ Due to a late change in case study areas it was not possible to schedule service-user interviews with young people in the fifth case study area.

⁸ User Voice is a registered charity which promotes the voice of the user of the criminal justice system to reduce reoffending.

2.18 A total of 32 young people currently known to YOTs were interviewed for this research.

Section 3. Supply and demand of accommodation for young people

- 3.1 This section explores the evidence as it relates to the supply and demand of accommodation for young people drawn from the literature review, online survey and telephone interview analysis.

Findings from the literature review

- 3.2 As the literature illustrates, part of the problem in understanding the scale of any perceived shortfall in suitable accommodation for young people lies in a lack of data availability. Previous studies point to the fact that young people more generally have often been overlooked. In the Centrepont (2005) study⁹ into unfit housing for young people, a survey of 100 local authorities' homelessness strategies across England found that 59% did not set out any plans for how they would house 16 and 17-year-olds. In addition, 32% did not plan to offer supported accommodation to this age group. Twenty six per cent of local authorities raised concerns that they would be unable to house 16 and 17-year-olds appropriately. Thirteen per cent were planning to rely solely on mediation with the family as a way to persuade young people to return home rather than house them.
- 3.3 The YJB 2007 study undertook consultation with a range of stakeholders from across ten YOT sites and asked whether the provision of accommodation for young people in their local area was sufficient to cope with demand. In nine out of ten sites the general consensus was that there was insufficient accommodation for young people experiencing housing difficulties (Arnull, 2007).
- 3.4 Often data relating to young people including the needs of young people is omitted from the regular assessments of local housing needs being undertaken. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment are both clear processes for establishing levels of housing need at a local level. However, a review of a random selection of these assessments within this audit indicates that very few reference the housing needs of young people or disaggregate these from the broader category of vulnerable groups.
- 3.5 The data to advise these assessments is available but very few made use of local data sources to inform the regional evidence base such as Supporting People Client Records and Outcomes data, and local bespoke needs surveys.
- 3.6 Further, YOTs case management systems, local authority housing and homeless strategies, local housing associations/Registered Social Landlords all hold valuable data on available provision and Supporting People strategies provide a supply map of supported housing that is available in the area.

⁹ Centrepont (2005) *Bed and Breakfast: unfit housing for young people*. London: Centrepont.

- 3.7 Another issue that presents a barrier to understanding the shortfall in accommodation supply is the inconsistency in reporting and recording practices.
- 3.8 Voluntary organisations such as Nacro and Shelter working with young people do not appear to publish collated data from their projects that might give an indication of trends although they may feed into other databases. Additionally, the voluntary sector may use different definitions to that of the local authority, which also makes estimating homelessness problematic. This then causes issues with regard to the legislative criteria, as to be eligible for a placement in a hostel or supported accommodation, there has to be evidence of housing need. The degree to which the housing need of a young person is monitored prior to placement is dependent on the level of recording undertaken by individual projects and does not appear to be collated either on an agency or national basis (Arnull, 2007).
- 3.9 Homelessness statistics are routinely collected by Communities and Local Government in England. In 2008, 4,320 young people were accepted by local authorities in England as being in priority need under the Homelessness Act 2002. These figures relate to 16 and 17-year-olds who are in priority need and 18 to 20-year-old care leavers. This age group represents 7% of the total number of homelessness acceptances. The figures for this age group have fallen year on year since 2004 when there were 10,930 cases of young people accepted as being in priority need – 9% of all acceptances¹⁰.
- 3.10 These falling figures are matched by improved performance on the YJB's accommodation targets, notably NI46. Arnull's review of youth justice plans indicated that performance against the targets relating to the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation was relatively high during 2004/5 with an average of 94 percent of young people assessed as being in suitable accommodation. Moreover, there was a significant overall increase in the proportion of young people assessed as being in suitable accommodation between 2003 and 2004/05 (Arnull, 2007). The most recent statistics demonstrate that this trend has continued. According to the performance figures provided by the YJB in 2008/9, the average performance across England and Wales for the percentage of young people with final warnings, relevant community penalties and closed custodial sentences assessed as living in satisfactory accommodation was 95.8%. For young people subject to a custodial sentence transferred to the community assessed as living in satisfactory accommodation the percentage was 89.7%. Moreover, performance against both targets has increased year on year since 2006/7.
- 3.11 Figures on numbers of young people in housing difficulty are masked by local authorities' statistics which relate solely to those young people who apply to them as homeless. Evidence from a range of services has indicated that they may not know who to approach in the first instance or

¹⁰<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/homelessnessq22009?view=Standard>

make their own arrangements such as living with friends or extended family as opposed to presenting themselves as being in need.

- 3.12 This means there is likely to be large numbers of young people who fall within the varying definitions of homelessness, but who do not approach local authorities, choosing instead to stay with friends or relatives (sofa surfing). These represent a hidden population of young people in housing difficulty.
- 3.13 Centrepont (2004) commissioned research to look at the scale, trends and causes of youth homelessness in England and Wales. The research concluded that a comprehensive approximation of the level of youth (those aged 16 to 24 years) homelessness (defined from housing legislation) was difficult to achieve and could only be based on estimates. Their estimates, which they indicate are broad indicators of homelessness, are based on available information from local authorities, those re-housed from registered social landlords into supported accommodation and those who sleep rough. On this basis, they estimated that between a minimum of 36,000¹¹ and a maximum of 52,000¹² young people were “found to be homeless” by local authorities in England in 2003 and that 13% may have had a recent experience of sleeping rough. They also indicate that young women appear to outnumber young men in local authority estimates, particularly among 16 and 17-year-olds living alone.
- 3.14 Suitable and settled accommodation is seen as key if a community sentence is to be effective in reducing or preventing reoffending and as such homelessness can have a significant impact on what occurs to young people involved in the criminal justice system. They are less likely to be bailed by the police or the courts if they do not have a suitable address to go to. People with housing difficulties are less likely to receive community sentences. The Audit Commission (2004) estimated that over 800 young people every year receive custodial sentences because they are not in stable accommodation. In addition stable accommodation is required for some bail conditions, such as curfews and electronic tagging. The Audit Commission in 2004 identified that up to 1,000 young people per year are remanded to a secure facility because they do not have a viable bail address.
- 3.15 For those on community sentences, the lack of availability of suitable accommodation can hinder the ability of an individual to engage and comply with the requirements of supervision. The ability to be released from custody into the community element of a custodial sentence can also be problematic for those that do not have an address to go to. Those eligible for release on a home detention curfew need a viable address, the agreement of family members or an offer of accommodation from a housing provider who is prepared to accept electronic tagging as part of the residence arrangements. Despite the fact that release dates are predictable to a degree, those without accommodation who may be ready for release can be discriminated against by not having an address

¹¹ Estimated to be 26 percent of households found homeless in 2003.

¹² Estimated to be 52 percent of households found homeless in 2003.

to go to and cannot therefore be released under these arrangements (Nacro, 2005).

- 3.16 Clearly the main processes of reviewing demand and supply at the local level overlooks or at best pays minor attention to the needs of offenders. The Rapid Evidence Assessment randomly collated 40 Strategic Housing Market Assessments from across England via website searches. Less than half made any reference to the accommodation needs of young vulnerable people at all, fewer still young people. Those that did, by and large, simply acknowledged a lack of data availability and a need to find out more.

Findings from the online survey and supplementary telephone interviews

- 3.17 In order to try and gain a clearer understanding of the level of accommodation needs among young people, the online survey asked respondents to provide data on the number of young people who had a housing need at the start and end of *Asset* within the last 12 month period. Of the 57 who responded, 35 were unable to provide the data. This was because they did not know the figures, were unable to source them within the time available or because the Youth Offending Information System (YOIS) or CareWorks system did not allow the data to be easily extracted.
- 3.18 Of the 21 who were able to respond the percentage range for those with accommodation needs at the start of *Asset* varied from 0–30% with an average percentage of 12% and from 0–18.5% at the end of *Asset* with an average percentage of 9%. In all but three areas the percentage dropped for the figures at the end of *Asset*.
- 3.19 This was consistent with the respondents to the telephone interview who were asked to estimate the number of young people with accommodation needs as a percentage of the YOT caseload. Most respondents felt that of the total YOT caseload those with accommodation needs fell somewhere between 4% and 18%.
- 3.20 Respondents were then asked to provide data relating to the number of young people within the last 12 months whose living arrangements were considered a risk factor (that is they were scored 3 or above on *Asset*) in their reoffending at start and end of *Asset*. Of the 46 who responded, 29 were unable to provide the data. This was again because they did not know the figures, were unable to source them within the time available or because the YOIS or CareWorks system did not allow the data to be easily extracted.
- 3.21 Of the 15 who were able to respond the percentage range for those with a high risk factor associated with living arrangements at the start of *Asset* varied from 1–33% with an average percentage of 15% and from 0–32% with an average percentage of 9% at the end of *Asset*.
- 3.22 Within the telephone interviews although most respondents stated that the number of young people requiring accommodation were relatively low

compared to the total number of young people, they felt that the numbers masked wider problems. Many respondents noted that although numbers were low there was still insufficient supply and the provision that was available was frequently full and 'bed locked', i.e. those beds that were available were in use, with no one moving on to independent accommodation and as such new entrants were unable to be accommodated :

Does demand outweigh supply? In one sense yes it does. We have young people in B&B and every project we have is full and has waiting lists. But then there are also the uncountable numbers of young people who are outside the YOT, outside of care who do not want to present as homeless.

Operations Manager, South West

All provision is well booked up and over subscribed – sometimes have 4–6 month waiting lists.

Resettlement and Accommodation Officer, South East

- 3.23 In addition in terms of understanding the demand for accommodation most areas felt some concern that the NI46 indicator did not give an accurate or true picture of accommodation needs. The indicator reports only on whether the young person is in suitable accommodation at the end of the disposal and as such presents data at a single point in time thus masking any earlier issues with accommodation that may have existed:

The way the system is recorded at the moment – it does not record in a meaningful way. The system does not allow me to extract meaningful information.

Accommodation Development Manager, North West

- 3.24 To understand the reasons behind the accommodation need, respondents to the online survey were asked to select from a list the five most common reasons for housing needs among young people in their area. Table 3.1 presents the list of options with the most commonly chosen reasons listed first and then in descending order. The most common reason for housing needs among young people, and a factor in almost every case, was a breakdown in relationships with family/relatives. This was cited in 93% (n=66) of cases and was something of an outlier, being around 23 percentage points higher than the next most commonly chosen reason 'sofa surfing' (70%, n=50 of cases). Although clearly many of these factors will be inter-related.

- 3.25 These findings were illustrated by the telephone interviews where respondents generally recognised that young people were most commonly in need of accommodation due to family breakdown, and often the parents held the view that once the young person reached 16 they would be entitled to council accommodation. Sofa surfing was also common which again masked the true picture of homelessness among young people:

Most common is family breakdowns – they do not necessarily become the most problematic. The most problematic are those with complex needs and have slipped through the net of social care.

Operations Manager, South West

But there is generally a consensus out there that once a young person hits 16 they are guaranteed a council flat. And so we see 16-year-olds often homeless as a result.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

Sofa surfing we have an issue with – because sofa surfing is a preferred option to going in a hostel for the young people.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

Table 3.1: Reasons for housing needs among young people¹³

Reason	Response %	Response Count
Relationship breakdown – parents/relatives	93%	66
Sofa surfing	70%	50
Leaving YOI or secure estate and are of no fixed abode	55%	39
Intentionally homeless as a result of their offending	54%	38
Relationship breakdown – step-parent/partner	41%	29
Banned from accommodation	37%	26
Offence type causes problems accessing housing (sexual offences, arson, etc.)	31%	22
Unable to access suitable accommodation due to health needs (mental health, substance misuse)	25%	18
Young person puts others at risk in accommodation	17%	12
Leaving care/foster home	13%	9
Accommodation puts young person at risk	13%	9
Asked to leave by friends	10%	7
Sleeping rough	8%	6
Family evicted by council/housing association (arrears/nuisance/other)	7%	5
ASBO prohibits entry to area, has led to eviction	7%	5
Family accommodation is of poor standard	4%	3
Fleeing violence from outside the home	3%	2
Wider family monetary issues (rent arrears/debt)	1%	1
New to area	0%	0
Relationship breakdown – partner	0%	0
Fleeing violence from within the home	0%	0

¹³ The percentage is calculated out of 71 responses – 13 individuals did not answer the question.

Barriers to seeking suitable accommodation for young people

- 3.26 Respondents were asked about the barriers to seeking suitable accommodation for young people. Table 3.2 presents the options in order of most prevalent. The most common barrier to seeking suitable accommodation for young people is the lack of availability/supply which was cited by 62 respondents (95%). This was closely followed by the young person being deemed intentionally homeless cited by 60 respondents (91%). With regards to the condition, nature and size of the property few respondents thought this was a barrier and a majority thought these were not a barrier.

Table 3.2: Barrier to seeking suitable accommodation for young people

Barrier	Yes	No	Don't know	Response Count
Lack of availability/supply	62	3	0	65
Young person deemed intentionally homeless	60	6	0	66
Lack of suitable provision due to nature of offence (e.g. sexual offences, arson, etc.)	53	9	3	65
Location is unsuitable because places a young person at the risk of re-offending/substance misuse/among other 'unsuitable' residents	53	11	3	67
Rent/issues relating to benefit	48	15	0	63
Lack of suitable provision to meet offender's health needs (e.g. substance misuse, mental health, learning disabilities)	47	15	1	63
Young person unwilling to engage	45	14	5	64
Concern relating to social factors, such as distance from family, educational provision, training or employment opportunities	39	22	2	63
Lack of appropriate support	39	24	1	64
Concern that the housing provision does not take into account the wishes/needs of the young person	39	25	0	64
Lack of funding to pay for placement	37	18	4	59
Suitability of the housing provider	36	26	4	66
Issues relating to single room supplement	31	26	4	61
Condition of the property	26	31	4	61
Concern relating to the impact on physical, emotional or mental health, e.g. difficulty in accessing a property, such as climbing stairs	15	43	3	61
Size not appropriate to the person's needs	4	50	5	59

3.27 A number of respondents provided other issues that presented barriers including the following:

- Gang membership/affiliation and age
- Some supported accommodation is for over 18-year-olds only
- Repeated evictions
- Problems with guarantor of the rent or lack of deposit
- Young person unwilling to engage in support
- Private landlords unwilling to let to those on housing benefit and people under 18 years
- Most provision in high-risk hot spots
- Waiting times from referral to support services providing support is slow
- Not enough emergency direct access provision.

3.28 Within the telephone interviews respondents were able to discuss the barriers to provision and support in greater depth. Many recognised that one of the key barriers to accessing available supply lay in the lack of specialised support and provision:

There is nothing really for young people – dual diagnosis, difficult behaviours, and high risk. And so we are having difficulties housing our young people.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

In some ways the supply is good – but I really struggle with those who have high support needs. I struggle managing these people and I am sure this will have to change.

Housing Support Officer, London

3.29 Many young people also had multiple needs and yet respondents often noted that as a result of their needs, once in accommodation the young person would soon fall foul of the provider's regime which resulted in them being evicted and at time becoming intentionally homeless and thus much harder to accommodate. This is supported by the view of the young people interviewed within the audit who did not like or agree with the rules and in most cases they did not understand why the rules were in place.

Also I do find that if we do get a young person accommodated somewhere they have rules to stick to and if they break those rules they are very quickly evicted; which is very frustrating for us. I do wish that some of these places had a better capacity to work with difficult young

people as all of ours by their very nature will be difficult. But it seems to me to be one strike and you're out.

Integrated Resettlement Worker, South East

- 3.30 When trying to then accommodate these young people with private landlords in addition to reluctance to rent properties to this client group, the nature of their offending at times meant that it was not possible for a private landlord to do so:

The prolific are far harder to house and accommodate because they have high level offending and sometimes the nature of their offending will mean the landlord cannot house them. Some of the landlords we work with are not insured to take those who have committed arson for example.

Deputy Head of Service, North East

- 3.31 In some cases the difficulty in placing young people with high support needs was compounded because the referral process allowed providers to 'cherry pick' which young people they took. This means that often those in need of higher levels of support are denied access to accommodation and placed in accommodation that it was argued increased their vulnerability:

We have been trying to set a Foyer up here for years – but my concern has been that some of our young people are NEET and the Foyer can sometimes be quite choosy about who they take.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

We also get young people with mental health issues/ ADHD and we have very little provision for these specialist young people who need high level support. Those services that are able to offer places cherry pick their clients and ours simply do not get accepted because of their offending. They are as vulnerable but are not picked and so go into less desirable places that make their situation worse. We then get exclusion and evictions and young people become intentionally homeless because we are having to place them in places that do not meet their needs.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

The one direct access hostel we have has been a historic problem in getting our young people in. I have been battling with Supporting People to get this resolved – and they have now worked with the hostel to ensure the hostel has targets to hit in terms of working with our young people.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

- 3.32 Linked to this a general lack of emergency provision impacted on young people meaning they were still placed in B&B or remanded in custody:

There just isn't enough supply here. Particularly there isn't sufficient emergency provision and so young people are

sitting on a waiting list or recent provision has closed its waiting list because it is simply too long. Emergency provision is really hard to come by. Or a bail address – in the past we have had to remand because we cannot find a bail address.

Remand and Support and Accommodation Worker, South West

We do still have young people who are banned from supported accommodation and so have to go into a B&B and this is simply not suitable. Because B&B is unsuitable often the young person will just not stay there and mostly then sofa surf – all very ad hoc and unsustainable.

YOT Accommodation Officer, South West

- 3.33 Interestingly one consequence of the G vs. Southwark ruling is that the use of B&B has increased:

Emergency accommodation is usually B&B provision but we are seeking to move away from that through the CLG target. But since the ruling (G vs. Southwark) it has gone back to an increased use in B&B accommodation I feel because social services do not have as good access to housing provision/service as housing did.

Remand and Support and Accommodation Worker, South West

- 3.34 Areas had attempted to reduce the use of B&B by various methods.

The aim is to reduce use of B&B and provide suitable bail to addresses. We are adopting a hub and spoke model to supported lodgings across the County. We already have Foyers dotted across the county and are planning on having 4–5 supported lodgings around each of these hubs.

Operations Manager, South West

- 3.35 For some the lack of supply of accommodation was compounded by the geography of the authority – this was an issue particularly for two tier authorities covering large geographical areas:

[The] geography [of the area] is a huge problem for us. Rural areas need more but the demand is less – here we need more dispersed units. We are looking as a county to develop supported lodgings with various models from family-based accommodation, shared houses with support, single units with support but nothing exists like this at the moment.

YOT Team Manager, South West

- 3.36 There are also issues with lack of or managing the expectation of move on accommodation:

The breakdown comes at the move on accommodation. They come out of YMCA which is really nice and whatever they move on to is always a step down.

Housing and Outreach Worker, London

- 3.37 Issues with benefits were apparent and presented barriers in terms of young people's access to private rented accommodation:

Single room rent – local housing allowance as it is now means we cannot get access to the private sector.

Accommodation Development Manager, North West

Supply, suitability and quality of accommodation

- 3.38 Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 is excellent and 1 is poor) the level of supply, suitability and quality of accommodation for young people in their area. Figure 3.1 provides a summary of their responses. Few respondents rated the supply, suitability and quality of accommodation for young people as excellent. The most negative responses were with regards to the supply and availability of accommodation (in line with responses to the previous question described above) where 57% of respondents rated supply as 1 (poor) or 2. The quality of accommodation was more positively viewed, with only 38% rating the quality as 1 (poor) or 2. This suggests that where accommodation is available the quality is acceptable; the greater problem at present is that there is not enough of it.
- 3.39 Through the telephone interviews few areas had accommodation specifically for offenders although some had negotiated a number of ring fenced beds within hostels to provide emergency beds but more substantial schemes were unusual.

We have a crash pad scheme – started at end of 2006. There are three one bed flats shared between YOT and housing advice. The young person can have a maximum two week stay. It can be used for respite, family exclusion plus mediation support, the young person and family will get intensive support if necessary with a view to getting them back home if suitable or into more suitable accommodation if that is the preferred option.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

The duplex scheme has been running since 2004/05 as a medium to long-term supported accommodation scheme specifically for young offenders. The young person has to be at risk or actually homeless to access that. All are council flats so at the end of their stay if they do well and want to keep the flat we can sign them over to a normal council tenancy. This means we are always getting turnover of the flats which is good.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

- 3.40 Some areas has no specific accommodation at all for young people aged under 18 which was felt to present increased risks:

Within Supporting People funding there is nothing for young people specifically. The budget that funds our services is

the same as that which funds up to 25 years old. I am amazed they can get away with no specific accommodation for under 18s or for high risk high support young people. Accommodation shared with up to 25 year olds presents a risk.

YOT Team Manager, South West

- 3.41 The accommodation need of the young person was often a symptom of other factors which meant that this group of young people often presented multiple problems which made accommodating them difficult:

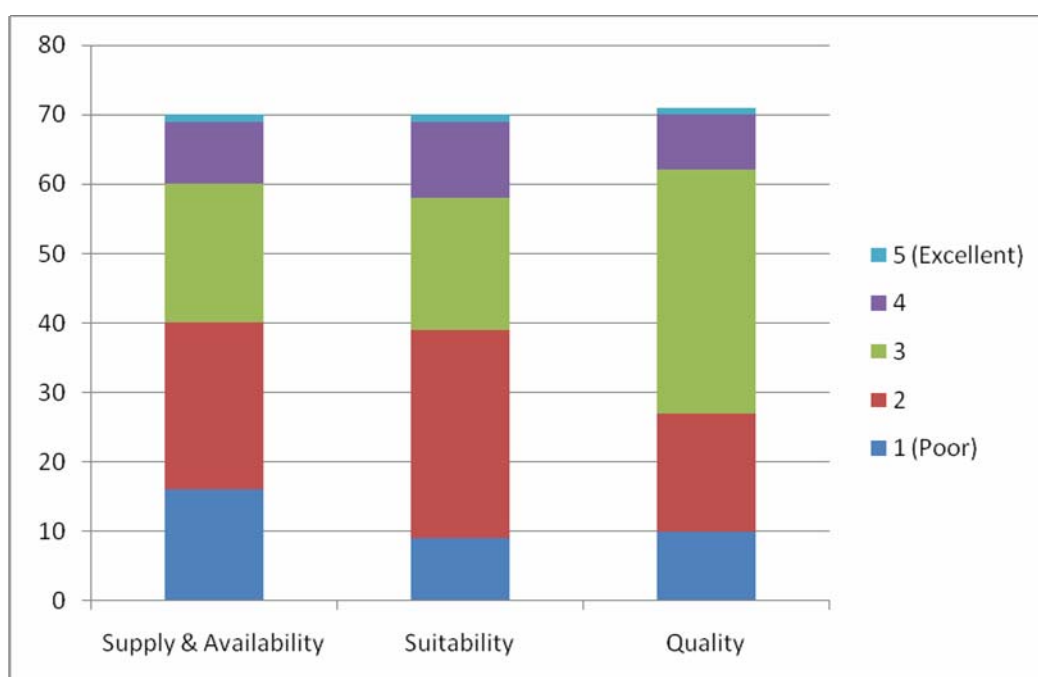
The ones that have all the problems including housing needs are a very small percentage of the total number we deal with annually. Both these young people often have multiple issues – substance misuse, excluded from education, prolific offending.

Deputy Head of Service, North East

This is based on my own case load – getting information through from YOIS is not that easy for me.

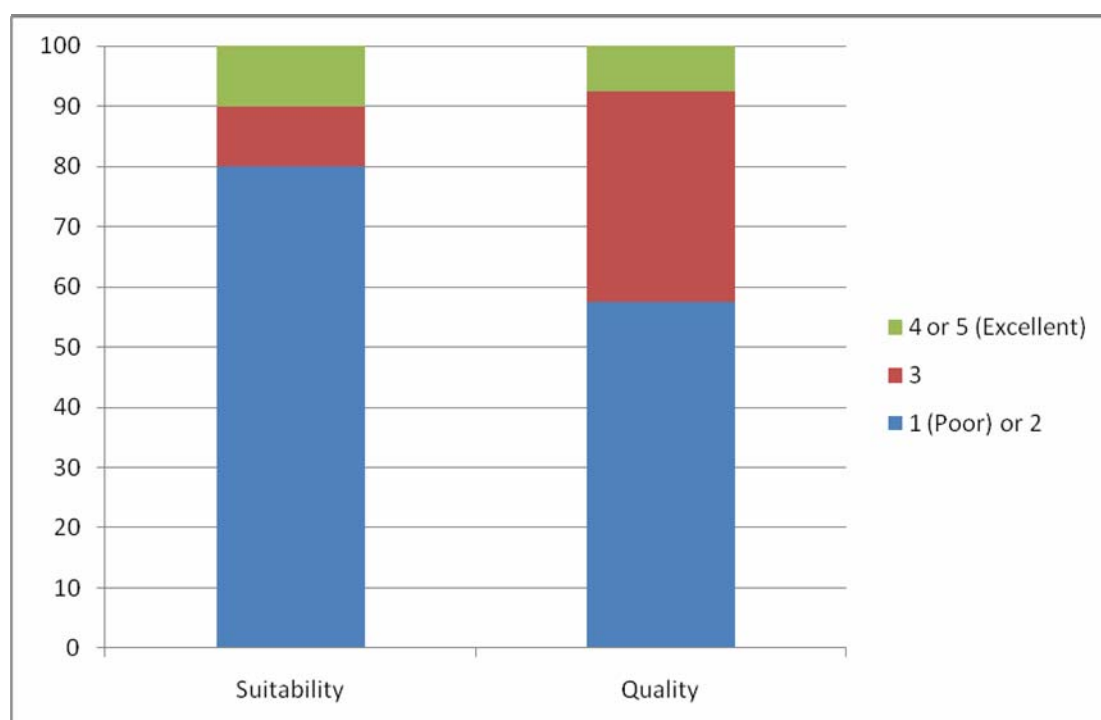
Housing Support Officer, London

Figure 3.1: Supply, suitability and quality of accommodation for young people (number)



3.42 Of those who ranked the supply and availability of accommodation as 1 (poor) or 2, 80% had ranked the suitability of accommodation as 1 (poor) or 2, however 58% had ranked the quality of accommodation as 1 (poor) or 2¹⁴. This would suggest that there is a closer correlation between poor supply and poor suitability than there is between the supply and quality of accommodation.

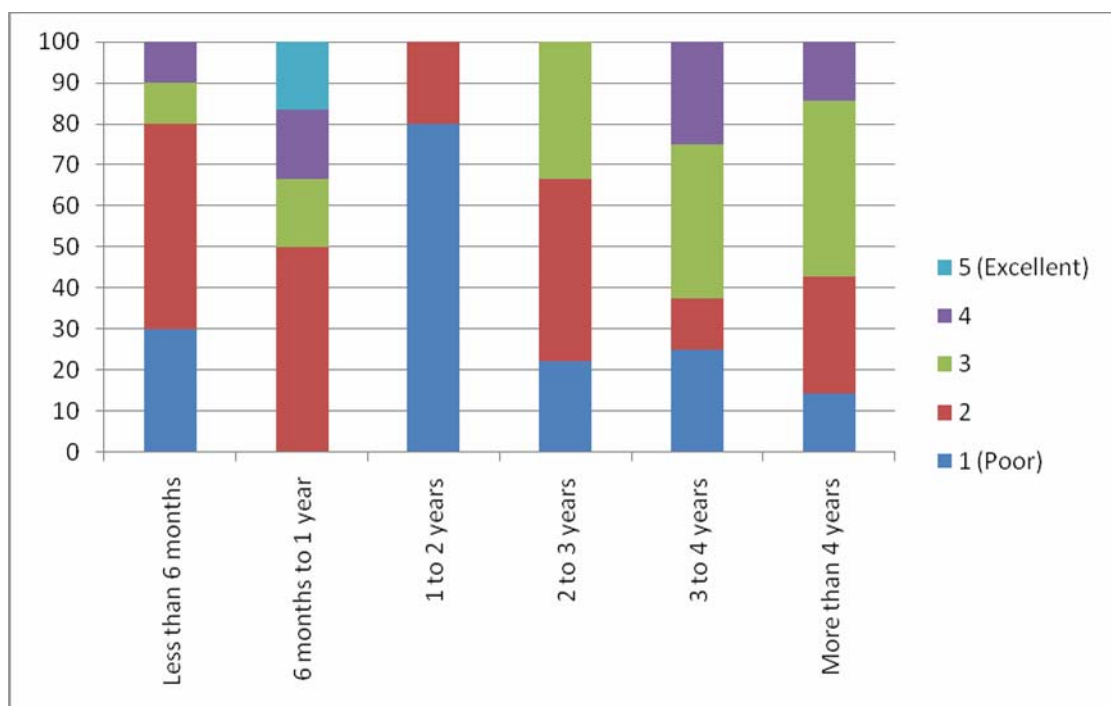
Figure 3.2: Supply and availability of accommodation rated 1 (poor) or 2 by suitability and quality of accommodation



¹⁴ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

- 3.43 Further analysis shows that those in a part-time Accommodation Officer role, and those for whom it was a shared or joint responsibility with another member of staff were most happy with the supply and availability of accommodation for young people rating it most commonly as 3 or above (totalling 71% and 62% respectively). Both the full-time Accommodation Officers and those who undertook the role as an additional responsibility more commonly felt the supply was inadequate (with a total of 42% and 30% respectively, scoring 3 or above)¹⁵. This area would benefit from further investigation to determine why experiences of supply and availability differ depending on the structure of the role¹⁶.
- 3.44 In addition there was no particular impact made by looking at the length of service of the member of staff. It could be expected that those who have been in post longer may have had more time to identify a consistent supply and develop relationships allowing them to find available accommodation. This however is not evident in the findings where supply and availability was rated most positively by those in post six months to a year, but those in post one to two years were the least happy with the supply¹⁷. This is displayed in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Supply and availability of accommodation by length of service (percent)



¹⁵ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

¹⁶ Analysis was also run to determine whether any relationship between the structure of the role and suitability and quality existed, however the findings were not statistically significant.

¹⁷ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

Use and availability of temporary accommodation

- 3.45 Respondents were asked about the use and availability of temporary accommodation. 84% of respondents stated that there was temporary accommodation in their area. When asked whether there was sufficient availability, almost two thirds of respondents (63%) felt there was not. There were concerns relating to the use and suitability of temporary accommodation.
- 3.46 In terms of meeting the demand for accommodation among young people, YOTs within the YJB guidance are encouraged to:
- Map young people's needs, which involve auditing the availability of accommodation and identifying any gaps in services.
 - Implement structures and systems, involving developing clearly defined protocols and processes for engaging with local partners.
 - Influence the local housing agenda, through the Supporting People programme, participating in the development of Homelessness Strategies and linking with other appropriate strategic groups.
- 3.47 That said, the YOT is not a commissioning body and as such the commissioning of accommodation services and support falls to Supporting People alongside housing, children's services, health and probation services.
- 3.48 The Supporting People programme was introduced in 2003 to draw together separate funding sources to provide housing related support services. Since its launch in 2003 Supporting People has been paid as a ring fenced fund for councils, to be spent according to specific rules and provides the means by which accommodation services can be developed in local areas.
- 3.49 One might expect that an effective partnership arrangement between the YOT, Supporting People and accommodation providers in a local area would ensure that the demand for a range of accommodation needs among young people (as measured by the YOT) would be met. However, existing albeit often locally based and anecdotal evidence has long pointed to a shortfall in the supply of suitable accommodation for young people including those who have offended (Arnull, 2007).
- 3.50 The Supporting People initiative is intended to be complementary to and run in tandem with the local authority homeless strategy and is promoted as part of the homelessness prevention agenda. From 2010/ 2011 the ring fence has been removed and the Supporting People funds will be included in Area Based Grant. The move is intended to increase innovation, flexibility and success within the housing support sector (CLG, 2008a). However there is some concern among practitioners that the removal of the ring fence could mean a reduction in the supply of accommodation and support for young people, including offenders.

Section summary and recommendations

- 3.51 Part of the problem in understanding the scale of any perceived shortfall in suitable accommodation for young people lies in a lack of data availability and inconsistent recording practices. Data on the demand for accommodation among young people is patchy at best and often data relating to young people including the needs of young people is omitted from the regular assessments of local housing needs being undertaken. There are also inconsistencies in reporting and recording practices that need addressing.
- 3.52 In order to try and fill the gap, respondents to the online survey were to provide data on the number of young people who had a housing need at the start and end of *Asset* within the last 12 month period. Of the 57 who responded, 61% were unable to provide the data because they did not have access to the figures, were unable to source them within the time available or because the YOIS or CareWorks system did not allow the data to be easily extracted. Many respondents expressed concern that the NI46 indicator did not give an accurate picture of accommodation needs among young people since it only reports on whether the young person is in suitable accommodation at the end of the disposal which masks any earlier issues with accommodation.
- 3.53 Of the 21 who were able to respond the percentage range for those with accommodation needs at the start of *Asset* varied from 0–30% with an average percentage of 12% and from 0–18.5% at the end of *Asset* with an average percentage of 9%.
- 3.54 This was consistent with the respondents to the telephone interview with the majority of respondents estimating that of the total YOT caseload those with accommodation needs fell somewhere between 4% and 18%.
- 3.55 Although these percentages are seemingly not high, the most common barrier to seeking suitable accommodation for young people was cited by 95% of respondents to the online survey as a lack of availability/supply. This was closely followed by the young person being deemed intentionally homeless cited by 91% of respondents.
- 3.56 The most common reason for housing needs among young people cited in the online survey was a breakdown in relationships with family/relatives. Sofa surfing was also common which again masked the true picture of homelessness among young people.
- 3.57 Although young people were recognised as often being classed as high risk, a lack of specialised accommodation support and provision was common and in some cases the difficulty in placing young people with high support needs was compounded because referral processes failed to prevent accommodation providers from ‘cherry picking’ the young people they took. This means that often those in need of higher levels of support were denied access to accommodation and placed in B&B accommodation that increases their vulnerability.
- 3.58 Data on accommodation need is available from a number of local sources and it is recommended that strategically the YOT takes a lead in

pooling local data pertinent to young people. This will not only include the YOTs own data but also that held currently by Supporting People Client Records and Outcomes data, local authority homelessness data as well as data taken from local bespoke needs surveys and strategies produced by local housing associations/RSLs. Common reporting standards/definition need to be adopted, agreed and shared across agencies.

- 3.59 It is recommended that YJB work with YOTs nationally to explore current case management IT systems and ensure that they offer sufficient levels of functionality to facilitate data interrogation and analysis – at present it is not clear that YOIS and CareWorks offer this level of functionality.
- 3.60 It is recommended that the NI46 indicator is reviewed and replaced with a more meaningful target. At the least a clear definition of suitability is required and measures need to be taken throughout the order. Alternatives would be to amend the measure to record the number of move-ons during an order.
- 3.61 There is some evidence that areas with a single gateway into accommodation services are better able to regulate accommodation placements and avoid providers cherry picking which young people they take. It is recommended that this is explored further with a view to provide guidance to YOTs and wider services on models of effective practice.
- 3.62 From 2010/2011 the ring fence is being removed from Supporting People funds which are now included in Area Based Grant and there is some concern among practitioners that the removal of the ring fence will mean a reduction in the supply of accommodation and support for young people, including offenders. It is recommended that the YJB seek regular feedback from YOTs to monitor whether this is the case.
- 3.63 Interestingly it appears that one consequence of the G vs. Southwark ruling is that the use of B&B has increased – although because the placement into B&B is made by Children's Services this falls outside of the CLG target. It is recommended that the YJB lobbies for the B&B target to be cross-governmental.
- 3.64 Establish a sub-regional local providers forum to provide support, build confidence and enhance resettlement resilience. This could take the form of an online forum which met periodically (quarterly or six-monthly) to discuss common issues and good practice solutions. This could build on early learning from the YJB pilots running in the North West, South West and London.

Section 4. Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

- 4.1 The National Indicator Set that forms the basis of Local Area Agreements consists of 198 possible indicators that have been refined from the far larger set of targets which local authorities previously reported on. The following six youth justice indicators are included for England:
- NI 19: The rate of proven reoffending by young people
 - NI 43: Percentage of young people within the youth justice system receiving a conviction in court who are sentenced to custody
 - NI 44: Ethnic composition of offenders on youth justice system disposals
 - NI 45: Young offenders engagement in suitable education, employment or training
 - NI 46: Young offenders access to suitable accommodation
 - NI 111: The number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10–17.

Findings from the literature review

- 4.2 In 2001 it became a requirement of core funding from the YJB that an Accommodation Officer be appointed (Advice Note 5 Feb 2001). The guidance suggested that this did not have to be a full-time post, but could be the identified responsibility of an existing YOT team member, provided they were given sufficient time to carry out the function. The necessity to have a nominated person in this post has been incorporated into the YJB's performance measure for accommodation (YJB, Youth Justice Plan Guidance).
- 4.3 The YJB indicated the primary role of the Accommodation Officer was to identify any gaps in housing provision and provide local planning forums with relevant information about the needs of young people. The YJB also suggested YOTs should aim to influence local housing strategies, develop directories of provision and be included in strategic partnerships for children leaving care (Advice Note 5).
- 4.4 Research commissioned by the YJB into the housing needs and experiences of offenders (2007) involved a review of Youth Justice Plans for 2004/5. These revealed that, almost without exception, YOTs had Accommodation Officers in place, although a small number of areas acknowledged the post was currently vacant – this is largely consistent with the findings of the YOT Accommodation Officer survey undertaken within this review (although a handful of YOTs did cite their lack of an Accommodation Officer as the reason for not participating in the survey).
- 4.5 The majority of plans reviewed by the research in 2007 were insufficiently detailed to allow any concrete analysis of how the YOT officer function was discharged or the role the Accommodation Officer was expected to play. Significantly, the Accommodation Officer was frequently not named as the lead officer against many of the accommodation-related action points within the plans. Where there were references to the functions of the post, these suggested a wide range of

approaches, perhaps reflecting differences in the way that the post was filled or the fact that, in practice the responsibility is a split function across a number of YOT officers.

- 4.6 The review identified that the majority of Accommodation Officers were appointed to the role without previous knowledge and experience of housing and accommodation issues and it was only a minority that had received training in this respect once appointed. The results of the online survey undertaken as part of this review conflict with the findings of the earlier 2007 review and demonstrate that around half of all Accommodation Officers entered the role with specialist knowledge of accommodation.

Findings from the online survey and supplementary telephone interviews

Nature of Accommodation Officer role

- 4.7 Respondents to the online survey were asked whether the accommodation part of the role was full-time, part-time or an additional responsibility. The results are presented in Table 4.1 and show that only a third of YOTs have a full-time Accommodation Officer.
- 4.8 In addition as the telephone interviews demonstrate, the role is not delivered in a universal way and there was a degree of variability in terms of how the role was fulfilled with some employed directly by the YOT and others on secondment from another agency or part funded by other agencies:

Housing Support Officer – I have worked in this post since 2002 but am seconded from a housing provider – the YOT funds my post.

Housing Support Officer, London

I am part-funded by the YOT but I work within Children's Social Care. My remit is to work with the housing departments across the five districts in the county and with social care and the YOT to reduce homelessness. So a broader remit really.

Joint Housing Manager, South East

Table 4.1: Nature of the YOT Accommodation Officer role (a)

Answer options	Response %	Response count
Full-time	37%	30
Part-time	11%	9
An additional responsibility	41%	34
A shared or joint responsibility with another member of staff	11%	9
answered question		82
missing		2

4.9 Respondents to the online survey were asked whether the role was covered by a single post holder or part of a wider team. The responses are provided in Table 4.2 below and show that just under two-thirds of YOTs have the Accommodation Officer role as a single post.

Table 4.2: Nature of the YOT Accommodation Officer role (b)

Answer options	Response %	Response count
A single post (this includes single posts that are job shared)	64%	50
Part of a team (several Accommodation/ Support Officers for the whole YOT)	23%	18
Don't know/Unsure	13%	10
answered question		78
missing		6¹⁸

4.10 When asked to explain the make-up of the team, the responses reveal a high level of difference across England in terms of the response by YOTs to one of the key conditions of their grant.

4.11 Some YOTs had a single post holder whose sole responsibility was for accommodation issues, in other YOTs there were a number of workers covering different geographical locations or core functions:

Among the team is a seconded Substance Misuse Worker, seconded Police Officer and seconded Education Welfare Officer. There is also an ISSP Support Worker, Support Worker, five YOT Practitioners, one YOT Officer, an AELP (Access to Education & Learning Projects) Worker, a part-time Probation Officer, a Victim/Reparation Officer, another Reparation Officer, a full-time Admin Assistant, three part-

¹⁸ Two individuals did not give an answer, the remaining four did not indicate whether the role was a single post/part of team but did provide an explanation of the makeup of their team.

time Admin Assistants and a part-time Admin Team Leader. In addition to this, we are supported by an Operations Manager and an Area Manager.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, East of England

The team consists of me as a full-time co-ordinator and two full-time Housing Support Officers however we support homeless 16 and 17-year-olds who are non-offenders as part of a multi-agency approach which was set up under a Local Public Service Agreement. Without this there would only be myself.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, South West

- 4.12 For 41% the role is a bolt on to other duties often related to bail, resettlement, courts and custody. For some this clearly presents issues in terms of their ability to dedicate sufficient time to accommodation support:

We don't have an Accommodation Officer – since the post holder left we have not replaced it. I am the manager for final warnings, court, post court and custody but also lead on accommodation which includes driving forward the county council strategy for homeless young people.

YOT Operation Manager, South West

Additional responsibility for me, a bolt on to my main job – as such the nature of the rest of my role means I can get called to court any day of the week which means I have no dedicated time set aside for the accommodation part of my role. This makes planning my time very difficult and can mean I miss meetings, etc. But then we are a very small team and so a full-time dedicated post would be really difficult here.

Remand and Support and Accommodation Worker, South West

- 4.13 It was generally recognised by those areas without a full-time officer, that a single dedicated post would be of benefit:

We really need an Accommodation Officer here – even if the YOT cannot resource one full-time then the council needs to second someone. I have only been on a one-day training course and as such my knowledge is really limited. I struggle to navigate through housing and without that specific knowledge we are scuppered.

RAP Worker, South East

I find that most people in the region do not have accommodation as a bolt on. We do not have anyone who is strategically working on it. This for me is an omission but the head of service told me there is no money for employing accommodation people. Could it be one of the head of services roles? It would be nice but don't think it is going to happen. Until something goes horribly wrong people just let it tick along.

Integrated Resettlement Worker, South East

- 4.14 There was also evidence that the role was unfilled in some areas:

Since our dedicated Accommodation Officer left the YOT I have taken over the responsibilities primarily to implement, on a multi-agency basis, the new strategy of the Council.

YOT Team Manager, South West

- 4.15 Respondents were asked whether they saw the role as a strategic or operational role. The majority (60%, n=50) saw the role as a mix of the two; around a fifth (22%, n=18) saw the role as operational and 13% (n=11) as strategic. The remaining 5% (n=4) did not know. This is consistent with the 2007 YJB research which undertook a review of YJB plans and found that while some Accommodation Officers had a strategic brief, representing the YOT in a range of local forums, such as Supporting People or those relating to the Local Authority's homelessness strategy, others were expected to develop links with local housing providers to extend the range of provision available to young people. More frequently, the role appeared to be focused at the operational level, locating individual placements as the need arose, and supporting young people in placements (Arnall, 2007).

- 4.16 In the main those participating in telephone interviews saw the role as part strategic and part operational, but recognised that operational matters often dominated because by their very nature these had a greater urgency. Although some recognised that probation represented the YOT at some key strategic meetings (e.g. Supporting People commissioning groups), some felt that a strategic drive on accommodation was lacking within the YOT:

If you read my job spec it is a very strategic role – strategy, statistics, main point of reference, liaison with the agencies and other partners – but in reality it is client focused a lot of the time. I think when the post started it was about strategy but other workers [stated] they needed support on the ground.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

Really you need someone who does strategy and someone doing operational as long as there is sufficient input in housing. The idea is that probation represents us on accommodation at key meetings but that doesn't happen here – they do not understand us, or represent us.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

Operationally, we used to have a senior practitioner just doing accommodation. We do not have that post anymore – a decision was made that once the person left on secondment the post would not be filled. The YOT has decided the operation level could be done by the YOT RAP team and the core management team can lead on strategy. I can see their point but it would be good to have a senior specific person with housing knowledge in the team to grease the wheels.

YOT Accommodation Officer, South West

- 4.17 Clearly, not having a strategic lead within the YOT on housing was seen as a barrier to effective practice:

No one really in the YOT is taking a strategic lead on this – I am very much operational. Not having a strategy in place isn't holding me back but someone working strategically might help unlock some of the barriers I face.

Integrated Resettlement Worker, South East

- 4.18 Within most YOTs (70%) the role had been in place for three years and over. The degrees of time that each respondent had been in post varied considerably as Table 4.3 shows:

Table 4.3: Length of time in role

Answer options	Response %	Response count
Less than 6 months	14%	11
6 months to 1 year	10%	8
1 to 2 years	10%	8
2 to 3 years	26%	21
3 to 4 years	10%	8
More than 4 years	30%	24
<i>answered question</i>		80
<i>missing</i>		4¹⁹

- 4.19 There was a fairly even split among the respondents between those who came into the role with specialist knowledge on accommodation issues (48%, n=40) and those who came into the role with no prior knowledge (52%, n=43). This suggests a considerable increase in the number of people coming into post with specialist knowledge in housing/accommodation over the last two years (i.e. since the 2007 YJB study which found that the majority of Accommodation Officers had no such background).

¹⁹ Two missing answers were for those who had described that the area does not have a specific accommodation officer role, this question was therefore not applicable.

- 4.20 Most respondents to the telephone interview recognised that a background in housing and an understanding of the locality were two key success criteria to fulfilling the position:

No [I didn't have prior housing knowledge] and as such I didn't know a huge amount about what I was doing as so yes it was a hindrance.

Resettlement and Accommodation Officer, South East

I don't have an accommodation background and this is very much a tag on for me and so it would perhaps be easier for me if I had that background or the responsibility went to someone who had that background.

Remand and Support and Accommodation Worker, South West

I think coming from housing and from the same LA was absolutely essential to hitting the ground running.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

No way can you do this without previous knowledge of housing. I feel really sorry for those that have had it dumped on them in addition to their bail and remand work as they have no existing knowledge.

YOT Team Manager, South West

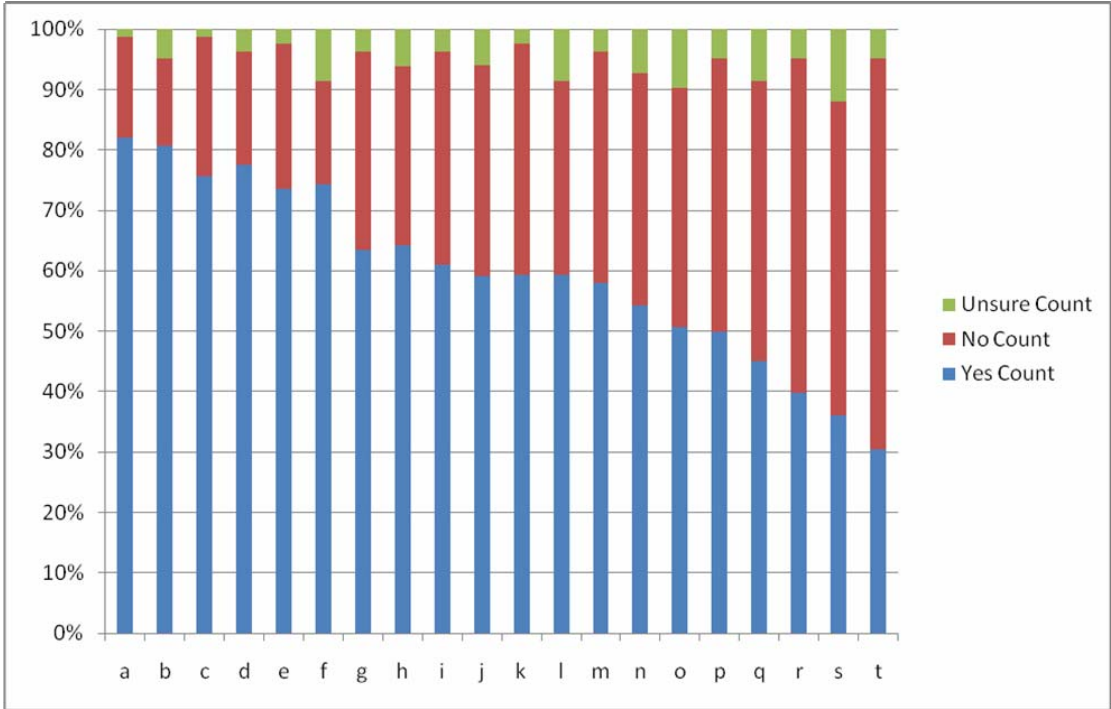
- 4.21 Where those without prior knowledge had succeeded, this was often as a result of working locally previously or building effective links to other agencies:

I am not from a housing background and I don't find this is a barrier at all but this is mainly because I have a really good relationship with the homeless and young person's team at the local authority and I have the housing advisor from that team locked in to how we work. He now holds surgeries in the YOT offices every Friday morning for young people with housing issues.

Integrated Resettlement Worker, South East

- 4.22 The survey sought to explore whether the YOT Accommodation Officers were undertaking the range of tasks as stipulated in the YJB role description. Respondents were presented with the range of tasks and asked to indicate whether this formed part of their role. The results are presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Duties undertaken by YOT Accommodation Officers



See table on following page for explanation of codes (a to t).

Table 4.4: Explanation of codes a to t in Figure 4.1

Code	Task/Duty
a	Engage directly with local housing authorities to improve access to accommodation resources and services for young people, including participation in the development of local housing and homeless strategies
b	Establish links with local housing providers and develop working protocols with all relevant local agencies
c	Explore and source suitable accommodation for young people
d	Provide specialist advice to YOT management and practitioners on specific accommodation issues, current housing and housing-related legislation and welfare benefits
e	Engage directly with the local Supporting People team and probation services
f	Support engagement in wider initiatives that feed into the accommodation agenda
g	Undertake specialist housing support work with young people
h	Develop clear internal referral systems that enable young people at risk of homelessness or living independently to access any further specialist support required, e.g. referral to parenting services or life skills programmes
i	Undertake (with local partners) a needs-mapping exercise in the local area to identify the level of housing demand for young people
j	Provide analysis of data to YOT management on the housing needs of young people to feed into local and regional strategic partnerships
k	Record, monitor and collate data on the housing needs of young people in the area
l	Develop robust internal mechanisms that clearly identify young people at risk of homelessness and ensure that appropriate interventions are put in place early to prevent homelessness
m	Undertake prevention work when a young person becomes homeless (e.g. family conferencing)
n	Act as the lead YOT officer in the development and implementation of a local accommodation strategy
o	Carry out (with local partners) a supply-mapping exercise to identify provision and availability of housing in the area
p	Explore the potential for joint training on housing and welfare benefits with housing providers and partner agencies
q	Use a gap analysis to evidence need to the local housing authority and Supporting People team
r	Explore funding opportunities that may be available to the YOT for the development of accommodation services and resources and work in partnership with other agencies on the development of new project proposals
s	Complete a gap analysis based on the needs and supply mapping exercises and use the findings
t	Deliver training on housing and welfare benefits issues to YOT practitioners

- 4.23 Interestingly, those that feature as less common duties are those that relate to undertaking a needs and supply analysis and liaising with housing and accommodation providers to explore options for meeting the demand and increasing the supply. This finding is supported by the findings within the Rapid Evidence Assessment of limited data available on accommodation supply with local strategic housing market assessments but also in terms of the respondents' difficulty in responding to questions in the survey about levels of need.

Section summary and recommendations

- 4.24 Only a third of respondents to the online survey were full-time Accommodation Officers and the role is clearly not delivered in a universal way with a degree of variability in terms of how the role was fulfilled with some employed directly by the YOT and others on secondment from another agency or part-funded by other agencies.
- 4.25 Some YOTs had a single post-holder with sole responsibility for accommodation issues; others had a number of workers covering different geographical locations or functions. For 41% of respondents the role is a bolt on to other duties often related to bail, resettlement, courts and custody. For some this clearly presents issues in terms of their ability to dedicate sufficient time to accommodation support and it was generally recognised by those areas without a full-time officer that such a post would be of benefit.
- 4.26 The majority of online survey respondents (60%) saw the role as a mix of operational and strategic duties and not having a strategic lead within the YOT on housing was seen as a barrier to effective practice.
- 4.27 There was a fairly even split among the respondents between those who came into the role with specialist knowledge on accommodation issues and those who came into the role with no prior knowledge which marks a considerable increase in the number of people coming into post with specialist knowledge in housing/accommodation over the last two years (i.e. since the 2007 YJB commissioned study which found that the majority of Accommodation Officers had no such background).
- 4.28 Most respondents to the telephone interview recognised that a background in housing and an understanding of the locality were two key success criteria to fulfilling the position. Where those without prior knowledge had succeeded, this was often as a result of working locally previously or building effective links to other agencies.
- 4.29 Of the range of tasks as stipulated in the YJB role description, interestingly those that feature as less common duties are those that relate to undertaking a needs and supply analysis and liaising with housing and accommodation providers to explore options for meeting the demand and increasing the supply. This finding is supported by the findings within the Rapid Evidence Assessment of limited data availability on accommodation supply within local strategic housing market assessments but also in terms of the respondents' difficulty in responding to questions in the survey about levels of need.

- 4.30 While it is recognised that for smaller YOTs a full-time Accommodation Officer may be a luxury, it is recommended that the YJB highlight that effective practice in terms of fulfilling the role is to have at least a full-time post, preferably filled by someone with prior knowledge of housing and accommodation services and the local area/partnerships involved. Secondments from housing and homelessness teams and Supporting People should be considered.
- 4.31 Because operational duties tend to often override the strategic it is essential that a nominated member of the YOT management team leads strategically on accommodation to ensure the Accommodation Officer is supported and effectively linked into local partnership working on accommodation.
- 4.32 The list of possible duties stipulated by the YJB, although comprehensive, is over ambitious. It is recommended that the YJB consider giving priority to those they see as core duties of the post. It is essential that priority is given to undertaking a needs and supply analysis if issues relating to poor data availability and use are to be improved.
- 4.33 Training should be provided for YOT Accommodation Officers, both in a general sense around core duties and also at a specific, local level. Training should be accredited in some way and could be part of the Certificate in Effective Practice for YOT workers. The training pack could be developed through work with young service-users.
- 4.34 YJB should continue to support the development of regional learning networks for YOT Accommodation Officers to share good practice solutions. This should be tied in with better marketing and increased use of the YJB accommodation web forum already in existence where YOT Accommodation Officers can share practice and discuss current issues as part of a virtual national network.

Section 5. Processes and performance

Findings from the literature review

- 5.1 Arnall's review of youth justice plans indicated that performance against the targets relating to the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation was relatively high during 2004/5 with an average of 94 percent of young people assessed as being in suitable accommodation. Moreover, there was a significant overall increase in the proportion of young people assessed as being in suitable accommodation between 2003 and 2004/05 (Arnall, 2007).
- 5.2 The most recent statistics demonstrate that this trend has continued. According to the performance figures provided by the YJB in 2008/9 the average performance across England and Wales for the percentage of young people with final warnings, relevant community penalty and closed custodial sentences assessed as living in satisfactory accommodation was 95.8%. For young people subject to a custodial sentence transferred to the community assessed as living in satisfactory accommodation the percentage was 89.7%. Moreover, performance against both targets has increased year on year since 2006/7.
- 5.3 These figures could imply that the provision of suitable accommodation is not a problematic issue. The research evidence suggests otherwise. The 2007 YJB study found the almost three quarters of YOTs indicated that the target presented significant challenges and noted shortages of accommodation for children and young people in their area, relative to the level of need. As such, there is concern relating to the performance measure which has continued to present a positive impression of supporting the accommodation needs of young people when practitioners report otherwise.
- 5.4 The assessment of whether accommodation is suitable and appropriate is largely subjective. The YJB counting rules define '*suitable accommodation*' in accordance with the Children (Leaving Care) (England) Regulations 2001. On this basis, the assessment of suitability should take into account:
 - whether the accommodation is suitable for the child in the light of his or her needs
 - the child's wishes and his or her education, training or employment needs
 - the character of the landlord or other provider.
- 5.5 The definition does not determine suitability for particular accommodation types but allows for a professional assessment by the individual practitioner. Moreover, the measure is a snapshot at a particular point in time and does not ask YOTs to specifically identify those in housing need or to relate the information to outcomes.

- 5.6 Much of the literature on the processes for dealing with young people who are in need of accommodation relates to the roles to be played by key partner agencies. Research undertaken by Nacro and the University of Middlesex in 2007 for the YJB found that the difference between the definitions of homelessness under housing legislation and the definition of 'in need' under the Children Act 1989 meant in some cases significant differences in the nature of support (physical and financial) a young person might receive in the long and short term, the length of time they receive that assistance for and by which agency. There was also evidence to suggest that Children's Services were at times reluctant to accept responsibility because of the possible long-term obligations and local authority housing departments view young people as potentially problematic (Arnull, 2007).
- 5.7 As we see later in this section the findings from this audit indicate that this is still an issue. The G vs. Southwark ruling is affecting this situation and as results from the online survey and telephone interviews will demonstrate in Section 6 results the ruling is already impacting on the work of YOTs in accommodating young people both positively and negatively.
- 5.8 Until recently common practice was that if the young person in need of accommodation was under 16 years they tended to be dealt with by Children's Services under the provisions of the Children Act 1989, whereas 16 and 17-year-olds fell within the Homelessness Act.
- 5.9 In G vs. Southwark the issue tested was if a child of 16 or 17 presents himself to a local Children's Services authority and asks to be accommodated by them under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, could that authority then refer the child to the local housing authority for accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996. The House of Lords was unanimous in allowing the appeal; setting out clearly the approach local authorities should take when performing their statutory duties to 16 and 17-year-olds who present as homeless.
- 5.10 The ruling has confirmed that local authorities must presume that any lone, homeless child should be provided with accommodation and under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 unless the child is not in the local authority's judgement (based on an initial screening assessment), a child in need. Where the criteria for section 20 have been met Children's Services do not have discretion to choose to use section 17 powers instead to provide accommodation. The effect of providing accommodation under section 20 is of course that the child becomes looked-after within the meaning of section 22 of the Act (DCSF, 2009).
- 5.11 The literature demonstrates a number of pressure points in the process of referral and placement. The YJB-commissioned study (Arnull, 2007) succinctly demonstrates the issue surrounding the application for housing benefit that penalises young people. The system that is designed to help people on low incomes pay rent and ensure that they can access decent housing holds an expectation that parents will support 16 and 17-year-olds and their entitlement to benefits is therefore restricted. This can be a significant problem for young people who are estranged from their families.

- 5.12 An additional problem with the payment of housing benefit is that it is paid at least four weeks in arrears, which presents difficulties for homeless young people. Furthermore, the payment of housing benefit may stop or the amount paid be reduced when someone starts work. Research into young people and the benefits system (National Youth Agency, 2009)²⁰ found that a young person's contribution towards their hostel accommodation can jump from £10 per week to £90 per week immediately when they start full-time work. This can be a major barrier for young people moving into full-time employment which is typically at or around the minimum wage and may leave the young person financially no better off in full-time employment. This concurs with previous research which estimated that 'at National Minimum Wage, working 35 hours a week someone is on average £3.49 better off in work in London'²¹. Young people with low or no income can end up in debt due to poor benefits administration (Centrepont, 2005) and the system itself can be daunting.
- 5.13 An additional problem associated with the payment of housing benefit to young people is that it is restricted for those under 25 years of age to the average rent of a single room in the private sector with shared use of facilities. This in itself can cause difficulties in terms of accessing accommodation which again places young people at a disadvantage.
- 5.14 Dependency on benefits makes it difficult to access accommodation, as many landlords do not accept people on benefits particularly young people and may additionally require substantial deposits. Further, if rent arrears are accrued as a result of going into custody, these will have to be cleared before an individual can be considered for re-housing. Housing benefit is paid for a maximum of 13 weeks for those sentenced to custody. This substantially diminishes the prospect of retaining accommodation for those serving custodial sentences of six months or more.

Findings from the online survey and supplementary telephone interviews

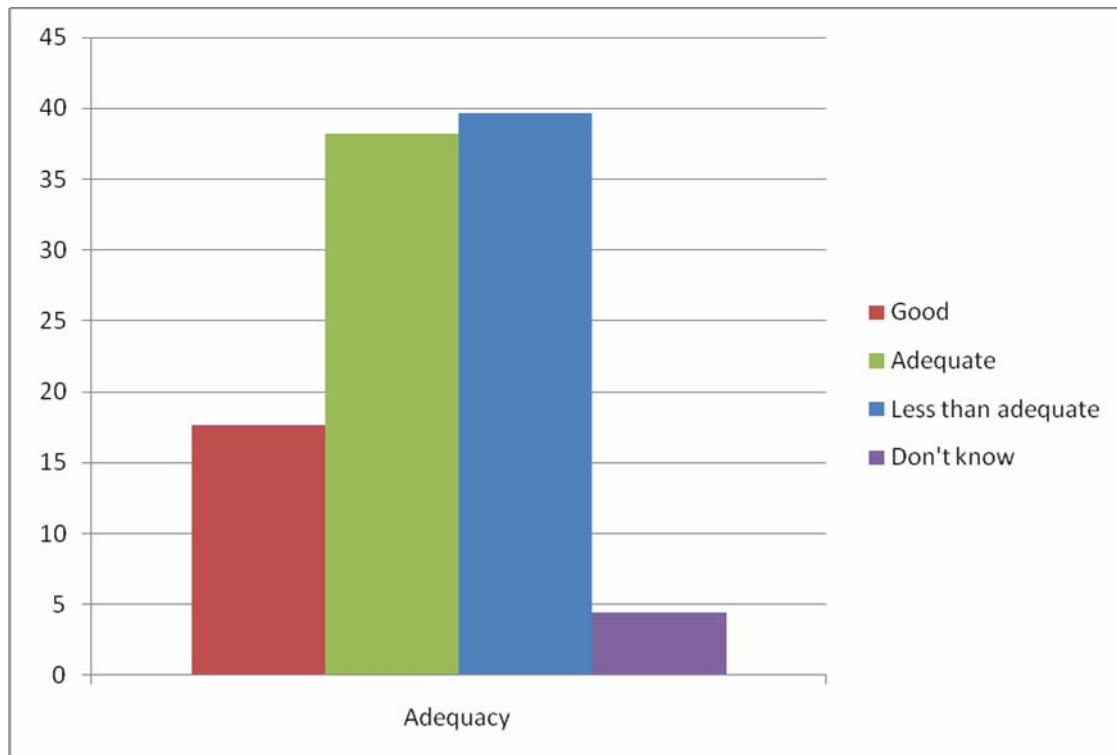
Adequacy of referral processes

- 5.15 Respondents were asked to comment on the adequacy of the referral and placement processes for young people in their area. The findings reveal that two-fifths (40%) felt the process was less than adequate. This is presented in full in Figure 5.1.

²⁰ Adamson, J and Sharpe, D. Dr. (2009 forthcoming) *Young people and the benefits system: values, beliefs and behaviour*, NYA: Leicester

²¹ The costs and benefits of formal work for single homeless people (Dec 200), pg 12, paragraph 7. The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, commissioned by Off the Streets and into Work.

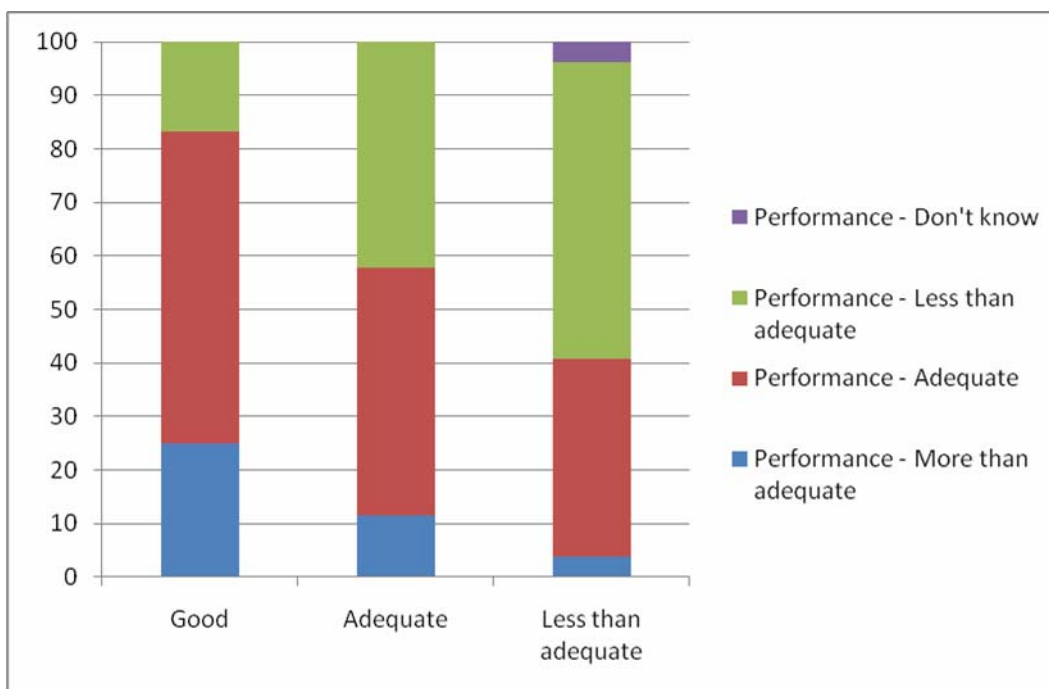
Figure 5.1: Adequacy of referral processes



5.16 This finding is important because how the referral and placement process is viewed correlates to how overall performance on accommodation is viewed. Those areas which rated the referral and placement process as less than adequate were less likely to rate overall performance on accommodation for young people as adequate or more than adequate (41%), than those areas which had a good (83%) or an adequate (58%) referral and placement process²². This is shown in Figure 5.2.

²² This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 5.2: Overall performance by adequacy of the referral and placement process for young people (percent)



Overall assessment of YOT performance on accommodation

5.17 Respondents were asked to rate performance overall on accommodation provision and support for young people in their area. Around a half (47%) felt the performance was adequate with a further 41% responding that performance was less than adequate. Only 10% felt it was more than adequate. These areas are listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Areas identifying overall performance as more than adequate

Area	NI 46 performance – Percentage of young people with FW, RCP and custodial sentences in satisfactory accommodation for quarter 2 09/10 (July to September 2009)
Windsor & Maidenhead YOT	100.0
Sunderland YOS	100.0
Enfield YOS	100.0
Harrow YOT	98.7
Bradford YOT	98.4
Leeds YOS	96.0
Cambridgeshire YOS	94.6

5.18 Due to the small number of areas assessing their performance as more than adequate, it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions about what makes for good performance based on the composition of these areas.

However, further investigation, using these areas as case studies may be beneficial.

- 5.19 Accommodation Officers who indicated their role was operational ranked their overall performance the highest. They most commonly rated the overall performance in their YOT area as adequate or more than adequate (totalling 69%). This was then followed by those whose role was a mixture of the two (totalling 57%) and those whose role was strategic (totalling 55%). Those who did not know how to categorise their role were the least positive (totalling 25%), their opinion of performance perhaps reflecting their lack of clarity in terms of their own role and the earlier finding that none were aware of an accommodation strategy in place²³. This would suggest that a clear focus for the role of Accommodation Officer is needed to achieve an adequate performance. The findings are displayed in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Overall performance by type of role (percent)

Area	NI 46 performance – Percentage of young people with FW, RCP and custodial sentences in satisfactory accommodation for quarter 2 09/10 (July to September 2009)
Windsor & Maidenhead YOT	100.0
Sunderland YOS	100.0
Enfield YOS	100.0
Harrow YOT	98.7
Bradford YOT	98.4
Leeds YOS	96.0
Cambridgeshire YOS	94.6

- 5.20 In terms of exploring the relationship between process and performance the telephone interviews throw some light on the subject. In terms of performance on accommodation, many questioned the national indicator (NI46) as an effective measure of their performance mainly because of the subjectivity of the term suitable but also because it did not provide the YOT with a true picture:

I have issues with the target – and it makes data difficult for us to provide in a meaningful, useful format. To make some real sense of the data we would need to drill down into every young person on our Asset tool to be able to calculate the exact issues in relation to accommodation.

Deputy Head of Service, North East

²³ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

- 5.21 Respondents were asked to consider an improved measurement and made a number of common suggestions. Respondents wanted to see a clearer definition of suitability and some favoured changing the measure to record the number of move-ons during an order:

We have done lots of work on NI46 – but it is very difficult to define suitable. With my independent housing head on – I do not always think what we deem to be suitable actually is ... parental home is not always suitable. Also return home can often just be temporary and masks repeat homelessness. I tend to look at the number of unplanned move-ons as much better indicators. Because then you can check progress from one year to the next. Ten unplanned reducing to five shows progress to me.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

Finding a better measurement – this is tricky and would need changing the case management system. Perhaps we should be looking at the number of times the address changes during the order. For some this can be up to 20 times during a single order – measure that.

Accommodation Officer, North East

A better measure would or should be around the 1989 Children's Act where suitable relates to the welfare and development of the young person or perhaps link to Every Child Matters outcomes.

YOT Operations Manager, East Midlands

- 5.22 In some cases respondents had concerns as to the reliability of the data:

I am not confident that all Asset forms are being filled in properly and not updated regularly – even in terms of changes from start to end of order. As such the data out there is useless.

YOT Resettlement and Accommodation Officer, South East

- 5.23 Generally speaking those working in two-tier areas noted the complexity of working across a number of districts which results in a variability of service and processes. For some who had recently moved to unitary status from two tier, this was seen as an improvement:

The problem we have here is that we have six districts to work with and so we are really trying to get some consistency. Particularly on issues of evictions so young people get an equitable service.

YOT Team Manager, South West

- 5.24 Few respondents had a YOT accommodation strategy in place and for those that did it was often considered out of date. Some were not aware whether one existed or not.

- 5.25 Opinions were mixed in relation to the value of having a bespoke accommodation strategy for the YOT, while some recognised the

document was useful, others argued that it was preferable to ensure that YOT targets were locked into the variety of other local strategies:

Yes we have an accommodation strategy but to be honest I am not sure how useful it is. The YJB recommend that we have one but it is a little dated now and very basic. But for it to work it needs to link more directly into the local homeless strategy. I was talking recently to my managers at the YOT and housing options about how to make it a working document – an annual action plan.

Accommodation Officer, North East

- 5.26 More important to respondents was having effective protocols in place to manage the referral and placement process in terms of ensuring the wheels turned smoothly and effective work with partners more broadly;

Our providers are better – I did a lot of work to set up operational protocols with those providers we were struggling with in terms of high evictions and reluctance to take place. So we have robust referrals processes, share a lot of risk and support information. Our case workers here attend review meetings with the housing providers. I keep an eye on the whole network and this has meant they have been more willing to accept high risk because they feel now that we are not dumping and running. So our unplanned evictions have reduced.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

- 5.27 In terms of the effective partners within the process, there were some tensions between the YOT and Children's Services regarding leaving care:

Leaving care – we got a lot of young people from our leaving care team who are placed in out of borough, poor B&Bs – this means the young person is completely estranged from their support networks and so of course they are at increased risk with less support. So of course our support has to increase.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

I see that once they get to 18 the leaving care team drop them like a brick and we are having to pick them up. Setting them up to fail.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

- 5.28 In some areas this had been tackled:

Recently the leaving care team have employed a housing worker and this has helped to accommodate our leaving care young people who are problematic. As such I can now bow out of aftercare placements – falls on the leaving care team.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

- 5.29 There were differences noted between those areas that had developed a single gateway process for accessing supported accommodation against those that had not. Of those areas interviewed who did not have a single gateway (and these were the majority) the YOT Accommodation Officer leads on work with all young people with accommodation needs and in many cases had to approach various providers for each young person in need of accommodation:

All YOT case managers approach me directly and then I work with the young person. I do an introduction with them and get a feel for their situation. If they need accommodation and don't want to go alone I will accompany them to go to the Housing Advice Project. I take the young person to that service to get the assessment done and get them sorted out.

Housing Support Officer, London

- 5.30 In some areas this could mean that the YOT Accommodation Officer has to fill in numerous applications for a single young person:

We now seem to have far higher risk cases – wounding cases, sex offences and it is increasingly hard to accommodate these. I feel in my job for most young people I work with I fill in 8–9 housing application to keep options open.

Accommodation Officer, North East

- 5.31 In some areas, improved systems had been put in place to manage the referral and placement process of young people including offenders:

We now have joint referral panels of all the local providers and referrers who sit around district-based panels and discuss allocations and decide who is the best provider for all young people. Everyone who has a role to play in accommodating young people sit on these panels so everyone is accountable. It makes us more proactive and less reactive because we have good flow of information exchange.

Resettlement and Accommodation Officer, South East

A tiered system of housing advice operates locally. I have overall responsibility but then a team of workers linked to each district picks up complex cases as well as options and advice being offered by other agencies including YOT case workers, Connexions, the leaving care team and youth service. We have a tiered approach where tier 1 is Connexions and youth service who will spot the needs and refer. If we get repeat homelessness cases or complex at-risk young offenders and care leavers these will get referred to housing services

YOT Team Manager, South West

- 5.32 These models work it seems because of effective senior buy-in from all agencies. For those who had or were moving towards the single gateway

model the perceived benefits included a reduction in paperwork/applications, and the reduction in the possibility of 'cherry picking' by providers:

We do not have a single gateway and this means that we have to make applications to a number of hostels and these can cherry pick who they take.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

We maintain liaison links with the Gateway – our annexed services offering a single point of entry into the temporary supported accommodation provision locally. This enables me to check that resources are going to the right people. The single point of entry has really helped for this.

YOT Operations Manager, East Midlands

The problem I have found is that supported accommodation does not cater for young people today; they have rules and regulations and so young people with alcohol or drug issues are very quickly evicted. The provider cannot cope, the staff aren't trained to deal with these issues and so our YP become repeat homeless. SP here are reviewing how we refer to supported accommodation – considering a single gateway. The idea is to take the final decision away from the housing provider to decide who they do and do not take. It gives the power back to SP and not the provider which we need.

Accommodation Officer, North East

- 5.33 Some areas managed the process with the young person by adopting an action plan:

We have a housing action plan with each young person and they sign it so it becomes a contract almost. It covers benefits, picking up clothing – gives them support but also ties them into the action plan. When I started the job I did action plans with the case manager. It used to be a YJB recommendation but it was too close to the Asset and wasn't with the young person – these are individual action plans with the young person. It gives us a point of contact and also makes the young person remember we are still working with them and have actions to meet together. At the moment this is crucial because we are bed blocked.

Accommodation Officer, North East

- 5.34 Accommodating young people on release from secure establishments varied. In some areas it worked well:

For people coming out of prison we have protocols with the homeless unit. I go into the prison to do the assessment and then the young person can approach the housing advice project on release and all is in place already.

Housing Support Officer, London

- 5.35 In others there were tensions in the system. One tension relates to the application process whereby in some areas this can only go ahead with a fixed release date and the young person present to make the application.

We get into YOI in advance and can get the applications set up. But the providers won't make a decision before they have met the young person and they won't go into YOI because they are too busy. And so the young person comes out and has to go into temporary accommodation for a short time which may not be ideal especially if out of area B&B. We are trying to get young people ROTL for the interviews.

Resettlement and Accommodation Officer, South East

It would be great if we could get young person released on temporary licence to attend the accommodation assessments but also to college open days, etc.

Accommodation Development Manager, North West

- 5.36 For those working with young people in secure settings, the frustration of not having an address on release were clear:

Often those we are working with have come from troubled placements and so they are not allowed to go back to where they were. Or there is no funding or bed allocation made available until the day they get out, which leaves us no time to get them settled and also we cannot do any prep work in terms of education or vocational employment. For us it is a huge problem.

STC respondent

[A] young person does not want to go to the place that has been found for them – out of area. Intentionally homeless comes in then. If we knew in advance that they were going to these places we could do some work around acceptance in advance but we only find out two days in advance. We could get them out a visit to reduce anxiety.

STC respondent

Average stay last year was less than 10 weeks and so we do not have them for very long – and so if we knew where they were going back to when they leave we could do some great work, which would make their resettlement far more effective and reduce their reoffending. But most go on to reoffend because we do not know where they are going back to and so our success is hampered from the start. Their reoffending is just a symptom of the fact that we haven't got their resettlement right in many cases and if we are told where they are going back until the day of return in some cases – what chance does that young person have?

STC respondent

- 5.37 Another barrier in the referral process was posed by the local connections policy. While it was recognised that in some cases the policy

was useful to ensure that the young person was not accommodated out of area and away from key links and relationships, at times this posed issues:

If I am informed early enough I will go up to the YOI 3–4 months prior to release and get the forms completed. But some are such high-risk we struggle to house and because of the local connections policies we cannot house out of area. Which means they often go into B&B.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

We also used to be able to access out of borough – but if there is no local connection we can no longer get in.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

- 5.38 In addition the transition between young people's and adults' services posed a difficulty particularly if the young person turned 18 and was in a secure establishment at the time:

Leaving care team – used to be very much us and them but it is now much more positive the way we are working with them. But there is then a gap when the young person hits 18 and moves to adult services we see a breakdown.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

We do try to do some support in advance of the young person coming out of custody. The young people go into custody at 17 and come out at 18 this is an issue for us. We are talking to legal and we are getting the young person to apply before they are 18 regardless of when they are due to be released because at 17 they will be classed as vulnerable. If they hit 18 technically and legally they are not vulnerable and so not a priority for housing.

Operations Manager, South West

Section summary and recommendations

- 5.39 Respondents to the online survey were asked to rate performance overall on accommodation provision and support for young people in their area. Around a half (47%) felt the performance was adequate although 41% felt that performance was less than adequate. Only 10% felt it was more than adequate.
- 5.40 It was recognised as important to have effective protocols in place to manage the referral and placement process in terms of ensuring the wheels turned smoothly and effective work with partners more broadly.
- 5.41 In terms of local processes, 40% of respondents to the online survey felt local referral and placement processes for young people in their area were less than adequate.

- 5.42 Barrier in the referral process commonly cited related to not being able to sort accommodation for those in custody until release – the frustration was clear among those with YOTs and from across the Secure Estate.
- 5.43 Another barrier is posed by the local connections policy. While it was recognised that in some cases the policy was useful to ensure that the young person was not accommodated out of area and away from key links and relationships, at times this posed issues.
- 5.44 There were differences noted between those areas that had developed a single gateway process for accessing supported accommodation against those that had not. For those who had or were moving towards the single gateway model the perceived benefits included a reduction in paperwork/applications, and the reduction in the possibility of ‘cherry picking’ by providers.
- 5.45 In terms of exploring the relationship between local processes and performance those engaged in the telephone interviews felt that the national indicator (NI46) was an ineffective measure of their performance mainly because of the subjectivity of the term suitable but also because it did not provide the YOT with a true or detailed picture of accommodation needs among the client group.
- 5.46 YOT performance in England against NI46 targets has increased year on year since 2006/7 which masks research evidence which suggest otherwise. The 2007 YJB study found the almost three quarters of YOTs indicated that the target presented significant challenges and noted shortages of accommodation relative to the level of need.
- 5.47 As such there remains concern relating to the performance measure which continues to present an overly positive impression of supporting the accommodation needs of young people when practitioners report otherwise.
- 5.48 The definition fails to define suitability for particular accommodation types but allows for a professional assessment by the individual practitioner. Moreover, the measure is a snapshot at a particular point in time and does not ask YOTs to specifically identify those in housing need or to relate the information to outcomes.
- 5.49 It is recommended that the NI46 indicator is reviewed and replaced with a more meaningful target. At the least, a clear definition of suitability is required and measures need to be taken throughout the order. Alternatives would be to amend the measure to record the number of move-ons during an order.
- 5.50 Although evaluations of single gateway models have been undertaken, it is recommended that the YJB considers evaluating the impact of such a model on meeting the high support needs of young people.

Section 6. Systemic relationships and accountabilities

Findings from the literature review

- 6.1 One of the criteria for success is clearly solid relationships with key partner agencies and effective partnership working. The YJB-commissioned study (Arnall, 2007) undertook interviews with stakeholders in ten YOT areas and found that in nine of the ten working relations between the YOT and accommodation related services were good, with several stating that relations had improved over the last few years, and continued to do so. In five sites, practitioners mentioned specific forums, partnerships or groups in the area which considered young people's accommodation problems. These groups tended to meet between once a month and once a quarter. The stakeholder interviewed in one site described having established protocols with the YOT. In two areas, stakeholders felt that information sharing between agencies needed to improve and protocols needed to be put in place. The findings from this review echo these sentiments.
- 6.2 In the review of youth justice plans every YOT recognised that developing constructive relations with relevant partners was an essential part of any strategy to ensure that all young people were in suitable accommodation. All referred to the Supporting People agenda and the large majority to the local Homeless Person's team as being key in the development of their local provision.
- 6.3 That said, research commissioned by the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP), Housing Corporation and CLG (2005) found that commissioners of housing-related support have found it challenging to bring together housing, health and social care to provide an integrated approach.
- 6.4 A significant proportion of YOTs noted in youth justice plans that responding effectively to those young people at risk of homelessness relied heavily on gaining access to accommodation through the local Children's Services department, as they effectively gate-keep access to services. It was clear, however, that in many areas accessing the relevant resources was not without its problems.
- 6.5 In the Centrepoint study (2005) young people spoke passionately about the social services or Connexions service staff that had helped and supported them. The benefit of a 'trusted adult' is borne out by Social Exclusion Unit research. Above all else, young people value a personal relationship with someone who is available on a 24-hour basis.
- 6.6 Department for Education and Communities and Local Government guidance on preventing homelessness encourages local authorities to consider incorporating relevant objectives, backed by commitments to joint working approaches, into a variety of local strategic plans including:

- Local Area Agreement
- Children and Young Peoples' Plan
- Housing and Homelessness Strategies
- Sustainable Communities Plan
- Regional Housing Strategy

Findings from the online survey and supplementary telephone interviews

6.7 Respondents to the online survey were asked whether the YOT had a specific accommodation strategy. Over half did (55%, n=45) although a further 28% (n=23) did not. Interestingly the remaining 17% (n=14) – around one-in-six did not know. Table 6.1 displays the results.

Table 6.1: Existence of accommodation strategies

Answer options	Response %	Response count
Yes	55%	45
No	28%	23
Don't know	17%	14
<i>answered question</i>		82
<i>missing</i>		2

6.8 As one would expect, those who had indicated that their role was strategic were most likely to affirm that their YOT has an accommodation strategy (73%). This was followed by those who indicated their role was a mixture of the two (60%), then by those who considered themselves to be operational (41%). Among those who did not know how to categorise their role, none indicated that their YOT has an accommodation strategy – 67% did not know whether or not a strategy was in place²⁴. Clearly a lack of clarity over the focus of their own role, impacts on awareness of the strategies in place.

6.9 Those who responded that the YOT does not have an accommodation strategy were asked to explain why, which yielded a range of responses. For some it was felt that there was no need for a separate plan because it was covered either within the Youth Justice Plan or plans of other services such as children's services:

We don't have a separate strategy but are part of the council's 'Youth Homeless Strategy'.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, Yorkshire and the Humber

6.10 For others, the size of the YOT meant that a separate plan was not needed as the issue was covered elsewhere:

²⁴ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

YOT is small with limited resources, our accommodation strategy is developed with Supporting People, district councils, accommodation providers and partner agencies upon whom we rely for support and the provision of suitable accommodation.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, South West

- 6.11 For some a new or refreshed strategy was being written at the time of completing the survey:

I have not updated it as we went unitary in April this year and I am waiting for other strategies to be put in place first.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, South West

- 6.12 For some producing a strategy was not considered a necessity because of sound existing working practices and relationships:

The YOT has developed excellent working relationships with other agencies, e.g. Housing Department, Benefit Agencies, Social Services and housing providers, we have an onward going plan to house homeless 16/17-year-olds and continue to do so, I would not call it a strategy.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, London

- 6.13 For some who were in a part-time role or where accommodation was an additional responsibility, finding the time to produce a strategy was difficult. In some YOTs where no post holder was in place, the strategy was on hold:

As my accommodation role is part-time, I have not completed one. It is something I want to do in the near future.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, South East

As far as I am aware the role of Accommodation Officer has been empty for sometime (post frozen) and an accommodation strategy has not been undertaken for this reason.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, West Midlands

- 6.14 The impact of the G vs. Southwark case and other related cases had in some YOTs prompted the need for clearer policies and strategies on accommodating offenders:

We are currently in the process of writing a countywide youth strategy which will encompass the needs of young offenders, care leavers and other vulnerable groups and reflect changes due to the recent Hammersmith & Fulham and Southwark rulings.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, South West

- 6.15 In those areas that had an accommodation strategy, just under half (48%, n=20) had been updated in the last 12 months and a similar number were considered by the respondent to be fit for purpose (50%, n=22). Interestingly, a fifth of respondents (20%, n=9) felt the accommodation strategy was not fit for purpose and the remaining 30% (n=13) did not know.
- 6.16 Of those who felt it was not fit for purpose this was in some cases due to the rapidly changing agenda:

The strategy is a good guide of planned practice and strategic work to be completed. However with relevant case law and government targets changing on a regular basis, a strategy can quickly become out of date and due to the lack of funding received in this area is dependent on the co-operation of other agencies.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, East of England

Not fit for purpose due to changes in local authorities becoming unitary and also changes in legislation re: homeless section 17 responsibilities.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, West Midlands

Needs revision to implement G vs. Southwark.

YOT accommodation survey respondent, South West

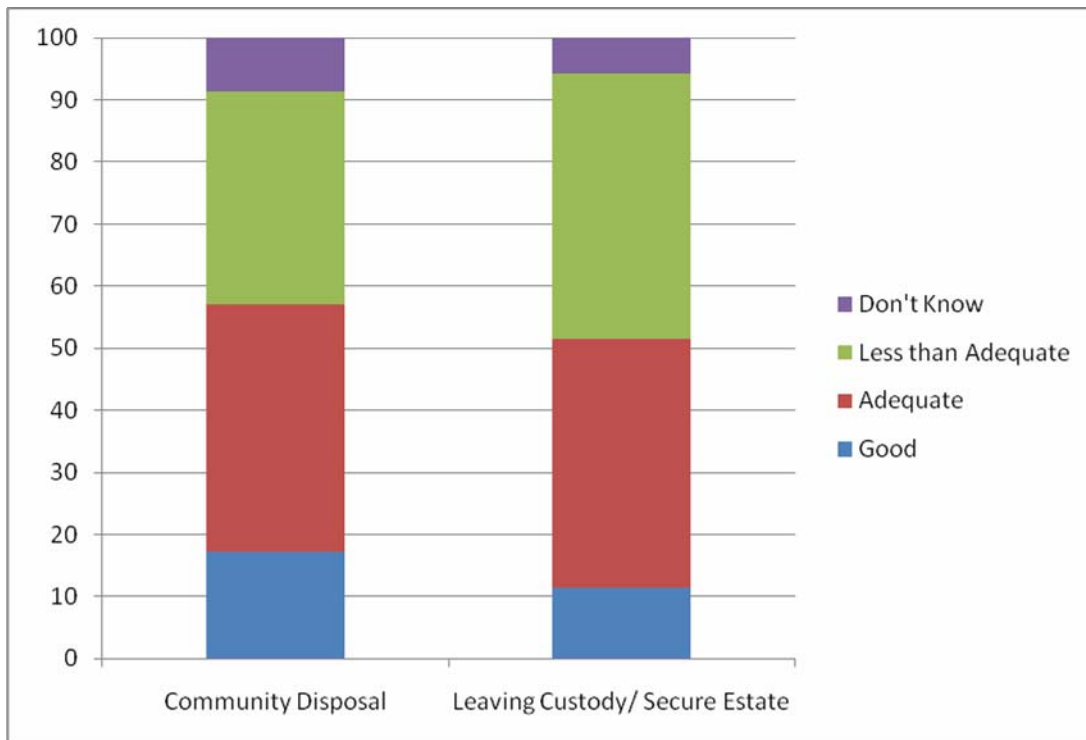
- 6.17 Just over a third of respondents (36%, n=16) were unaware of whether their accommodation strategy included related LAA targets and indicators. Of those who did know, 41% (n=18) said their accommodation strategy did include related LAA targets, while the remaining 23% (n=10) said that it did not. More respondents were aware of the links between the YOT accommodation strategy and other local housing/homelessness strategies with just over three-quarters (80%, n=35) stating that there was such a link.

Assessment of accommodation support

- 6.18 Respondents were asked to rate overall the level of accommodation support given to young people on community disposals and then the level of accommodation support given to young people leaving the secure estate in their area. The results are presented in Figure 6.1. Overall, the level of support given to young people on community disposals is rated better (with 57% rating it adequate or good) than that given to those leaving the secure estate (with 51% rating it adequate or good). The tensions that exist in terms of the resettlement from the secure estate have already been noted in this report but warrant further investigation, particularly given that the relationship between YOT Accommodation Officers and the secure estate received the highest proportion of good or very good responses across a range of partners

worked with²⁵. This is also necessary given that this view was not consistently shared by of those working in the secure estate.

Figure 6.1: Rating of accommodation support given to young people on community disposals and leaving custody/secure estate (percent)



Assessment of partnership working arrangements

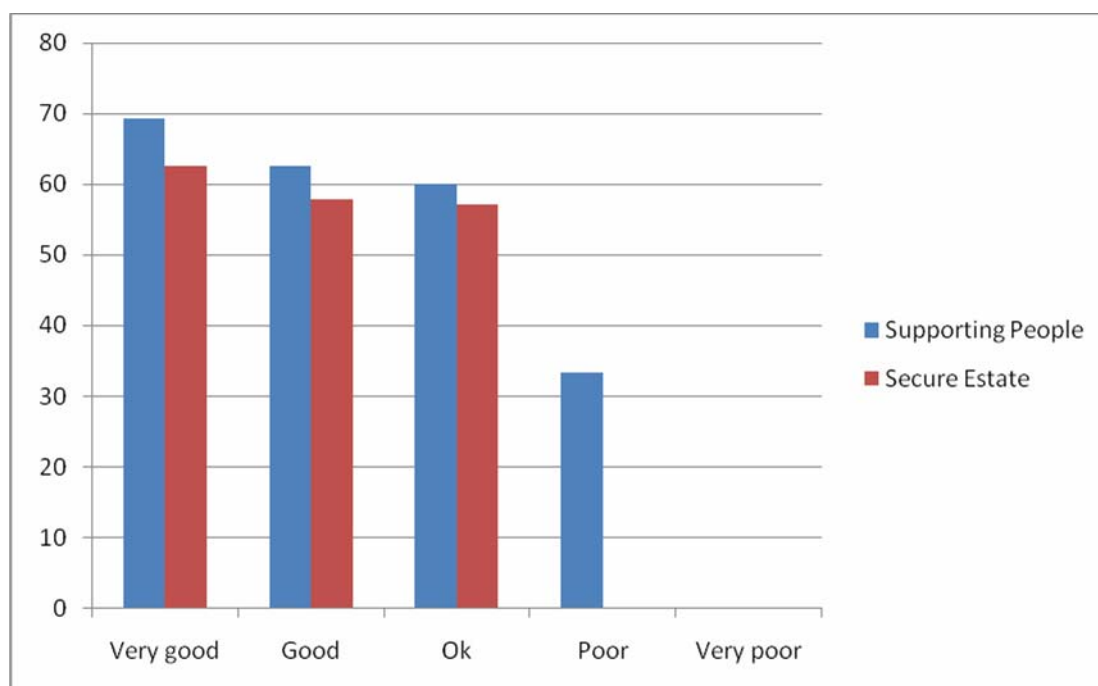
6.19 Respondents were asked to consider partnership working and asked to rate their working relationship with a range of partners. The results are presented in Table 6.2.

²⁵ Full details on the relationship between partners are provided in the section – ‘Assessment of partnership working arrangements’.

Table 6.2: Level of working relationship by partner agency (number)

Agency	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor	Don't know/ N/A	Response count
Homelessness Team	17	25	17	6	1	2	68
Voluntary sector agencies	17	19	18	2	0	12	68
YOI	14	31	19	1	0	3	68
Supporting People	13	24	15	9	0	7	68
Local Housing Authority	12	20	23	5	3	4	67
Other forms of secure estate	8	38	14	1	0	7	68
Social Services	5	18	32	8	4	1	68
Wider children's services	3	20	31	4	1	7	66
Registered Social Landlords	3	12	20	8	4	21	68

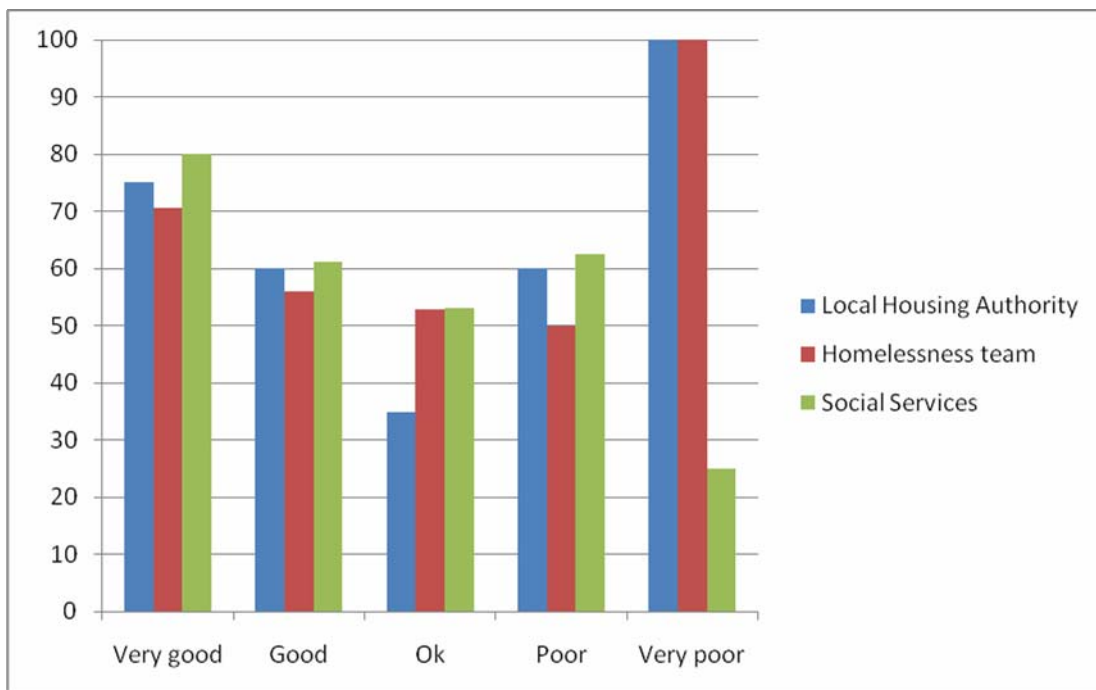
6.20 Analysis of the relationship with partner agencies showed varying links between the quality of the relationship and the YOT area's overall performance rating²⁶. It may be expected that having a good relationship with partner agencies will increase performance. Indeed as Figure 6.2 displays, the proportion of areas rating their overall performance as adequate or more than adequate fell when the rating of the relationship fell. This would suggest that having a good relationship with Supporting People and the Secure Estate is important in achieving a good overall performance in YOT areas.

Figure 6.2: Adequate or more than adequate performance by rating of relationship with partners (percent) (a)

²⁶ For each of the partner agencies, this was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

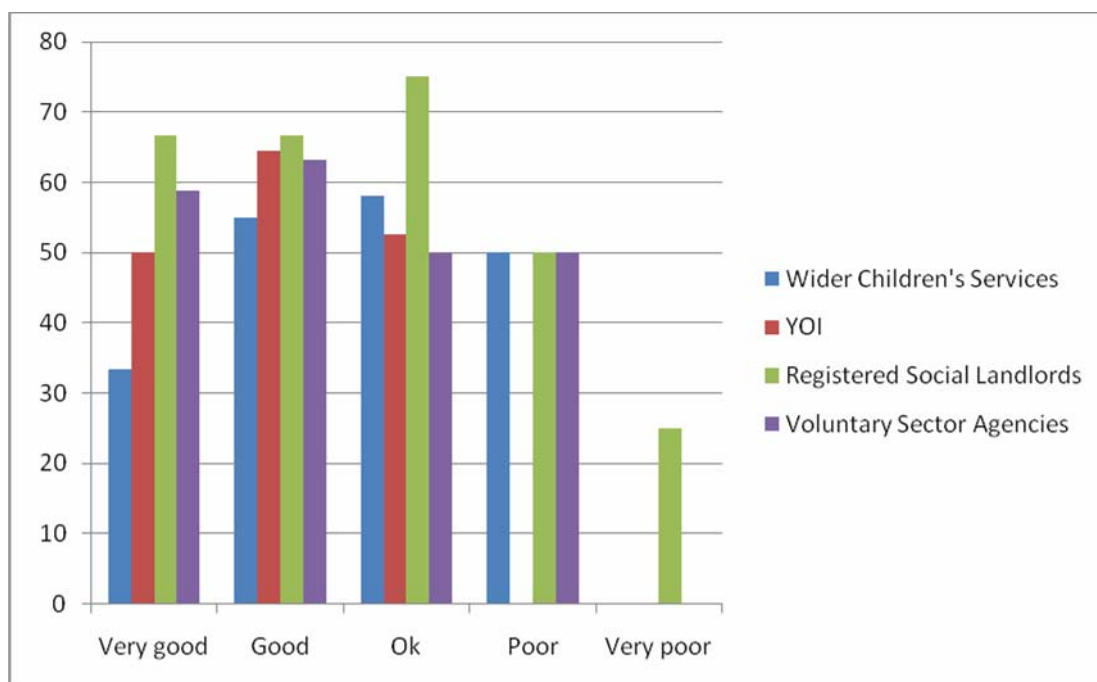
6.21 However for both the Local Housing Authority and Homelessness team, it seems that while this trend generally applies, there was a noticeable exception that all of those who rated their relationship with the agencies as very poor had rated their overall performance as adequate or more than adequate. Similarly, areas which rated their relationship with Social Services as poor showed a relatively high proportion of adequate or more than adequate overall performance. This may indicate that areas with poor relationships with the Local Housing Authority, Homelessness team and Social Services have worked hard to compensate. The findings are displayed in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: Adequate or more than adequate performance by rating of relationship with partners (percent) (b)



6.22 Meanwhile with the remaining agencies it appears that the strength of the relationship does not impact on overall performance in the area, as they show varying peaks and troughs that do not correspond with how highly overall performance was rated. This is displayed in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4: Adequate or more than adequate performance by rating of relationship with partners (percent) (c)



- 6.23 Areas that felt they were performing well recognised the benefit of effective partnership arrangements and close links to other partners' strategies and planning processes:

With the high success rate we have on NI46 this is down to the tenacity of the YOT caseworkers and we have good working relations with Connexions and leaving care team – a lot of shared interest, they have been involved in the development of the countywide strategy. We have a collaborative response to placements and joined up working.

Operations Manager, South West

The YOT strategy is linked into community safety, broader local authority five-year plan as well as housing and homelessness strategies and primary care plans. Supporting People is now funding more staff in mental health and homelessness and so our strategy links into this also. We also link well to the voluntary sector and to the different RSLs that we are working with locally.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

- 6.24 By and large feedback on partnership working with local authority housing option, homelessness team and supporting people was positive but there were concerns as to the impact of the move away from ring-fenced Supporting People funding:

We have an excellent working relationship with Supporting People – and we are hoping with the move to pooled funding this continues but this is a slight cause for concern.

YOT Accommodation Officer, West Midlands

But from now we are losing the ring fence on Supporting People and they may well be dissolved into a wider area. So the cash may get swallowed by the area grant and lost.
Resettlement and Accommodation Officer, South East

- 6.25 Another concern related to the fact that the YOT did not have a commissioning function on accommodation and as such was reliant on probation representation at the key meetings:

We do not have representation on the Supporting People commissioning body – probation are there to represent us but they do not! And they should ours clients are there customers of tomorrow.

YOT Team Manager, South West

The Supporting People commissioning body is another issue – we are not represented on that board. But my head of service tells me that they do not want us there. Maybe because we do not have a commissioning role – but also we do not have hundreds of young people who need accommodating. Maybe they don't see the need for us to be there.

Integrated Resettlement Worker, South East

- 6.26 Comments on other services were less positive and the most common difficult lay in working with children's services:

Feedback on children's social care is not always positive here. We have one case where a person had really serious mental health problems and was evicted from B&B and made intentionally homeless. A Child in Need assessment was carried out but children's social care did not want to pick them up. We had to go to the solicitors here to get children's social care to pick them up.

Housing Support Officer, London

Where we do not have a good relationship is with children's social care – that is down to them being so protective of their budget.

Housing and Outreach Worker, London

- 6.27 In terms of improving relations with the two key partners – housing and Children's Services, the Southwark ruling is clearly having an impact both positive and negative but this differs by each locality. Some areas have responded well and have reviewed and revised protocols in light of the ruling which has clarified responsibility and process. In other areas the ruling appears to have been ignored, or authorities are slow to react. In some cases there was evidence that heads of Children's Services were even prepared to face judicial review before amending their practice:

Some managers are well aware of the ruling and its implication and interpret one way but others have never heard of it and so are unaware of any changes.

YOT Operations Manager, East Midlands

The Ruling and its implications sits with the legal department of housing at the moment and nothing has changed as yet. Housing are still working with our under 18s. Children's Services are saying that they are not taking on any more responsibility and are happy to go to court if they have to.

RAP Worker, South East

We are trying to do away with intentionally homeless. We thought we had through the Southwark ruling. We have interim protocols in place between housing, Children's Services and in the homelessness strategy. But we have a hiccup with one of the senior managers who is not taking the responsibility on and happy to go to judicial review on this. We are meeting again to reduce the impasse.

Operations Manager, South West

- 6.28 It was recognised that clear guidance, revised protocols and a genuine desire to work together were essential factors in the response to G vs. Southwark:

This needs to be locally resolved – heads of service needs to be working more closely together.

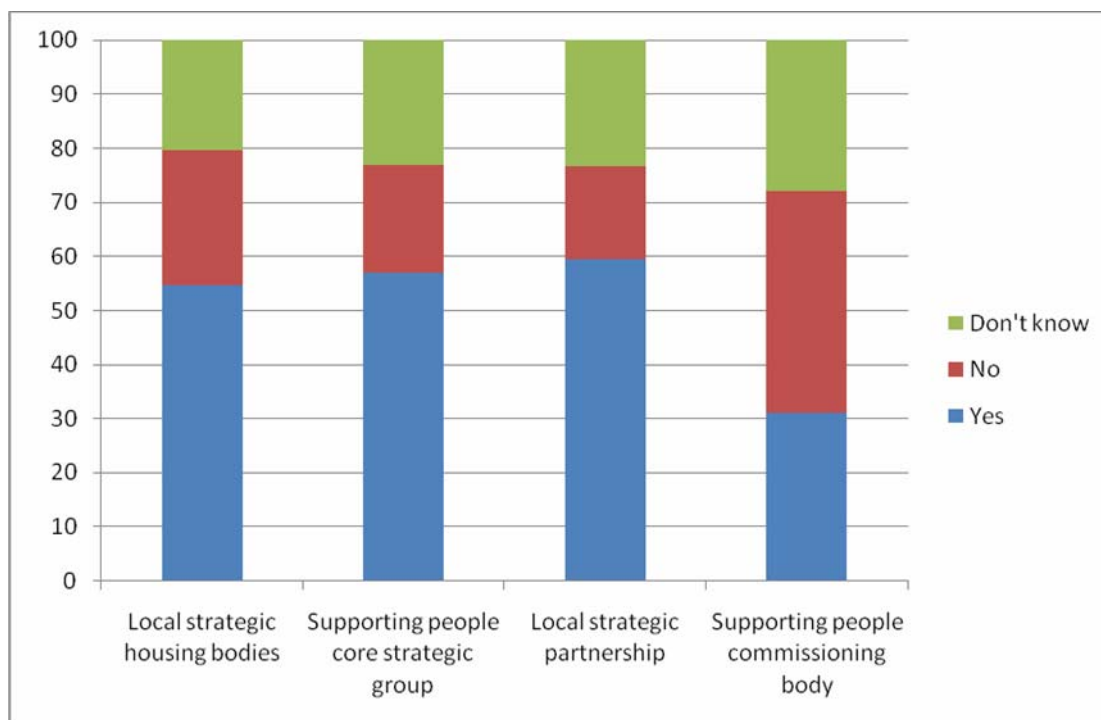
Integrated Resettlement Worker, South East

We need a real clear joint working protocol between Children's Services and housing now – it is left in the hand of senior managers who do not have the time or the detailed knowledge. I have got involved in some meetings recently and am not sure it is achieving anything or resolving it. As such I lack confidence that this is going to be resolved.

Accommodation Development Officer, South East

- 6.29 Respondents to the online survey were asked about attendance and representation at key partnerships and strategic bodies. Representation on local strategic housing bodies (55%), Supporting People core strategic group (57%) and local strategic partnership (59%) were all at a similar level. However representation on the Supporting People commissioning body was less common (31%). Figure 6.5 details the responses.

Figure 6.5: Representation by the YOT at key decision-making bodies



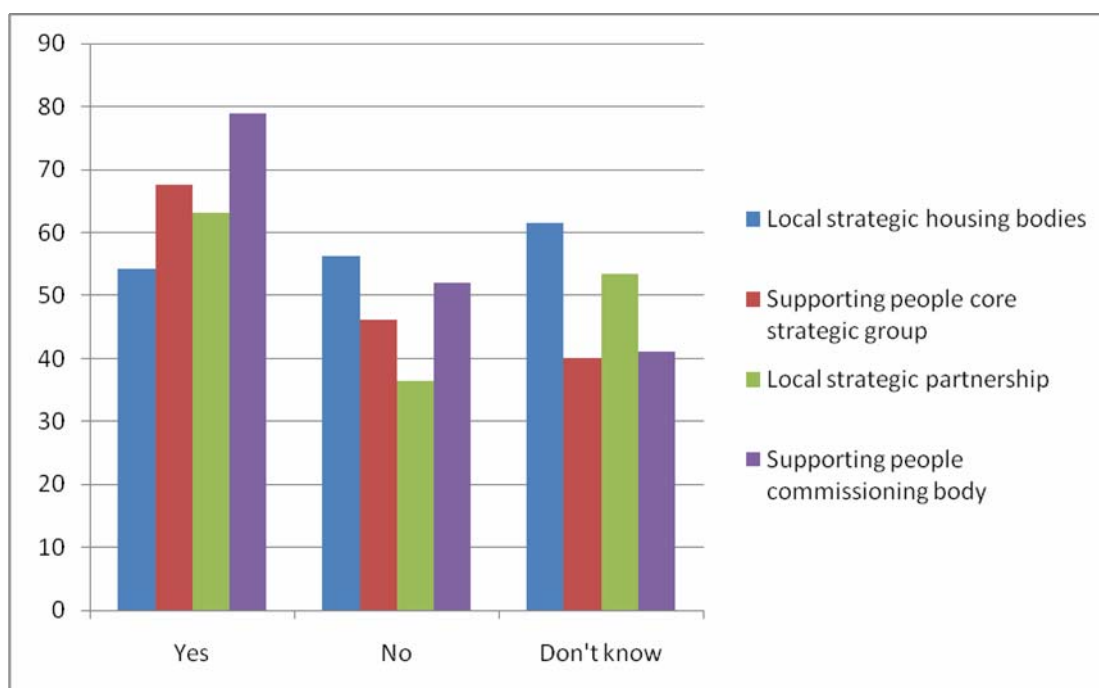
6.30 Representation on the local strategic bodies was most likely among those who had an accommodation strategy in place (73%). Only a quarter (25%) of those areas which did not have an accommodation strategy in place were represented at the local strategic housing bodies²⁷.

6.31 Representation within the YOT at the various groups and bodies showed some links to overall performance. Areas which had representation on the local strategic housing body yielded a similar proportion of adequate or more than adequate overall performance ratings than areas which did not have representation. However areas which had representation on the Supporting People core strategic group, the local strategic partnership and the Supporting People commissioning body, all showed a higher proportion of adequate or more than adequate overall performance rating than those areas which stated they were not represented on those groups²⁸. This is displayed in Figure 6.6.

²⁷ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

²⁸ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 6.6: Adequate or more than adequate overall performance by YOT representation on groups (percent)

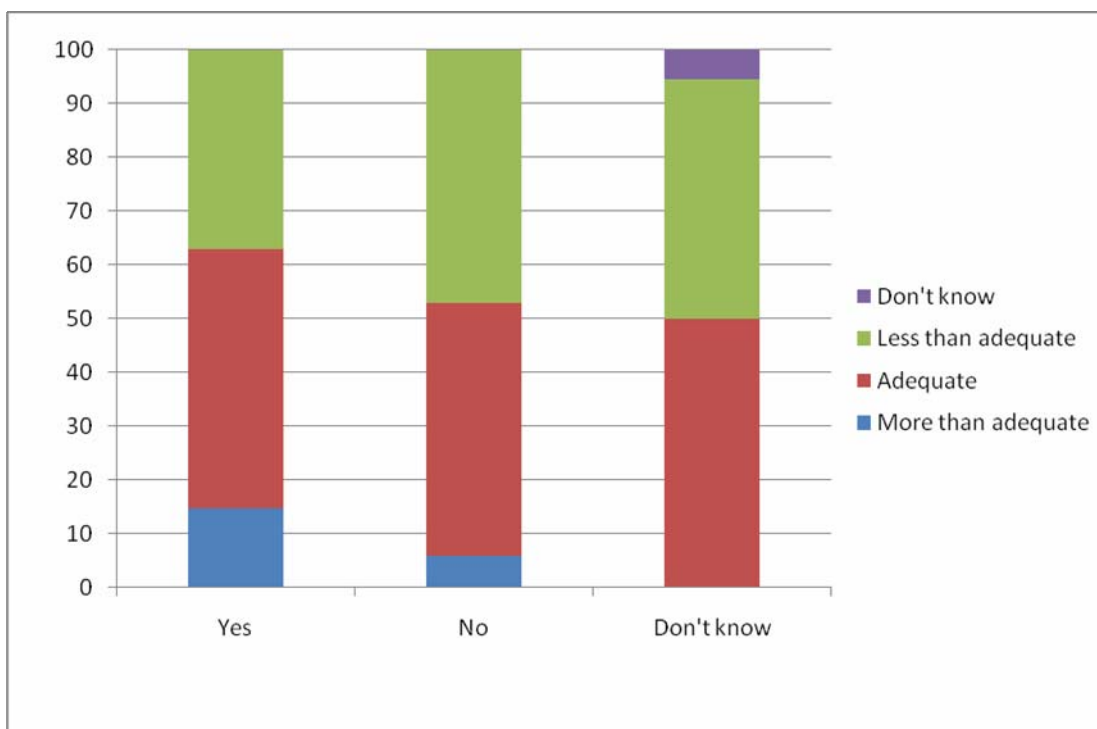


6.32 Respondents were also asked whether the housing authority is represented on the YOT management board. While 29% of respondents did not know, 44% said that they were represented and over a quarter (27%) that they were not.

6.33 There appears to be some correlation between the overall performance of an area based on whether the local housing authority sits on the YOT management board. A greater proportion of those who indicated that the local housing authority sits on the YOT management board yielded adequate or more than adequate overall performance ratings (totalling 62%) than for those areas where this did not take place (totalling 53%) or where it was unknown (totalling 50%)²⁹. This is shown in Figure 6.7.

²⁹ This was statistically significant, using Chi Squared $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 6.7: Whether local housing authority sits on YOT management board by overall performance (percent)



Section summary and recommendations

- 6.34 One of the criteria for success is solid relationships with key partner agencies – effective partnership working. That said the challenges of bringing together key players to provide an integrated approach are recognised. Areas that felt they were performing well recognised the benefit of effective partnership arrangements and close links to other partner’s strategies and planning processes.
- 6.35 One would expect that having an accommodation strategy that reflects other agencies work on accommodation would enable the YOT to perform effectively on accommodation; however, not all YOTs have a strategy. Although over half of respondents to the online survey did over a quarter did not. Interestingly the remaining 17% – around one in six – did not know.
- 6.36 Reasons given for not having a strategy in place varied. Some felt that there was no need for a separate plan because it was covered either within the Youth Justice Plan or plans of other services such as Children’s Services – this was notable the case in smaller YOTs. For others, a new or refreshed strategy was being written at the time of completing the survey and others did not consider it a necessity because of sound existing working practices and relationships. For those in a part-time role or where accommodation was an additional responsibility, finding the time to produce a strategy was difficult. In some YOTs where no post holder was in place, the strategy was on hold.
- 6.37 As one would expect, those who had indicated that their role was strategic were most likely to affirm that their YOT had an accommodation strategy. Among those who did not know how to categorise their role,

none indicated that their YOT had an accommodation strategy which suggests that a lack of clarity over the focus of their own role impacts on awareness of the strategies in place.

- 6.38 In those areas that had an accommodation strategy, just under half had been updated in the last 12 months and a similar number were considered by the respondent to be fit for purpose. Interestingly, a fifth of respondents felt the accommodation strategy was not fit for purpose.
- 6.39 By and large feedback on partnership working with local authority housing options, homelessness team and Supporting People was positive but there were concerns as to the impact of the move away from ring-fenced Supporting People funding. Comments on other services were less positive and the most common difficulty lay in working with Children's Services.
- 6.40 Overall, the level of support given to young people on community disposals is rated better than that given to those leaving the secure estate.
- 6.41 Respondents to the online survey were asked about attendance and representation at key partnerships and strategic bodies. Representation on local strategic housing bodies (55%), Supporting People core strategic group (57%) and local strategic partnership (59%) were all at a similar level. However representation on the Supporting People commissioning body was less common (31%).
- 6.42 Representation on the local strategic bodies was most likely among those who had an accommodation strategy in place (73%). Only a quarter (25%) of those areas which did not have an accommodation strategy in place were represented at the local strategic housing bodies.
- 6.43 Another concern related to the fact that the YOT did not have a commissioning function on accommodation and as such was reliant on probation representation at the key meetings – which was not undertaken consistently.
- 6.44 The impact of the G vs. Southwark case is clearly affecting local partnership working – most notably between Children's Services and Housing which in some areas has prompted the need for clearer policies and strategies on accommodating offenders.
- 6.45 In terms of improving relations with the two key partners – housing and children's services, the Southwark ruling is clearly impacting both positively and negatively but this differs by each locality. Some areas have responded well and have reviewed and revised protocols in light of the ruling which has clarified responsibility and process. In other areas the ruling appears to be being ignored, or authorities are slow to react. In some cases there was evidence that Heads of Children's Services were even prepared to face judicial review before amending their practice.
- 6.46 Representation within the YOT at the various groups and bodies showed some links to overall performance. There appears to be some correlation between the overall performance of an area based on whether the local

housing authority sits on the YOT management board. A greater proportion of those who indicated that the local housing authority sits on the YOT management board yielded adequate or more than adequate overall performance ratings than for those areas where this did not take place or where it was unknown.

- 6.47 It is recommended that where the housing authority is not represented at YOT board level – this is addressed locally.
- 6.48 Revised protocols and a genuine desire to work together were essential factors in the response to G vs. Southwark. It is recommended that the YJB offers some clear guidance and support to YOT Accommodation Officers on the implications of the Southwark ruling for YOTs to enable them to facilitate revised working practices locally.
- 6.49 The tensions that exist in terms of the resettlement from the secure estate have already been noted and warrant further investigation, particularly given that the relationship between YOT Accommodation Officers and the Secure Estate received the highest proportion of good or very good responses across a range of partners worked with although this view was not consistently shared by those working in the Secure Estate.
- 6.50 The value of having a separate YOT accommodation strategy is unclear; those areas that do have a strategy in place appear to be better linked into other strategic housing partnerships but at present (because of time and resource pressures) not all YOTs have an up-to-date strategy in place that is fit for purpose. It should also be recognised that the presence of a YOT accommodation strategy could be a symptom of effective partnership working as much as a cause. Linked to earlier points it is essential that a member of the YOT management team leads strategically on accommodation to provide drive, commitment and support to the Accommodation Officer. It is recommended that it is of greater value to ensure that YOT targets on accommodation are reflected and locked into local strategies (including housing, homelessness and accommodation support) than it is to ensure that a separate YOT accommodation strategy is produced.
- 6.51 The YJB needs to enforce the conditions of the grant with regards to accommodation provision. The research identified several areas which do not have a named Accommodation Officer and do not have anyone undertaking the operational or strategic functions outlined for accommodation despite this being a requirement of the grant. This needs to be enforced to raise the profile of the importance of this function.
- 6.52 Systematic relationships need to be reviewed in light of policy changes, in particular to consider the impact of the future devolution of custody budgets to local areas and the potential for commissioning of accommodation and the realignment of YOTs with regards to Children's Trusts.

Section 7. Feedback from service-users

Background to the service-user interviews

- 7.1 Interviews with current service-user were carried out in four of the five case study areas³⁰. Two young researchers were recruited through an organisation called User Voice³¹ to work on this project. The two young people took part in a training session prior to commencing work on this project. This training focused key aspects of the research process, such as research ethics, different methodologies, analysing and disseminating results, etc.
- 7.2 Both young people have previously been through the criminal justice system and where able to draw on their own experiences to help develop the research tools (e.g. questions schedules) for this project. The young researchers were of a similar age and background to those young people participating in the interviews and this was seen as an important aspect of engaging participants in a meaningful and honest dialogue about the issues.

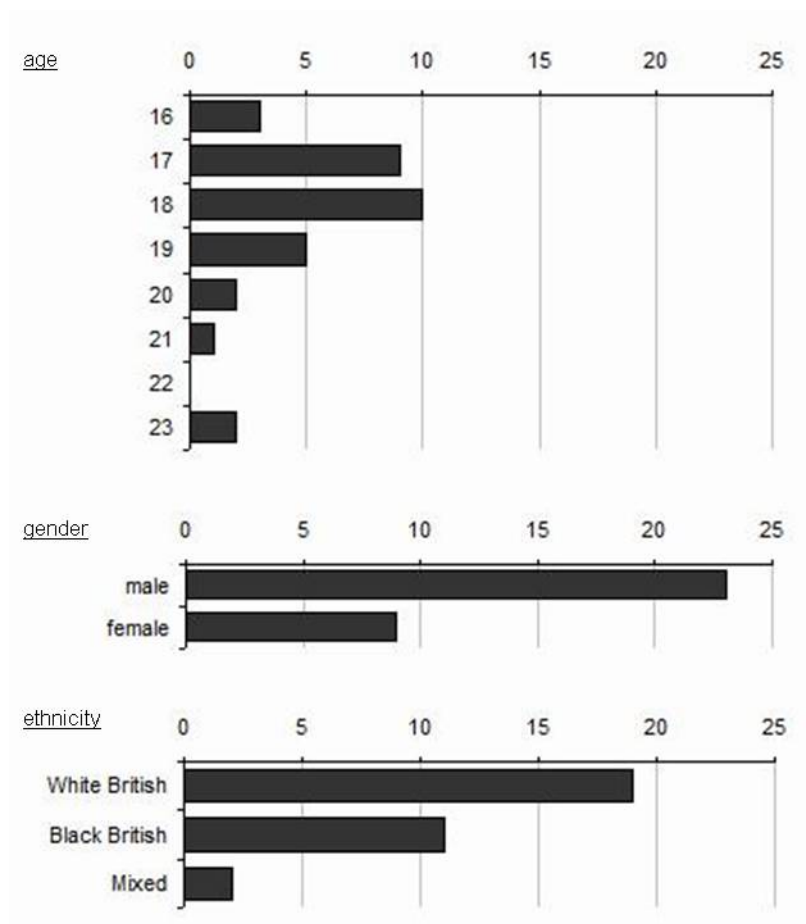
Profile of participants

- 7.3 A total of 32 young people currently known to YOTs were interviewed for this research and the profile of participants is described in the Figure overleaf.

³⁰ Due to a late change in case study areas it was not possible to schedule service-user interviews with young people in the fifth case study area.

³¹ User Voice is a registered charity which promotes the voice of the user of the criminal justice system to reduce reoffending.

Figure 7.1: Profile of participants in service-user interviews



- 7.4 The average (mean and median) age of participants was 18 years. Just under three-quarters of those interviewed were male and the rest were female. The largest group of participants by ethnic group were White British (59%) followed by Black British (34%) and mixed ethnicity (6%). Two of the participants were young mothers.

Feedback from current service-users

- 7.5 Most of the young people participating in the interviews had lived in a family home at some point in their recent past and had experience of several different accommodation settings. Across all areas only three of the young people interviewed were currently living at their family home and all three were keen to move out. Most of the other young people had been asked to leave their family home and were currently living in supported accommodation, staying in a hostel or on their own in a flat. Most of the young people interviewed lived in areas where there were predominantly flats, with some supported accommodation.
- 7.6 As would be expected there was a mixed response from young people with regards to their satisfaction with their current accommodation. Most of the negative responses came from young people living in hostels. This was largely because they did not like or agree with the rules and in most cases they did not understand why the rules were in place. They were not allowed to decorate their rooms and therefore felt that they could not

personalise it. One commented that she was the only female in her hostel and that it was 'unhygienic' and the kitchen was dirty.

- 7.7 In one area, three of the young people who were in their own flats were unhappy with their current accommodation for a variety of reasons. One did not like the size or area of their flat and said that it required repairs. Another was under threat from her ex-partner despite having been rehoused previously because of violence towards her.
- 7.8 A few young people talked about problems such as being on a final warning at their hostel due to anti-social behaviour, under pressure to get out of the family home or being pressured for rent when benefits took two months to come through. Despite these few anecdotes, on the whole, sustaining their current tenancy was not seen as a big problem for the participants in this research.
- 7.9 All young people participating thought that budgeting skills were the most important skills to sustain a tenancy. Around half the young people mentioned respecting others/neighbours as being key to sustaining a tenancy, with a similar proportion talking about 'key skills' or 'normal skills' such as cleaning, cooking and generally 'looking after yourself'. All young people thought that they could manage independently and a few said they would like some support.
- 7.10 The positive responses about current accommodation all focused around a similar theme of having some independence, plus access to support when they needed it. Young people cited support from family and YOTs. Five young people who were in a St. Basil's self-contained flat and receiving support spoke about how happy they were with this and were enthusiastic about the quality of their accommodation and in particular the combination of having a considerable amount of freedom but support when they needed it.
- 7.11 As part of the interviews participants were all asked to describe what they thought of as 'home'. Some of the young people found this a difficult question to answer but almost all did come up with some suggestions for this. A couple of respondents talked about having a 'roof over their head' but most thought that 'family' was the important part of a home. A 'home' was described by most as a place in which they could relax, have their own space and feel safe and comfortable.
- 7.12 Few people had been refused housing but a large number had never applied. Many of the young people thought they were not yet ready to move on and some were about to begin programmes aimed at developing skills for more independent living. Those who had been refused were refused on grounds of their age (being too young), history of offending or due to arrears with the local authority.
- 7.13 While not all young people were able to apply for housing, of those who were, all had received some support in finding accommodation from the YOT. All young people were positive about the help they had received from their YOT worker and in one area young people cited the YOT Accommodation Officer as being particularly helpful. Most young people felt reassured and listened to by YOT workers and the only negatives

were about having to wait too long to get re-housed and about not getting the flat that they had requested and having to move back home.

- 7.14 There was no great consensus as to where young people would like to get information and advice from. Equally none of the participants had any problems or issues in accessing the information and advice they wanted. Most expected to get this advice from their YOT key-worker or someone in their current accommodation. Other suggestions included Connexions, the YMCA office, a local office based in a council estate or by searching the internet.
- 7.15 There was a similarly mixed picture when participants talked about their biggest problem in finding accommodation. There was no obvious single issue for this group of participants as a whole and a wide range of different problems specific to each individual's situation emerged. A few young people mentioned their offending behaviour as a problem, but no more than four or five of the 32 taking part. Waiting lists, lack of suitable housing, housing cost, the number of immigrants taking up their places in properties, and just being 'too lazy' and unable to motivate themselves to apply were all mentioned as factors during interviews but none emerged as more prevalent than the others. One individual felt that the local authority had been deliberately evasive of his rights when he had been 'in trouble [with the police]' and struggled to get re-housed despite being only 15 years old at the time.
- 7.16 The majority of young people thought that there was a link between the type and circumstances of housing and offending behaviour. A few young people thought there was no link at all, that it was down to individual choice and that 'you can stay out of trouble if you want to'.
- 7.17 In one area all young people were living in hostel accommodation. They all stated that the accommodation they had stayed in has influenced their offending behaviour in one way or another. Many stating that people in hostels, etc. provoke each other and also influence each other in going out and committing crime. One stated that he had not been involved in crime until he went into a hostel for young people but over time he was influenced to do so. In another case study area most young people thought there was a link and identified hostels or B&Bs as environments that contributed to getting involved in crime or anti-social behaviour due to lack of stability, having to be outside during the day and problems with other residents particularly older residents. The two young women identified B&Bs in particular as places where they did not feel safe. Others thought that homelessness and bad experiences in the home also contributed to their own offending.
- 7.18 A number of young people also identified a link between offending behaviour and the other people living in the area as a more significant factor than the type of housing.
- 7.19 Almost all young people thought that if they had the location and type of accommodation they wanted it would reduce their offending. The reasons given were that they would be in a more comfortable and relaxed environment away from people who influence them to commit crime. The exceptions to this were two young people who said they had

already stopped offending and this would not make any difference to them personally.

- 7.20 All participants had different ideas about what they would change about the current situation with regards to housing and accommodation for young people and a few found this a difficult question to answer or did not have a view on it. A number of people thought that offenders should not be housed in hostels upon release as they are in an environment with people who use drugs and commit crime. Most thought that it would be better to find offenders their own place on release to 'give them a chance'. One person felt that 'the structure is not right; it should be easier to get your own place in an area where you can better yourself'. Several young people commented that they would like to have more power and more of a say in housing. Some felt that their own, specific circumstances were not listened to and one stated that she 'wouldn't allow a young girl like herself to be in a hostel'.
- 7.21 One young person referred to a 'first-come, first-served' system in his area which was based on an online bidding system which he thought was unfair as 'not everyone has access to a PC to go online and bid; it's down to luck as opposed to priority and is unfair'. He wanted to scrap this system.
- 7.22 Overall, the young people currently using the system were not happy in hostel accommodation and also thought this contributed to an increase in offending. Young people wanted to gain some independence and to have a safe, comfortable space of their own in which to live. They wanted advice and support when they needed it, both on applying for accommodation and on other basic skills such as budget management, cooking and keeping the house clean. They were generally happy with the support they received from all YOT staff and particularly from YOT Accommodation Officers, where they existed.

Section summary and recommendations

- 7.23 Some service-users disliked living in hostel accommodation as they did not agree with the rules in place and did not understand the reasons for them. For example, they disliked not being able to personalise the room they lived in. Some service-users disliked living in flats due to their size, location and feeling unsafe. Service-users want to live in a place where they have some independence but access to support when they need it. They think of 'home' as a place to relax, have their own space and feel safe and comfortable.
- 7.24 On the whole, service-users did not see sustaining their tenancy as problematic, although a few indicated they would like support, particularly around budgeting and 'life skills' (e.g. cooking and cleaning). None of the service-users described any problems in accessing the information and advice they wanted. All young people received support from their YOT worker and were positive about the support they received. No single issue was more prevalent in terms of problems in finding accommodation.

- 7.25 The majority of service-users thought that there was a link between accommodation type/circumstances and their offending behaviour. In particular hostel and, to a lesser extent, B&B accommodation was linked with an increased likelihood of more frequent and more serious offending behaviour. Service-users thought that if the type and location of accommodation they wanted was available to them it would reduce their offending. Several young people wanted to have more of a say in their housing options and felt that their own specific circumstances were not listened to.
- 7.26 The YJB should oversee the production of guidelines for providers on involving service-users in ownership of provision and the rules, requirements and design of accommodation. This could lead to the development of a kite mark of what is good accommodation, developed by young service-users.
- 7.27 An intergenerational model of support (volunteering and mentoring) could be developed to support young service-users in securing and sustaining suitable accommodation. This could draw on existing networks – such as the 1,000 voluntary groups in the Beth Johnson Foundation or the 1,200 groups in Community Works – who are looking for voluntary opportunities working with young people and could provide support around common life skills such as budgeting and managing a home.

Section 8. Case studies

Case study 1

- 8.1 Case study 1 is a city YOT located in the East Midlands. The city has a youth population of approximately 30,156 13 to 19-year-olds and the city generally is compact and densely populated with a total population approaching 300,000. It is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK with 36.5% of people coming from black minority ethnic groups, speaking over 80 different languages.
- 8.2 The index of multiple deprivation indicates that the city is one of the most disadvantaged areas in England. The level of deprivation in some areas of the city is five times greater than in others and 20 Super Output Areas³² appear within the 5% most deprived nationally.
- 8.3 The case study review involved the following:
- a review of key documentation
 - a review of available YOT data
 - a series of interviews with key stakeholders from the YOT, the Health and Well Being Partnership³³ (formerly Supporting People) Local Authority Housing and Homelessness, Supported Accommodation Providers, Head of Looked-After Children (Children and Young People's Services – CYPS)
 - Nine one-to-one interviews with young people in supported accommodation.

Supply and demand of accommodation for this group

- 8.4 It is not possible to calculate demand for accommodation among young people exactly since there is no central data collection system. It is recognised locally that a more centralised system of data collection would help to give a clearer picture of demand and ensure a unified and informed overview of the options. In addition, none of the provision available is specific to young people – but open to all young people.
- 8.5 Referral rates seem uniformly high compared to the number of beds. For example, reported referrals within a year were around 400 for one provider of a 25 bed hostel and 70 for another provider with 11 beds. This at first suggests some pressure in the system but there is equal evidence of young people remaining in supported accommodation too long leading to bed blocking.

³² Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a geography designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics.

³³ Supporting People within the city has been absorbed within the Health and Well Being Partnership – part of the local strategic partnership.

At the moment we have people in service that do not need to be and I am hopeful that the new system will enable us to tailor needs far better. And we can place more sensitively.

SP representative

- 8.6 As such it was generally felt that the level of supply was sufficient across the city:

Does the city have enough provision? I would say yes most of the time. We do get peak times. If we are all full with nobody going out at the end we do at times get bed locked. But over the last 12 months this hasn't been so much of a problem.

Supported accommodation provider

I feel that the system works well and we have good supply – but then care leavers are given a priority in the system.

CYPS respondent

- 8.7 A comprehensive profile of the demand for accommodation among young people specifically has not been undertaken locally by the YOT. However, on taking up post, the YOT Accommodation Officer undertook a snapshot profile of offender needs relating to accommodation via a short questionnaire distributed to all YOT staff to aid the development of the accommodation strategy.

- 8.8 Twelve Case Managers returned a completed questionnaire. On average, YOT Case Managers stated that they deal with two young people a week that have an accommodation or housing issue. The main housing issues identified related to:

- family
- homelessness
- hostel issues
- housing options
- eviction
- other.

- 8.9 Other issues related to offenders presenting multiple needs, high risk offenders, notably those with specific offences and substance misuse problems, those with life skill needs and bail issues.

My concern is that we are not geared up to deal with high risk, high offending, those with high support needs and nor are other providers really.

Supported accommodation provider

The biggest problem are for us is for those with complex needs – it is a small number but a small number of those leaving care will have complex needs and these are hard to place. So we find that the most vulnerable young people end up in the least supported and temporary options such

as B&B in some cases. We are talking very small numbers 1–2 at any one time but they are the most damaged and those most in need of support and often the options available to us are limited.

CYPS respondent

- 8.10 Although the use of B&B by Housing Options³⁴ is only ever used as a last resort there is evidence that the current reporting arrangements on the use of B&B via Housing to CLG do not report on the full picture:

Certainly if you take the housing figures, we are not placing young person in B&B. Housing reports to CLG about their use of B&B which is minimal if at all but Children's Services do not report to CLG and this is not one of the things we are measured on by the Department for Education. We are using B&B even though in very small numbers but this won't show up in the CLG targets. I am very clear it is an absolute last resort but for some this is perhaps the best option when the young person may not be able to keep to the commitments and requirement that the supported accommodation providers may put on them. I am not saying is it always suitable but in some cases it is more suitable than the alternatives.

CYPS respondent

- 8.11 Information on demand can also be extracted from the Careworks, specific Asset data and via pre-sentence reports although it was noted that this is not routinely undertaken. It is recognised locally that access to and interrogation of data relating to young people and their housing support needs is essential in terms of influencing the local strategies and funding agreements.
- 8.12 In terms of the supply of accommodation and support, across the city there is a range of accommodation accessible to young people under 18 who have offended³⁵. The main provision is mainly residential hostels and supported accommodation provided by the YMCA or voluntary sector providers funded via Supporting People. Most provision in the city has workers to support young people with a variety of life skills to enable them to move on to more suitable or independent accommodation.
- 8.13 Despite the fact that traditionally young people are seen as a difficult client group it was felt that by and large their needs were being recognised with the exception of those for whom the seriousness or nature of their offending behaviour and/or the presence of multiple needs means that they were considered too high risk for providers to accommodate their needs.
- 8.14 Supporting People and the YOT have recognised the need to develop supported accommodation for young people with high-risk behaviour.

³⁴ Housing Options is a gateway to affordable housing in London:
<http://www.housingoptions.co.uk/ho2/>.

³⁵ See Table 8.1 at end of this section.

- 8.15 There were some concerns around move-on accommodation and supporting young people to maintain tenancies once they had moved to independent living.

When the young person reaches 18 they are assessed for council properties and they generally will get offers if they are flexible in terms of where they want to live.

But the hostels where they may have been living are pretty flush, nice and then the council properties are often dreadful with concrete floors and no decoration and no start-up support. That is where our floating support should be operating but it isn't. It is no wonder they fail in their tenancies.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.16 The city has been successful in bidding for funding recently through the Department for Education Partnerships for Schools and Care Leaver projects. The capital funding is being used to support a refurbishment project that will re-model one of the YMCA sites in the city to renew supported housing accommodation alongside existing facilities for education, the arts, sports, health and fitness, advice and information and health services, providing a high-quality transition for young people into independent living.

Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

- 8.17 Previous attempts to recruit to the YOT Accommodation Officer post had failed which meant the YOT was without an Accommodation Officer for two years. In 2007 the YOT was successful in recruiting to the post and helpfully the post holder had a background in housing having worked previously as a hostel manager and prior to that as a worklessness officer, both posts within the city.
- 8.18 The post holder felt that having a sound understanding of housing and local knowledge was a crucial factor in their ability to undertake the role successfully:

The expectation is that you can hit the ground running as an Accommodation Officer and so you need to have the knowledge of the subject, the law and also the local agencies. You need to be able to quote law confidently and understand how tenancies operate but also have been in the loop and understand the pressures facing local providers and how they may feel in terms of having to place high risk young people.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.19 The specific knowledge of housing held by the Accommodation Officer was also valued by other agencies:

It is crucial that someone in the YOT has a housing lead. We are not experts in youth offending and so we need them to be the expert and link between the two.

SP respondent

- 8.20 The post holder sees the role as both operational and strategic:

I am skilling up case managers to deal with front line issues so that I can lead on the strategic issues. I have written the accommodation strategy, developed partnership working with key agencies. I still get involved in crisis and risk management cases but by and large the case managers lead on day-to-day operational matters

Accommodation Officer

- 8.21 The YOT Accommodation Officer is valued highly.

- 8.22 In terms of support available within the YOT to aid the role, the post holder did not feel adequately supported but recognised that this was because the YOT in general did not have the specific housing knowledge that she held.

If we were to develop strategically, perhaps it would be to get some strategic housing input into the YOT.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.23 Without an Accommodation Officer in place for a significant period of time before the appointment has meant that while there has been some representation from the YOT including senior management it has meant that often YOT has been under-represented in the appropriate planning and funding allocations. The YOT Accommodation Officer is currently on secondment to the City Council which appears to have impacted negatively on referrals to providers and on the YOT's ability to support accommodation for young people across the city.

Since X has gone we have seen a reduction in the number of YOT referrals. X was excellent – kept us up to date with information and networked between the providers. X knew the providers and did the early referral work and so knew where it was best to place the young person.

Supported accommodation provider

X did a huge amount in terms of linking in the strategic bodies we need to have representation at. X had a housing background which was ideal for us also – X understood what we offered as providers, and how best to refer.

Supported accommodation provider

I used to meet regularly with the Accommodation Officer ... but X has now gone on secondment and hasn't been replaced and since then links have reduced.

CPYS respondent

We had an Accommodation Officer who sat on our core strategy group. But X has gone on secondment and that has not been picked up by the YOT really and so I am not sure that the wider YOT feeds in.

SP respondent

Processes and performance

8.24 To oversee accommodation issues relating to young people, the YOT produced an accommodation strategy which although now considered out of date still provides a reference point and series of actions relating to the improvement of accommodation and outcomes for young people to meet the overall performance measures set out in the City YOT Plan. Actions include:

- continuing to contribute to the Young People's Strategic Housing forum and sub groups
- supporting voluntary sector developments of accommodation for complex and high-risk offenders
- reviewing joint working agreement with CYPS 16+ team to improve services for young people deemed vulnerable due to housing needs
- engaging with the regional Accommodation Officers' forum to share best practice
- exploring ways of identifying funding for rent guarantees/ deposits for young people moving on from hostels
- recruiting remand foster carers
- reducing the use of the secure estate for remands
- reducing the number of custodial sentences as a proportion of all court disposals.

8.25 In terms of the referral and placement process, currently young people are able to access provision in the city in some cases via direct access hostels, or via Housing Options or other support services.

8.26 The referral process within the YOT is that a case manager will initially identify homeless or housing issues using the Asset assessment tool. Accommodation issues are then referred to the YOT Accommodation Officer (currently on secondment) who then works specifically with the young person to look at their need and the best course of action and outcome to ensure that they are in suitable and sustainable accommodation.

8.27 Generally speaking, providers were happy with the current referral processes:

Overall I feel we have a good relationship and a good understanding of each other's projects in terms of dealing with the move-on of young people.

Supported accommodation provider

Relationship with referrers is pretty good. They all know us and our system and we rarely get a curve ball from the referrers. We send out a weekly email to our referrers to update them on our vacancies.

Supported accommodation provider

- 8.28 As seen earlier, with the YOT Accommodation Officer on secondment and the post not being filled in the interim by the YOT, feedback from accommodation providers and other services is that the referral process and support from the YOT are not working so well.

- 8.29 At present there is no central application system, so referrers have to make separate applications using separate forms to each accommodation provider. For agencies such as YOT who make regular referrals, often under pressure, this can be an issue and attempts have been made to synchronise paperwork between providers.

We have linked the care planning system for care leavers that we use with the SP assessment and support plan that the accommodation provider follows. At one time in some supported accommodation places we were getting 2 x plans and assessments which meant lots of paperwork and not much efficiency. In Park Lodge we use our assessment and planning process as the referral and support plan for the young person. Reduced paperwork and a good example of joint working.

CYPS respondent

- 8.30 The city is now moving towards a new system – a single gateway – which it is hoped will strengthen the referral, placement and move-on process and improve access for vulnerable people to accommodation and support with greater efficiency. The new system, which aims to be operationalised by March 2011 – has four pathways into accommodation – one specifically for young people, and pathways for those with mental health and substance misuse issues and a separate pathway for families.
- 8.31 The gateway should provide a much improved way of assessing support needs and ensuring the young people are placed correctly.

In terms of the new pathway we will have assessment beds, progress beds and move-on accommodation for young people each with support attached depending on the level of need. The idea is to ensure that we will have the right level of support for the right person.

Supporting People representative

- 8.32 It could also mean that there are fewer young people in the system because those who should not be in supported accommodation will be assessed properly. It will also mean that move through the system is improved with greater co-ordination which in turn will reduce bed locking:

We will have better responses once they are in the accommodation in terms of supporting them to get better

help to move on. So we should not get beds locked within the system.

CYPS respondent

- 8.33 The new single gateway system will have a co-ordinator for each pathway. The young person's co-ordinator will lead the work on referrals and emergency accommodation and is hoped will strengthen links to the secure estates so that the paperwork is sorted in advance of release. One aim of the new system is to make the referral process more equitable whereby local providers will have less option to choose who they take and more importantly do not take:

We had a massive issue that providers were cherry picking clients and so this will make it more equitable.

Supporting People representative

- 8.34 This move is being met with some trepidation among accommodation providers but in the main is recognised as a move forward:

Single access point – well at the moment we all working in our own way and so I like the idea of greater unity. There will be a shift I think – but it is right that Supporting People should be in control to commission the services that are needed as opposed to us as providers saying to them “this is what we are offering”.

Supported accommodation provider

- 8.35 It is still early days in its development and understandably there are some concerns. Some agencies lack confidence in the new system with a single young person pathway to meet the specific needs of young people:

I am concerned that with the single access point coming in young offenders will be purely classed as young people and as such their needs will not be met. So if they are then wrongly placed and they mess up they will become intentionally homeless.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.36 As is the situation now, the new accommodation provision will not identify specific beds for young people. This decision has been taken to avoid stigmatisation of young people but it is recognised in the service specification that young people will need access to specialist beds with higher support hours.
- 8.37 Others are keen to ensure that the new system offers sufficient flexibility to allow young people a choice over the location and type of provision offered which could further disrupt their life:

We could end up with a situation when a young person is being placed away from their support systems, or worse in areas where they are at risk, or places that are too far away from their college or training centre.

CYPS respondent

8.38 In terms of performance, the city performs well against the NI46 Performance Indicator. Overall for the 2009 calendar year 400 out of 418 young people (95.7%) were living in satisfactory accommodation at the close of their order or release from custody.

8.39 The remaining 18 (4.3%) young people can be broken down as follows:

Gender

Male	14 (77.8%)
Female	4 (22.2%)

Ethnicity

White	14 (77.8%)
Mixed	3 (16.7%)
Other	1 (5.5%)

Age (when measured)

16	7 (38.9%)
17	9 (50%)
18	2 (11.1%)

Order type

Community Rehabilitation Order	2 (11.1%)
Detention & Training Order	4 (22.2%)
Referral Order	6 (33.3%)
Supervision Order	6 (33.3%)

Primary offence type

Violent offences	8 (44.4%)
Theft offences	1 (5.5%)
Burglary offences	5 (27.7%)
Robbery offences	4 (22.2%)

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 8.40 The YOT has recognised that to ensure greater leverage they must focus not only on housing providers but on all organisations that work across the spectrum of housing, including agencies working specifically to prevent youth homelessness, including the 16+ team (Leaving Care), Connexions, and youth provision.
- 8.41 The YOT links well to other agencies and strategically into their relevant strategies including the City Homeless Strategy, Children's and Young People's plan, the Drug and Alcohol Action Team's Substance Misuse Housing Action Plan and Supporting People Strategy.
- 8.42 When the City Council and associated partners have undertaken strategic reviews of homelessness services, including accommodation for young people, the YOT has been involved in the process and consultation.
- 8.43 Having the YOT Accommodation Officer in post was recognised as key criteria for success in establishing, maintaining and improving strategic links and partnerships across the city. The following points were noted as areas of effective working:
- Effective influence and work with the Supporting People programme. The Accommodation Officer attends the SP Core Strategy Development Group to feed into local developments and increase the profile of the YOT.
 - Connecting with and participating in the development of the Leicester City Homelessness Strategy by the Accommodation Officer.
 - Leicester City YOT are also represented on a number of local forums and meetings which look at the needs and developments for young person's accommodation, including Young Homeless Strategy Group, move-on sub-group, and multiple needs sub-group among others.
 - The Accommodation Officer oversees the established partnership work with the YMCA.
- 8.44 While the YOT and specifically the Accommodation Officer attend a number of relevant forums and has established partnerships with various providers, it is recognised that there are also a number of links that need to be further developed and established which includes:
- Housing Association/Social Landlords, who provide accommodation for young people.
 - Probation services – to look at the transition between young people and adult offenders and their accommodation needs.

8.45 The city has responded well to the Southwark ruling:

It hasn't impacted as much as we thought it would. But we responded very quickly as we were keen to avoid young people falling between the gaps in services and so we have robust protocols in place between housing and children's services.

CYPS respondent

8.46 There is some concern that the effective partnership arrangements that YOT has are relatively dependent on the skills, knowledge and indeed personality of the Accommodation Officer at the YOT:

It works because I know people in this field. Strategically we are not tied in; it works because I am tied in!

Accommodation Officer

Summary and recommendations

8.47 The response to accommodation needs among young people is currently working well in the city:

Supported housing is working well across the city – we have a lot of local expertise – some excellent service providers and a genuine desire to work in partnership.

Supported accommodation provider

We are pretty good – we have had some good successes. Our providers are excellent and have passion. They do whatever it takes.

Accommodation Officer

8.48 However, there is an over expectation in the city that the Accommodation Officer leads on the accommodation application process and that this is required because the case managers do not necessarily have the level of understanding to manage the process. With the YOT accommodation on secondment with no replacement, cracks are beginning to show and so there is a need for YOT case managers to take a greater lead on accommodation operationally:

We need all case managers to have more of a focus on welfare issues not just offending behaviour – the two are intrinsically linked! It is seen as 'I do not have time – homelessness and accommodation is your issue!'

Accommodation Officer

8.49 The new single gateway system needs to ensure it is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of high risk cases including serious and sexual offences. There is also a gap in service provision for those who do not need supported accommodation but are not in need of foster or residential care. One solution might be a crash pad scheme tied in with mediation support when a family simply needs time out.

- 8.50 Some also wanted to see greater flexibility in the system to address individual needs:

Also there is reluctance among young people to go into supported accommodation with a preference among some young people who we know would be better in a supported tenancy. They would be fine to go into their own property but can't until they hit 18. We need to be giving some young people more credit and giving them more options.

Accommodation Officer

Before you get to 18 you do not get any benefits. But some young people under 18 are fully independent and we should be able to consider different pathways. Otherwise all we are creating is a dependency state.

Homelessness respondent

- 8.51 There is a gap in partnership working that relates to education and training providers who do not appear to be sufficiently tied in to accommodation providers:

PSA16 target linking accommodation with education and training – we need to improve on this locally. When I first started here I pulled together all people who supported our leaving care people. This included accommodation providers, but also colleges and training providers and this was the first time they had sat in a room together. This was the first time accommodation providers had worked with accommodation and training providers and there is a still huge room for improvement.

CYPS respondent

- 8.52 Similarly, it was felt by some that more could be done in relation to prevention through education and awareness raising early on:

We do not equip our young people with enough preventative measures. Youth workers and schools should be thinking about work with young people on understanding housing options, tenancies, homeless decisions. Also parents, they need educating that if you kick your kid out at 16 they won't get housed.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.53 In terms of how central government supported local service providers there was some concern that the centre was insufficiently joined up:

The YOT report to the YJB, we [children's services] report to Department for Education and housing reports to CLG. We all have different reporting lines, with similar targets. If they were joined up more centrally perhaps things would be better, easier for us working locally.

CYPS respondent

- 8.54 For the YJB, there were also calls for greater support from the Accommodation Officer:

I do not feel adequately supported by the YJB – it is really an isolated role. They need to have a lead on housing strategy in the YJB – there is so much going on in terms of policy on housing and yet because it is not seen as offending it does not have sufficient priority. They need to keep pushing housing on the agenda. It needs to be seen as much of an issue as knife crime/gun crime/gangs. Sorting out housing is central to reducing offending behaviour.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.55 There was also some interest in regional commissioning:

The YJB needs to have regional housing co-coordinators. Young people do not see boundaries in the way that we might and in some cases it would be better for the young person not to come back to the city. I would like to see better planning and commissioning at the regional level in general.

Accommodation provider

Table 8.1: Key accommodation and support provision

Housing provider Contact details	Project detail	Age range	Beds	Emergency access	Length of stay	Level of support provided	Accept high risk/difficult/ persistent offenders	Accept arsonists/ Schedule 1 offenders	Move-on arrangements
Local authority managed hostel for young people	Single homeless Self-catering	16–25	23 beds	Apply through housing options or self referral – direct access	Min – 1 night Max – 6 months Ave – 2 months	Key work system – monthly residents meeting, welfare advice	No automatic exclusions will consider each applicant individually	No automatic exclusions will consider each applicant individually	Staff provide support in looking for move-on accommodation, also referrals to specialist drug/alcohol agencies
YMCA supported accommodation	Single homeless Self catering – evening meal provided	16–25	34 beds	Self or agency referrals	Min – 1 month Max – 2 years Ave – 6 months	Key work system with positive outcomes and on- site education provision	No violence, arson or arson with intent, racist crimes, or serious sex offenders – other offences considered	No	Assistance provided to look at move-on and other accommodation – has MJH House move-on facility
Voluntary sector provider of assured short – hold tenancies	Young vulnerable single homeless people Self-catering	16–25		Self or agency referrals	Min – 6 months Max – 2 years Ave – 1 year	Staff offer help around welfare rights/benefits and referrals to other support agencies	Pregnant women	Please contact to discuss	Support residents with all aspects of moving on including resettlement for up to 3 months
Voluntary sector provider of supported accommodation for young people	Vulnerable young people who have been referred via CYPS or LCC Full-board Staffed 24/7	16–17	12 beds – some single and some shared rooms	Agency referrals only	Max – 2 years	Weekly key work with action plans and agreed outcomes – help with developing independent skills	No automatic exclusions within target group – all applicants risk assessed	No automatic exclusion s within target group – all applicants risk assessed	Staff provide help with finding suitable move-on accommodation

Housing provider Contact details	Project detail	Age range	Beds	Emergency access	Length of stay	Level of support provided	Accept high risk/difficult/ persistent offenders	Accept arsonists/ Schedule 1 offenders	Move-on arrangements
Voluntary sector project	Young single homeless people with support needs and local connection Self-catering	16–25	11 beds in supported accommodation plus move-on provision for around 16 young people	Self or agency referrals x2 references required	Min – 1 month Max – 2 years Ave – 18 months	On-site staff including sleep in cover	People with a history of violence, arson or schedule one offenders	People with a history or violence, arson or schedule one offenders	1 re-settlement worker helps with move-on process
Bethany project	Vulnerable homeless women with or without children Self-catering	16+		Named referrals only	Min – 6 months Max – 2 years Ave – 1 year	Intense support – with family liaison and service-user involvement worker	Women with history of arson or sex offences	No	Staff provide support with move-on options
GAP project	Pregnant teenagers and single mums	16–19		Agency referrals only	Max – 2 years	2 full and 2 part-time staff	Anyone not included in the target group or with a history of arson, violence or sex offences	No	Staff provide help with move-on and may provide follow up support
Liberty House	Vulnerable women in later stages of pregnancy or with young children	16+		Referral only accepted over the telephone	Max – 2 years	2 staff based on site – full-time	Women with a history of arson, violence or schedule one offenders	No	Staff support move-on process

Case study 2

- 8.56 Case Study 2 explores the approach to responding to the accommodation needs of young people within a countywide YOT. The accommodation support project was set up in 2005 under a multi-agency Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA).
- 8.57 It arose out of a concern for homeless 16 and 17-year-olds slipping through the net between services. As the YOT was already working with young people in housing need, the YOT became the host agency combining the existing YOT Accommodation Officer role with that of the accommodation support project co-ordinator to provide a service for non-offenders as well.
- 8.58 The accommodation support project aims to:
- improve the experience of young people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or living in unsuitable accommodation
 - provide a joined up multi-agency approach
 - reduce the number of homeless applications made
 - prevent offending by young people.
- 8.59 The accommodation support project was awarded the South West Regional Centre of Excellence for accommodation which provided the opportunity to share the good practice achieved with other counties in the region.
- 8.60 The Scheme Management Board has reports to the Children's Trust Board.

Supply and demand of accommodation for this group

- 8.61 In terms of demand, in the year up to end March 2009, 86 young people were referred to the accommodation support project which represents an increase of 12 per cent on the previous year. Early data available for the current financial year suggests the number of referrals will rise again as a total of 66 referrals had already been made during the first six months of the year.
- 8.62 Referrals were evenly split between males and females and the majority were referred because of parental eviction or problems in the family home.
- 8.63 Connexions is the primary referrer (36% of referrals) followed by the YOT (20% of referrals).

Connexions are our biggest referrers and the YOT is the second biggest referrer. We work very closely with Connexions Personal Advisors not only with finding suitable

accommodation but also to help the young people to access education or training.

Project Co-ordinator

- 8.64 At the point of case closure young people are most likely to be living back at home or in supported accommodation.
- 8.65 In terms of meeting the demand for accommodation and support the service operates holistically.

We have a real holistic way of working. We have an emergency fund which means we are able to meet basic welfare needs. We make up moving in boxes with crockery, cutlery, toiletries, new bedding because sometimes the young people arrive only with what they are standing up in. We work well with local charities, for example food banks and furniture projects

Project Co-ordinator

- 8.66 Gaps in service exist with a need for more emergency and supported accommodation countywide for young people. As such, a partnership between a local Housing Association and Third Sector Organisation has provided a further six bed spaces in the North of the county specifically for 16 and 17-year-olds.
- 8.67 Partnership working has also developed to enhance support for care leavers with a Housing Association in the West of the County making available some properties for care leavers which in turn has freed up supported lodgings placements that were being bed blocked by young people who were ready to move on.
- 8.68 More recently the accommodation support project has been successful in securing additional funding to set up a Host Family Scheme across the county. The funding will be used to recruit and support families who are willing to take in a young person for up to three weeks while mediation can be carried out with the aim of more young people being able to return to their families if safe to do so.
- 8.69 A subgroup was set up to explore alternative accommodation options for hard-to-place young people with complex needs. A new Hostel opened in September 2008 including five beds for 16 and 17-year-olds with complex needs.

Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

- 8.70 The role of YOT Accommodation Officer as set out in the YJB guidance does not really exist within the county. The accommodation support project co-ordinator holds a strategic role across the county. In 2006 a housing support officer was recruited and referrals began later that year. Additional funding via the CLG has meant the project was able to employ a second housing support worker in January 2008. Overtime the accommodation support project has evolved and grown and this service fulfils the functions set out in the YJB guidance.

Processes and performance

- 8.71 Young people's needs are identified through using the same assessment tool as Connexions called APIR³⁶. There is a response to referrals within one working day.

We initially used the YJB referral assessment form but that was too long and so we now have a shorter form that works for our needs. The agency referring has to call us or fax us in the YOT office. We then get in touch with the young person. We assist young people in either returning home or helping them to access suitable accommodation.

Project Co-ordinator

- 8.72 The service provides support and advocacy relevant to young people's needs and enables easier access to suitable accommodation (as defined by a common and agreed Housing and Support Standard).
- 8.73 The accommodation support project has been able to identify gaps in provision and gather information to justify the need having gained a better understanding of the profiles of 16 and 17-year-olds who are homeless in across the County.
- 8.74 Since its inception, the scheme has assisted over 300 16 and 17-year-olds across the County from September 2006 to date.
- 8.75 The aims of the service have been achieved through a range of strategic and operational activities.
- 8.76 Strategically a multi-agency agreement was signed up to by all local partners explaining the goals of the project and the common referral process. Bi-monthly project board meetings take place chaired by one of the Housing Associations.
- 8.77 An initial concern related to the term 'suitable' and so partners locally agreed a local standard that is now used as the measurement criteria. The development of the Housing and Support Standard for use by all the partners has provided a common standard, setting out criteria by which the suitability of accommodation and support for young people can be assessed.
- 8.78 The establishment of multi-agency sub-groups has fostered improved partnership working and taken the work of the project forward in the following four areas:
- communication and awareness-raising for internal and external stakeholders
 - service-user involvement
 - alternative accommodation options

³⁶ The APIR (Assessment Planning Implementation Review) framework outlines a process for identifying a person's needs, planning effectively and taking action to address those needs. This process helps Connexions' advisers to coordinate coherent service delivery to those people who may be facing significant or multiple barriers to learning or work.

- route mapping and revisions to protocol for the project.
- 8.79 Communication and information-sharing is strong. The project co-ordinator produces regular newsletters and a website exists to promote the service and keep partners informed of progress and developments.
- 8.80 The accommodation support project is also represented at appropriate local and regional forums concerned with housing and homeless options for young people.
- 8.81 The projects works well across the districts (now a unitary) which provides the ability to share the burden for dealing with challenging situations and clients across organisational and geographic boundaries.
- 8.82 Operationally the recruitment of two Young Persons Housing Support Officers, based within the YOT has aided the service. They have a remit (and 'emergency fund') to provide support for 16 and 17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, place young people in appropriate, sustainable accommodation, and co-ordinate adequate support packages with relevant providers. This role also includes involvement in pre-remand and pre-sentence plans and community resettlement planning for young people in custody.
- 8.83 Advocacy and practical support are available for young people to help them sustain tenancies and licences provided by the housing support officers. More recently the accommodation support project has been providing placements for Social Work Students which has proved very successful.
- 8.84 Training has been provided to housing providers in restorative approaches to reduce evictions and influence change in housing providers' eviction procedures so that key partner agencies are aware of problems which could lead to eviction at an earlier stage and can provide additional support as required.

Locally, the Local Public Service Agreement has broken down quite a few barriers. Because people attend [the sub] groups together, because everybody knows what everybody does, people are more open to change ... The LPSA has helped refocus the fact that actually we're talking about young people ... in crisis ... and we have a duty to them ... and it has to be somebody's [duty] who [is] around this table because th[ese] are all the agencies ... Before [LPSA] that was missing, because there was space ... for nobody to pick up [young] people in crisis because people would have a way of saying "well it's not my responsibility".

Housing provider

- 8.85 Performance indicators were set that related to (a) the number of young people aged 16 and 17 living in B&B accommodation and (b) the number of young people aged 16 and 17 living in unsuitable accommodation.

- 8.86 Over the three-year timeframe of the LPSA the aim was to have no more than 14 young people placed in B&B accommodation by the final year, and that the number of young people aged 16 to 17 living in unsuitable accommodation should be reduced to 45.
- 8.87 Performance by the end of the LPSA period against the two performance measures was successful resulting in a performance reward grant enabling the project to continue with revenue funding and also capital funding enabling the exploration of additional accommodation. Without the LPSA in place, performance would have been nearer 130 young people in B&B and 270 in unsuitable accommodation.
- 8.88 As such, the enhancement in performance has resulted in 130 fewer young people in B&B and 225 fewer young people in unsuitable accommodation.
- 8.89 The holistic approach adopted by the accommodation support project is considered to have a huge impact on the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) outcomes of the client group and as such aids other services in meeting their targets.

Referral, assessment, support and move-on process

- 8.90 Once the Host Family Scheme is up and running the following route map will be developed. For most Homeless 16 and 17-year-olds the first option will be a placement with a Host Family.

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 8.91 The accommodation support project is recognised locally as having improved partnership working between agencies across the county.
- 8.92 There are a range of key agencies involved:
- Supporting People
 - Youth Offending Service
 - Connexions
 - Housing Associations
 - Accommodation Providers
 - Children and Families Service, Aftercare Service, Emergency Duty Care (EDS) Service and Youth Development Service
- 8.93 Until April 2009 the county was two-tier with four districts councils and a county council. In April 2009, the county became unitary which has brought with it a different set of issues:

Before we had issues getting young people access into provision across district borders – this caused us problems. Now we have the opposite problem of people being housed out of area! The Host Family Scheme will enable young people to be accommodated in an emergency within their local community.

Project Co-ordinator

Feedback from service-users

- 8.94 Involvement of service-users is key to the success of the accommodation support project. Young people who have benefited from the support of the accommodation support project have been involved in the production of three DVDs used for promoting the project and educating stakeholders and other agencies about the needs and experiences of young people facing homelessness.

Our young people have continued to have an active role within the scheme to help shape the service. They have built on the success of the DVDs by designing a leaflet for young people about the work we do but also as a prevention tool.

Project Co-ordinator

- 8.95 The most recent DVD is an animated production with clear messages to other young people that they cannot expect to get a 'council flat' as soon as they move out of home or become homeless and about how difficult it is to manage on benefits. Two young people have written lesson plans for Key Stage 3 Personal Health and Social Education which will take the prevention work into schools across Wiltshire.
- 8.96 Young people have also helped out with staff interviews as well as having input into other organisations where they were able to make suggestions about how people are trained in the area of substance use.

Summary and recommendations

- 8.97 Locally the lack of security for the future of the accommodation support project is an issue that places the service under threat. The project co-ordinator would like to see better resourcing of accommodation for young people because "*without a roof over their head ... offending will continue!*".
- 8.98 There is also a need for YOT and other frontline staff in services for young people to be trained in basic housing knowledge.

It would be good to develop a training package that the YOT Accommodation Officer can then go out and deliver this.

Project Co-ordinator

Case study 3

- 8.99 Case study 3 is an urban YOT covering a large city in the West Midlands with a population of just over one million residents. The age profile of the city's population is youthful and residents come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The city's population has been growing since 2001. The Office for National Statistics estimates that the population in mid-2008 was around 1,016,800 with a youth population estimate of 74,000 15 to 19-year-olds. The YOT is one of the largest in England.
- 8.100 The city has a large and vibrant minority ethnic population. 29.6% of the population are from an ethnic group other than White British compared with 9.1% for England as a whole with Pakistanis being the largest single minority ethnic group. The percentage of Asian or Asian British residents, 19.5%, is much higher than the average for England of 4.6%. The percentage of Black or Black British residents, at 6.1%, is also higher than the average for England of 2.3%.
- 8.101 The level of unemployment, at 5.7% is higher than the average for England of 3.4%.
- 8.102 Index of multiple deprivation data indicates that the metropolitan authority has very high and severe levels of deprivation. The area has 521 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the 10% most deprived LSOAs nationally.
- 8.103 The case study review involved the following:
- a review of key documentation
 - a review of available YOT data
 - in-depth interviews with the YOT Accommodation Officer
 - a series of interviews with key stakeholders and YOT partners including Supporting People Commissioners, Local Authority Housing and Homelessness Services, Children and Young People's Directorate and Supported Accommodation Providers
 - eight one-to-one interviews with young people in supported accommodation.

Demand and supply of accommodation for this group

- 8.104 It has not been possible to calculate demand for accommodation among young people. The only data available comes from the YOT in terms of numbers of young people referred to the Accommodation Officer with a housing need. He receives between 40 and 50 referrals per quarter; at any given time he is working with around 80 young people. In the first three quarters of this year, the Accommodation Officer received 130 referrals – extrapolated over four quarters this would give a total for the year of 173. This is unlikely to provide an accurate picture of total demand in the city.

- 8.105 There is a range of supported accommodation available to young people in the district with most of the accommodation and support services provided by one large voluntary sector organisation specialising in delivering services to homeless and vulnerable young people aged between 16 and 25. The YOT Accommodation Officer is employed by this organisation and seconded to the YOT. He relies heavily on its provision to meet the accommodation and support needs of young people in the city.
- 8.106 The key provision available to the YOT includes a 12-unit supported hostel with one emergency bed which takes referrals exclusively from the YOT; a 24-unit supported hostel offering high quality self-contained flats including one emergency bed for exclusive use of the YOT (the Accommodation Officer currently has six clients at the hostel), and a range of other generic supported accommodation and floating support services mostly managed by a single provider agency.
- 8.107 Demand for supported accommodation by young people in the city generally exceeds supply. Details of the provision available are set out below.
- 8.108 Young people do have access to Local Authority accommodation in the city largely in terms of move-on accommodation from supported housing. From the perspective of the Accommodation Officer:

It is not that difficult to access Local Authority accommodation [in the city] if young people are flexible about areas.

- 8.109 The Accommodation Officer has good working relationships in place with Housing Services including the Homeless Team and Housing Pathways Service. Young people who are homeless will often approach their local YOT worker for accommodation in the first instance. YOT workers will contact the Accommodation Officer for advice and make a referral to him. He will attempt to place a young person in supported accommodation on the same day and if he is unable to, he will advise the YOT worker to assist the young person to make a homeless application to the local authority. They will usually be placed in B&B accommodation and will have an assessment of their needs within 30 days before being moved into supported accommodation or into a tenancy. The Accommodation Officer will be contacted by Homeless Team workers or the Service Manager and consulted throughout this process where a young person has a history of offending. According to the Accommodation Officer:

the key partnerships are now in place...

- 8.110 However, the Accommodation Officer is concerned about the planned introduction of a new choice-based lettings system for local authority/social housing in the city based on a computerised bidding system due to be introduced in March 2010. He is concerned about the problem of access to computers for young people who will need to make and update their bids for housing. He has raised these concerns with the local authority which is now looking at how to ensure access to IT, e.g. through local hubs in libraries, community resources, etc. He is also

concerned about whether young people will have access to properties in areas of their choice through the new system.

Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

- 8.111 As noted above, the Accommodation Officer is employed by St. Basil's – the largest voluntary sector provider of accommodation and support to young people in the city. He is seconded to the YOT through a three-year service level agreement between St. Basil's and the YOT. St. Basil's receives Integrated Resettlement Support (IRS) grant to fund the post. The post has evolved over the last five years. It had an initial focus on ensuring planned release from YOIs for young people and all Bail and Remand referrals. The relationship between the YOT and St. Basil's and the access it provides for the Accommodation Officer to client needs assessments carried out by St. Basil's staff, to its supported housing and floating support provision and to its infrastructure and managerial support is essential in enabling him to carry out his work. The SLA between St. Basil's and the YOT provides access for the Accommodation Officer to one emergency bed within a high quality supported housing project. The partnership arrangement to fund and provide the Accommodation Officer post between the YOT and a voluntary sector organisation is a positive one and could perhaps be replicated in other areas.
- 8.112 The Accommodation Officer previously worked for St. Basils in a supported housing service. He has been in post as Accommodation Officer for around two and a half years and considers it essential that the post holder has a background in housing and experience and solid expertise to bring to the role.
- 8.113 The YOT is a large city service with a large number of young people on its caseload. The Accommodation Officer works alongside five area teams and two specialist teams – Intensive Support and Supervision and the Bail and Remand Team – with 100 YOT caseworkers who can refer young people in housing need to him. He receives between 40 and 50 referrals per quarter; at any given time he is working with around 80 young people. In the first three quarters of this year the Accommodation Officer received 130 referrals – extrapolated over four quarters this it would give a total for the year of 173. This appears to be a very large case load for one officer to manage. It is the view of the Accommodation Officer that he is in urgent need of additional resources to enable him to manage his caseload effectively and achieve the optimum outcomes for young people. He has identified the need for a full-time assistant who would focus on case work under his supervision.
- 8.114 The model of Housing Support Workers funded by Supporting People and seconded to the YOT to work alongside the Accommodation Officer – highlighted in the case study of the West Yorkshire YOT– could be a helpful model for this particular YOT.
- 8.115 The postholder sees the Accommodation Officer role as both operational and strategic. He estimates that around 85% of his time is devoted to casework and only around 15% to strategic issues and development. He would like to be able to spend more time working at a strategic level and

particularly on the development of new housing and support options for young people in partnership with commissioners and providers. He attends a number of strategic forums on behalf of the YOT and has worked successfully with Supporting People commissioners on a recent tendering process for a supported housing scheme that works exclusively with YOT referrals which was in danger of being lost to the YOT, as highlighted below.

- 8.116 The Accommodation Officer has the advantage of access to a range of multi-disciplinary specialist services and workers within the YOT including a team of five IRS workers who are part of his team.
- 8.117 The Accommodation Officer spoke positively about his involvement in the Regional Forum for YOT Accommodation Officers chaired by a YJB representative.

Processes and performance

- 8.118 The Assistant Head of Service for the YOT is taking the lead on the development of a new Accommodation Strategy for the service. He has been in post for a relatively short period of time but sees the strategy as a priority. The strategy document will:
- map current provision available to the YOT
 - assess current and projected needs
 - identify gaps in provision
 - identify major issues and areas for development
 - identify key partners and emphasise partnership work.
- 8.119 The aim was to have the new Accommodation Strategy in place by April 2010.
- 8.120 The Assistant Head of Service identified the need to engage the strategic partners into the development of the YOT accommodation strategy. He sees supported move-on provision as a key area for development. He would like to replicate a model available to the YOT in his previous post where the local Authority Housing Department allocated a supply of 12 move-on flats to the YOT working in partnership with a local RSL. Young people were allocated a supported tenancy within the units and if successful took on the tenancy in their own right with the Local Authority, topping up the provision to maintain the total of 12.
- 8.121 The referral process within the YOT is that a case manager will initially identify homeless or housing issues using the *Asset* assessment tool. Accommodation issues are then referred to the YOT Accommodation Officer. As indicated above, he receives around 40 to 50 referrals per quarter from caseworkers. Referrals are then made to the Local Authority for assessment and accommodation and/or to voluntary sector providers for accommodation and support.
- 8.122 The main partner agency working with the YOT to provide accommodation and support is the local St. Basil's agency – the largest

provider of accommodation and support to young people in the city. The Accommodation Officer has close links with St. Basil's workers and will receive referrals directly from them as well as using his contacts in the agency to place young people in supported accommodation.

- 8.123 Until recently the St. Basil's SP funded 'Link' service was the main gateway for young people in the city to supported housing and floating support services. The service is based in the city centre and provides a walk-in facility for homeless and vulnerable young people in need of accommodation and support. The Accommodation Officer has strong links with the service and relies on them for assessment data and help with placing young people in accommodation.

I couldn't possibly do all the assessments of young people referred to me. I need to rely on St. Basil's staff to carry out initial assessments for housing and support.

- 8.124 Supported housing provision in the city is currently undergoing a major upheaval. As an outcome of a review of services and in response to new strategic priorities, Supporting People Commissioners recently undertook a major re-commissioning and re-tendering exercise for all SP-funded services for young people. Commissioners identified that young people were remaining in supported accommodation for too long. They wanted to see an emphasis on move-on into independence and took a strategic decision to break the link between accommodation and support with the aim of ensuring that support can be delivered to young people where they need it – regardless of accommodation and tenure. In the view of the Commissioning Manager for SP-funded services the new model is designed to:

Ensure greater flexibility and innovation. It breaks the link between accommodation and support and should ensure an emphasis on move-on. The system puts an emphasis on hours of support and not units of accommodation. It should lead to an increase in numbers of clients worked with through greater flexibility.

- 8.125 However, from the point of view of providers, and confirmed by the Accommodation Officer for the YOT, the remodelling has already led to the loss of 80 units of supported accommodation as previous providers have been de-commissioned and they fear an overall loss of up to 300 units.

- 8.126 One outcome of the remodelling process is the introduction of a new single point of access to accommodation and support for all vulnerable young people in the city. This new service is known as the SPA (Single Point of Access) and provides a 24-hour telephone and email service to both young people and referring agencies to enable access to accommodation and support services. The SPA service is delivered by St. Basil's staff and overseen by a multi-agency Steering Group of key partners including Children's Services and the Housing Department. SPA provides a basic assessment and referral to one of four main provider agencies. These agencies are now the only SP-commissioned providers of support services to young people in the metropolitan area.

- 8.127 The outcomes of this process are still 'working their way through the system and there remains a great deal of uncertainty as to its overall impact.
- 8.128 In terms of performance, the district performs well against the NI46 Performance Indicator. For the period April to December 2009, 97.7% of young people were assessed as living in satisfactory accommodation at the close of their order or release from custody.
- 8.129 However, it is the view of the Accommodation Officer, which was reinforced by the voluntary sector providers in particular, that there are a number of barriers to enabling access for young people to the accommodation and support they need. The main barriers are as follows:

Supply

- 8.130 It appears that most of the supported accommodation provision in the city is aimed at young people aged 18+. From the perspective of the Accommodation Officer he has a problem finding suitable options for 16 and 17-year-old offenders. He has access to only 13 units of supported accommodation exclusively available to the YOT – though he can place young people in other generic provision. He would like to see an increase in the supply of accommodation and support services for this age group.

The primary need for young people who offend is accommodation. They have other support needs but without accommodation there is not much we can do...

Nature of offence, for example, arson

- 8.131 The nature of the offences committed by young people can prove an obstacle to housing. This is particularly the case for young people with either arson offences or sex offences. Many housing providers are reluctant to take young people convicted of such offences.

Gang affiliation

- 8.132 Gang affiliation can provide a significant obstacle to housing young people. Young people from certain areas within the city will often be affiliated to local gangs – sometimes without their choice and simply by association with an area. This can lead to problems living alongside other young people from a different area/gang and create difficulties within their housing placements leading to disputes and fights – which result in eviction and exclusion from housing projects. Gang affiliation and gang problems can also mean that young people are understandably reluctant to take up the offer of accommodation in certain areas. Supporting People Commissioners are about to launch a new initiative – 'Guns and Gangs' – aimed at helping young people address gang-related problems and developed in consultation with the YOT.

Geography

- 8.133 The YOT covers a large metropolitan area and young people cannot always be offered placements in the areas of their choice. Furthermore, it appears that the south of the city in particular does not have a great deal of provision available. Along with the gang affiliation issue highlighted above, these issues can lead to difficulties in securing suitable accommodation for young people – particularly in terms of longer-term move-on and more independent tenancies.

Breakdown of placements

- 8.134 The Accommodation Officer identifies the breakdown of placements and a number of young people circulating around the system as a result as a particular problem. Young people who go through a number of placements in a short period of time – either through simply walking away or through eviction, can find themselves excluded from provision, exacerbating the problem of finding suitable placements for them.
- 8.135 In his monitoring report for the third quarter of the year, the Accommodation Officer highlights some of the obstacles involved in finding suitable long-term accommodation for young people as follows:

There have been some difficulties in moving young people out of the emergency beds and on to suitable accommodation. This is due to lack of vacancies across the city and the high support needs of some YOT clients. A number of young people that have accessed the emergency beds are 'gang affiliated' and can only live in certain areas. Carole Gething [St. Basil's hostel] emergency bed is located in Small Heath, the area is classified as neutral territory for the local gangs, therefore when young people are moved here, they want to remain in this project due to safety issues. Because of this, the young person will continue to occupy the emergency bed until a generic vacancy becomes available within CGH and this can sometime cause a blockage.

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 8.136 The YOT generally appears to have strong strategic relationships in place with key partners and stakeholders. This appears to be particularly so with Supporting People Commissioners, St. Basil's and other voluntary sector providers.

Supporting People (SP)

- 8.137 The YOT was consulted by SP Commissioners on the development of a new SP strategy and the new model for support services for young people described above. Furthermore, the Accommodation Officer and Commissioning Manager worked closely to ensure the continued provision of ten units of supported accommodation available exclusively

to the YOT which were threatened by the re-commissioning and re-tendering process undertaken by SP. Working together the two services were able to ensure the successful transfer of this accommodation to a new provider. Both the Commissioning Manager and YOT Accommodation Officer highlighted this process as a particularly successful example of joint working.

- 8.138 The YOT is represented by its Head of Service on the SP Commissioning Body and in the view of the Commissioning Manager is:

fully consulted on the specification and development of new services.

- 8.139 The Commissioning Manager also spoke about the potential for future joint commissioning of services with the YOT. He went on to outline a new service to be commissioned by SP to contribute to tackling gun and gang-associated crime and gang culture in the city. The 'Guns and Gangs' service will be delivered by a voluntary sector agency and will offer a support service to young people wishing to escape from gun and gang culture. As indicated above, the YOT was involved in consultation concerning the development of this innovative new service.

Local Authority Housing and Homelessness service

- 8.140 The Assistant Head of Service for the YOT highlighted the need for closer strategic working with the Local Authority Housing Department. In his view:

Relationships at operational level are OK but need developing at the strategic level.

- 8.141 The Head of Housing for the Local Authority spoke positively about the relationship between Housing Services and the YOT at both operational and strategic level. At operational level he identified the Housing Pathways Team as the main point of contact for the YOT and relationships between the two teams have been highlighted as positive above. At the strategic level, the Head of Housing is a member of the YOT Board. He spoke of the partnership and joint working between the YOT, the Housing Service and the Children and Young People's Directorate through a strategic group charged with leading and developing the city's response to the G vs. Southwark ruling. The aim of the group is to develop protocols and put resources in place to ensure that looked-after children' do not become homeless and the Head of Housing believes this can be achieved through partnership working. He also expressed the view that:

The YOT is fully consulted on Housing and Homelessness Strategy through workshops, forums and meetings.

Children, Families and Young People's Directorate

8.142 The YOT is located within this directorate.

8.143 From the perspective of the Commissioning Manager for the Children Families and Young People's Directorate relationships between the YOT and his services are generally good both at operational and strategic level. There is effective joint working between services on the ground and some contact at strategic level including the strategic group looking at implications of the G vs. Southwark ruling highlighted above.

8.144 There is a specific manager within the Children's Services Placements Team with lead responsibility for liaison with the YOT. He also highlighted close links with the YOT Bail and Remand Team.

8.145 The Commissioning Manager sits on the Core Strategy Group for Supporting People and was closely involved in the development of the new SP strategy and delivery model outlined above which included consultation with the YOT.

Response to G. vs. Southwark

8.146 The Children, Families and Young People's Directorate is leading on the local authority response to the G. vs. Southwark ruling. As a result of the ruling the Commissioning Manager for the Directorate is anticipating between three and four hundred young people per year requiring assessment under Section 20 of the Children Act. In his view:

Ultimately all Section 20 cases are likely to become care leavers.

8.147 This will potentially have enormous resource implications for his services. The Commissioning Manager is currently trying to identify additional staffing resources to enable same day assessment for young people under Section 20. His aim is to set up a Fast Response Team to facilitate assessment and transfer young people into the Children's Services 16+ Team for ongoing care and support. As indicated, he is working in partnership with Housing Services and the YOT on this initiative. He hopes to link the Fast Response Team into the Single Point of Access (SPA) service identified above.

8.148 From the point of view of the Accommodation Officer, G vs. Southwark has had little impact on his work so far. He has few specific links with Children's Services but is confident that case officers in YOT Area Teams will have such links. He has though been involved in recent meetings to develop new protocols between the YOT, Children's Services, the Homeless Team and Housing Policy to find joint solutions to the ruling. He was less than positive about the joint working so far between the YOT and Children's Services staff on the ground.

Summary and recommendations

- 8.149 It appears that the response of this large city YOT to meeting the accommodation and support needs of young people is currently working well. There are obstacles and barriers to enabling young people to access the services that they need but the situation is generally positive.
- 8.150 The role of the Accommodation Officer is clearly central to this achievement. It appears to be essential to have a full-time and dedicated Accommodation Officer in post in order to enable the YOT to achieve a high level of performance against NI46. This is particularly the case in the context of a large YOT such as this. Indeed, it appears to be the case that the Accommodation Officer could not manage his caseload effectively without access to the infrastructure, resources and support available to him from the St. Basil's agency. In addition, he highlighted the need for an additional staff post to work as an assistant to him with a focus on casework. It is recommended here that this should be explored. The placement of the two Housing Support Workers into the YOT, funded by SP and employed by a leading local provider, highlighted in case study 2, is a model that could be considered in this case.
- 8.151 As reported in case study 2 it also appears to be extremely helpful that the role is a full-time and dedicated position and that the post-holder has previous experience and expertise in housing, supported housing or support services.
- 8.152 Partnership working between the YOT and local voluntary sector provider agencies is extremely effective as highlighted by the joint working between the YOT and the St. Basil's agency referred to throughout this report. The Accommodation Officer also has strong links with a second agency – Trident Reach – which now manages the 12-bed unit almost lost to the service highlighted above. The YOT and this agency are in discussion concerning developing their partnership to enable access to additional provision in the city including four units of move-on accommodation for exclusive use of YOT clients.
- 8.153 A particular issue to be addressed is that of gang affiliation and gang culture in the city. This was highlighted by the Accommodation Officer as a particular barrier to enabling successful placements in supported accommodation and in securing suitable move-on options for young people. As highlighted above, a new initiative is about to be launched in the city to help young people move away from 'Guns and Gangs' culture and it is recommended that the YOT should play a role in the development, coordination and evaluation of this new service.
- 8.154 In terms of the YJB, as noted above, the Accommodation Officer spoke positively about support for his role from the YJB and particularly the Regional Forum for YOT Accommodation Officers chaired by a YJB representative.

Table 8.2 Key accommodation and support provision

Housing Provider	Project	Age range	Units	Access	Length of Stay	Support	High Risk Clients Accepted	Move-on arrangements
St. Basils	By referral including one emergency bed and move-on flats	16 to 25	24	Referrals from agencies including YOT. One emergency bed for exclusive use of YOT	28 days in emergency bed. Up to two years in other units with average nine months stay before move-on	24 hour staffing	Yes subject to a risk assessment	Planned move-on with average stay of nine months – through City Housing Pathways service
Trident Reach	By referral through SPA including one emergency bed and two move-on flats	16-19	12	YOT referrals only	Two years maximum	24 hour staffing	Yes subject to a risk assessment	Planned move-on with target of move-on after one year through City Housing Pathways service
St. Basil's	Generic accommodation and support services for young people	16 to 25	350	Various including some direct access	Two years maximum	Various	Yes subject to a risk assessment	Planned move-on
Trident Reach	Planned new service offering supported move-on accommodation.	16 to 19	4	Move on from hostel	3 to 6 months	Visiting support	Yes subject to a risk assessment	Planned move-on into independent tenancies
Four key SPA provider agencies - see above	Various accommodation and support services	16 to 25	Not known	Through the SPA	Two years maximum	Various	Yes subject to a risk assessment	Planned move-on

Case study 4

8.155 This case study is a local authority in Inner London. It is a densely populated borough with around 270,000 residents in a relatively small geographic area (approximately 10 square miles). Around 40% of the population are from black and ethnic minority (BME) groups, a figure which rises to around 60% for 10 to 17-year-olds. Around 150 languages are spoken in the area. The local population is relatively young with around a fifth of the population aged under 18 years, and is forecast to grow considerably over the next twenty years. The 2007 Indices of Deprivation (IMD) places this as one of the most deprived boroughs in London and in England. Deprived areas are spread throughout the borough with particular concentrations in certain wards.

8.156 The case study review involved the following:

- a review of key documentation
- a review of available YOT data
- a series of interviews with key stakeholders from the YOT, Supporting People, Local Authority Housing
- seven one-to-one interviews with young people in supported accommodation

Supply and demand of accommodation for this group

8.157 It was not possible to accurately identify the supply and demand for accommodation specifically for young people as information is not recorded in a robust and routine way to enable this. However, some participants felt that it was not particularly helpful to categorise young people in this way anyway as most young people requiring accommodation support had similar issues and needs.

8.158 There are a disproportionately high proportion of young people from a BME background using Supporting People services compared to the resident population. This proportion is higher still for those young people known to the YOT, with around 80% of the client base from a BME background. It is acknowledged locally that they 'probably' have the highest level of disproportionality in London; however, within their family of most similar areas in London, this is not as apparent at custody level. As a result...

...in [this area] if you're a black youth you are much more likely to enter the criminal justice system than a white youth, but once you're in, you're outcomes aren't very different.

YOT Manager

8.159 Services are commissioned by Supporting People for young people at risk, young single homeless people and young people leaving care. The local Supporting People Strategy (2005–2010) identifies that, based on 2004/05 data, there is limited information on housing-related support

needs of young people and suggests that this is addressed as a priority. The Young Person's Commissioner in Supporting People³⁷ felt that this had happened since the strategy was written and that the development of a single gateway for dealing with young people in housing need was a significant factor in the improving position.

- 8.160 The current capacity provides for accommodation and tenancy support for over 400 young people which includes floating support, supported housing, supported lodgings (e.g. people in the community), tenancy support and a teenage parents support programme. The main local providers are an 80+ bed Foyer and a 90+ bed YMCA which house a range of young people, including young people. There are four or five smaller shared houses and six or seven other providers of specialist services such as specific BME services and a teenage couple's service.
- 8.161 Some of the specialist services are influenced by young people in a range of different ways. For example, talking about the teenage couples specialist service the representative from Supporting People noted that:

Interestingly, in this seven-bed unit, five of the fathers are currently in custody which is a worrying, but an interesting statistic, I guess. We need to think about how we approach that in terms of their risk assessment around appropriateness of relationship, safeguarding issues. The other two fathers are actually both working and they're in quite a different position.

SP representative

- 8.162 In this case study area there was one service specifically for young adult offenders (aged 18 to 25 years) who are either on some kind of order or being released from custody. This service is a fairly recent development, which started around summer 2009, and has around ten places.
- 8.163 The YOT estimate that around '4 to 5% of their client group are not in suitable accommodation so this is an issue for around 25 young people over the year' (YOT Manager).
- 8.164 There were two teams dealing with housing for young people – one dealing with supporting needs and placements, and the other a family support team. For the family support team, the primary aim is to get young people back into the family home. If that is not possible, they would look at supported housing and, as a last resort, at temporary accommodation (unstaffed, so no support). The representative from the family support team thought that their work had proven most successful with a) young people who are at risk where they currently live, b) young people who are involved in the youth justice system or c) young people who are leaving custody.
- 8.165 The work of the family support team includes a respite programme to provide 'time out'. This is a temporary contract which the young person and their family enter into. It lasts for 13 weeks during which time the

³⁷ The post of Young Person's Commissioner in the Supporting People Team has responsibility for commissioning services for all young people with regards to housing.

young person agrees to certain conditions such as a 10pm curfew, no visitors, agree to learn basic life skills and to engage in education or training. There is an understanding that the young person will return to the family at the end of the 13 weeks and a trained mediator works with the family and young person to address specific issues causing conflict, such as offending and anti-social behaviour. In some cases they arrange for young people to go into supported accommodation, often where the parents have mental health issues which make this the only option.

In some case where the young person does not move back home ... we will try and repair the relationship as much as possible so that, even though they have moved away from home they still have contact with their family. We have some young people who go back home just for a weekend. We try to explain to the family that while they are not happy with the young person at the moment they are their family for life and it is important that they feel they can go to them for support when they really need it.

Local authority housing representative

8.166 This preventative approach is the key aim of the family support team.

8.167 The two main reasons for young people known to the YOT requiring accommodation were having to leave the family home due to family/relationship breakdown and overcrowding:

Having to leave the family home because there are ... not so much conflict but because it becomes impossible for them to remain there because, as an adolescent, they need more space and there is overcrowding in the family home.

YOT Manager

Lots of HMOs (housing multiple occupancy) where two-bed flats with three or four kids. Oldest kid gets to 16 and has to get out the house.

Housing representative

8.168 In addition to this the housing representative also thought that for young people a lack of understanding of the housing situation was also a factor, in particular a belief that a young person would get their own flat at age 16. In this case study area in a London Borough issues around gang violence were another increasingly prevalent driving factor. This was highlighted by all relevant services as 'undoubtedly' a major issue in terms of housing difficulty:

[after family breakdown and overcrowding] the other major issue is that they have to leave [home] because of a genuine and credible threat to their safety and because of the high levels of youth-on-youth violence. If there is a threat to their safety and the people who are going to hurt them know where they live – then they have to move because they could be killed or they fear they will be seriously hurt and potentially killed and we do have such young people.

YOT Manager

What is increasingly becoming a problem is involvement in gangs. There are young people who cannot stay at home because they are threatened with violence or they themselves commit violence of some form. It's always been there but in the last twelve months its now really coming out into the open and a lot of young people are involved in gangs.

Housing representative

8.169 This was thought to be a particularly acute problem among young people leaving the secure estate.

8.170 Locally, according to the local authority housing representative, there were recurrent trends – peaks and troughs – of young people experiencing housing difficulty. The peak tends to be around October (50 young people presenting as homeless in 2009) with a fall in the lead up to Christmas followed by a spike again in January/February, then generally low figures in the summer, particularly June.

8.171 In the Local Authority Housing Service there was thought to be sufficient capacity in terms of temporary accommodation but as this was not staffed (i.e. no support), it was not suitable for re-housing young people. It was felt that there was not enough specialist accommodation; one example given was that they do not really have an appropriate facility for those leaving an institution (youth custody) who are on electronic tags. Another problem is in placing young people on release:

If you have someone who is coming out, say on X day – in 28 days time – and you have got a void, then you have to keep that void for 28 days in order to give it to that person. Those coming out on licence you will need to find them a place in advance and hold it for them. Most providers don't want to do that. They want their places full. The solution would be to have a small unit – say 20 beds – where they kept the places open [for young people leaving the secure estate] so that they weren't losing money.

Housing representative

8.172 There was a feeling across services that they had been successful in this borough in moving young people (including offenders) into settled accommodation. This was borne out by the achievement of a Key Performance Indicator six months prior to deadline. This success was thought to be due to having a dedicated team doing this so that within a

few weeks a move could be made, with support such as putting up the rent deposit to secure a place in private rented accommodation.

- 8.173 Within the YOT, the level of supply was thought to be a potential barrier as 'there is only a finite amount of available beds' but this was not thought to be the main barrier. The YOT Manager commented that 'we've never been told 'no, because we have no money' but we have been told 'no one can take this young person because of the risk they present'. This was echoed by the Supporting People function who thought there was sufficient provision available for the accommodation needs of young people, including young people:

...I think the challenge for us is how we can get the make-up of the provision we've got to work in a different way? We've got a lot of provision; I'm not convinced we need more. I think it's about different ways of using what we've already got.

Supporting People representative

- 8.174 Another barrier highlighted for young people was around sustaining successful independent living and the need to learn basic life skills such as budgeting, how to get gas and electricity, etc. Gaining access to learn these skills was not always clear or easy. Related to this, another barrier was highlighted in young people, and particularly young people, not being able to cope with the processes in place

...the young person can't engage with those services [e.g. housing] and have a conversation and can't deal with working with professionals in that way. They [the young person] interpret this as, 'you're not listening to me, f--- you lot, I'm off' and then they'll storm out. They haven't got the patience, the social skills and the support to get through that process. Then they are going to walk out of the whole thing and, more than likely, end up living on someone's floor.

YOT Manager

- 8.175 A major barrier specific to housing young people is around risk and how you deal with the risk presented by young people's history of offending, e.g. 'if you have a young person who has committed sexual offences against other young children and the only available place is in a unit where there is a mother and baby unit'.
- 8.176 Again, gang-related violence was also thought to be another barrier here. It was felt here that placing certain young people with larger accommodation providers also put other people at risk, if they were known gang members.

Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

- 8.177 There is currently no YOT Accommodation Officer in post in this case study area. This post has now been vacant for around a year. This is due to the post remaining unfilled since the previous post-holder left the

position as a result of an internal promotion. The previous post-holder carried out a mainly operational role within the YOT. The strategic role around accommodation issues for young people was seen as the remit of the YOT Manager. The YOT Accommodation Officer was seen as a valuable post which made a significant contribution to the resettlement of offenders.

8.178 This split around strategic and operational functions remains and there were plans in place when this fieldwork took place in January 2010 for the YOT Accommodation Officer post to be recruited on this basis. There had recently been a major round of recruitment within the YOT (including senior practitioners, performance staff, YOT officers) and the Accommodation Officer post was due to be recruited in the next round.

8.179 The post will most likely be recruited through an internal secondment from the local authority housing function and will be a part-time post (0.5 FTE). The YOT Manager expects the new post-holder to have a background in housing, a good knowledge of what options are available, the current legislation and what this means in relation to young people. They would also be expected to know the processes and people particular to the borough.

8.180 In the absence of a YOT Accommodation Officer, caseworkers have handled the Accommodation Officer role individually, with support from the resettlement team, but generally:

they do not have the specialist housing knowledge of a dedicated officer ... and if they have, it's out of date.

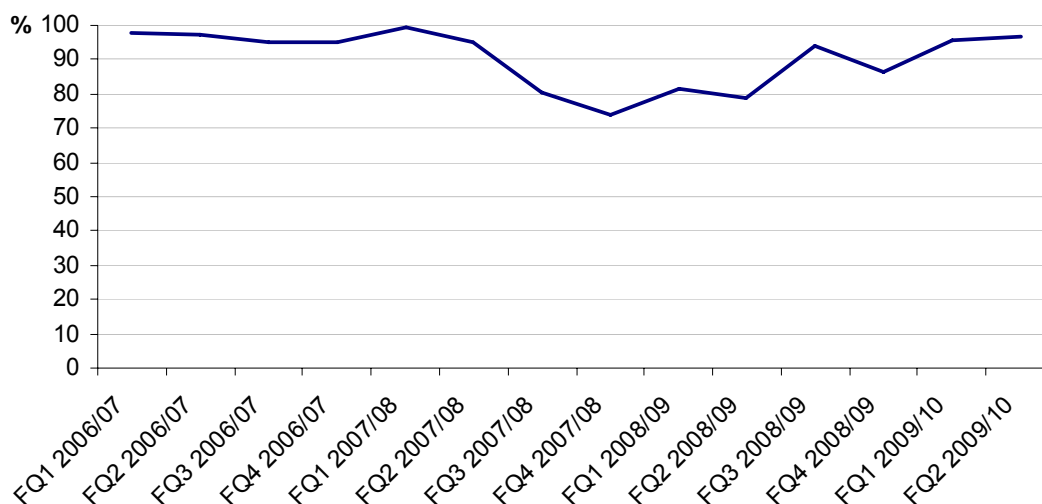
YOT Manager.

Processes and performance

8.181 Staff at the YOT thought that local performance against the National Indicator for offenders in accommodation (NI 46) was around 95% and determined from this that accommodation difficulty is 'consistently' an issue for around 5% of their client group.

8.182 The actual returns to the Youth Justice Board (shown in Figure 8.1, below) indicate that there is actually a little more fluctuation on a quarterly basis but local perceptions are fairly accurate on this.

Figure 8.1: NI 46 – offenders in suitable accommodation (%) by financial quarter



Source: Data downloaded from the Floor Target Interactive website on 25.01.10

8.183 There was a good level of knowledge about what information was recorded and could be accessed through Asset but this was not currently done as part of routine practice. They had recently produced a report based on aggregate Asset data which looked at a range of issues, including housing. However, while previously there had been a routine process in place for extracting and analysing data in this area, this had ceased to be done largely as a result of the overturn of staff:

We used to do a regular report which we haven't done for a while on all areas of Asset – including accommodation – but I'm not sure how much use that would be [for the purposes of this study] cos it's a bit historical and we stopped doing it with a change in performance staff ... but we will start producing it again.

YOT Manager

8.184 There was a feeling from the YOT that the referral process had 'been a bit jumbled' but a joint protocol was imminent ('in a matter of weeks') between Children and Young People's Services and the various elements of Housing Options and YOT. Supporting People also felt that there was room for improvement in the referral process on all sides and commented that:

We have a young adult offender's service ... and I have to say that referrals have been quite slow coming through from YOT. I'm not quite sure what the glitch is there. It's possibly partly down to us (SP) perhaps being a little risk-averse to start with...

Supporting People representative

8.185 This seemed to be reflected in the YOT perspective too with some tensions about information sharing acknowledged

What's gone on recently is ... what I'm hearing from staff here is that they wanted to share information and when we share information they [SP] say 'oh God, we can't touch that!' And so the staff member at family support or housing options or where ever ... what happens is staff over there are asking for information and they are not receiving it and they say 'if we're not receiving the information we can't help you' and my staff are saying 'well if I give you the information you won't house the person'. Then what happens is the working relationship deteriorates. It becomes about 'them': 'they' won't do this.

YOT Manager

- 8.186 It is hoped that the new protocol being put into place and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, plus the implications of the G vs. Southwark case will help address some of the issues around referral and placement and how they collectively help young people who are in housing difficulty.
- 8.187 While Housing were represented on the YOT Board they did not always attend meetings. It was felt by the YOT that partnership working had deteriorated and that in future the relationship between Housing and Children's Services would be 'absolutely key' to resolving accommodation issues for all young people. It was also felt that forthcoming budget cuts in local authorities would make things more difficult in future.
- 8.188 The different priorities of partners remained an important factor. An example was given which illustrates this where a young person involved in gang activity had returned home after being stabbed several times

I called the RSL and said I was concerned about where the young person was living. They said, 'yes we've got concerns too, he's involved in anti-social behaviour and we'll be looking for an eviction'. Part of me thinks, well someone has tried to murder this boy and you think the best thing is to evict him? I find it hard to understand that perspective but then I'm not receiving the calls on a daily basis from his neighbours whose lives are being made a misery. What's best to do is to move the family somewhere else but they can't do that because the family are involved in anti-social behaviour.

I visited the property and the front of the house was insecure. When I raised this with the RSL they said the door would not be replaced until he paid for it as the police had kicked it in 'cos he was a criminal. For me the immediate issue was that there was a real and credible threat that this boy could be murdered but that's not the perspective of the landlord. The issue for him was that this boy was making the lives of other residents an absolute misery. They don't have the responsibility to protect people from violence ... We've still got a long way to go there.

YOT Manager

- 8.189 The representative from the local authority housing function felt that the types of provision needed to change; in particular, that the large hostels were not suitable for young people and smaller units would be much more preferable.

I think we need a lot of smaller accommodation units [for young people]. The larger ones won't do. The larger schemes – 80 beds – are not suitable and may house young people in gangs ... what is more suitable would be smaller providers of maybe 15 to 20 beds where they [young people] can actually get more one-to-one support.

Housing representative

- 8.190 However within other areas, such as Supporting People, this was not seen as a realistic option in the immediate term:

We can't go from large providers to small providers overnight. So the priority should be 'how can we support providers to better meet the needs of young people, including young offenders?'

Supporting People representative

- 8.191 The housing representative thought that on the whole the level of assistance available to young people locally was limited with regards to education, training and employment, and with regards to accommodation as a whole. Where family ties had broken down, assistance available locally was thought to be very good indeed and with regards to general health issues 'very good' and for mental health local assistance was also judged as good. However, local assistance for those with learning disabilities/difficulties was thought to be 'non-existent'. It was thought that, in part, this was due to a reticence to 'label' young people which meant that they did not get the support they needed.

- 8.192 The YOT Manager felt that he did not have a big enough picture to accurately reflect local performance in terms of dealing with accommodation issues of young people. This was largely because the YOT Manager felt that they didn't have a very balanced picture as they only got to hear about those cases where there was a particular problem that had been escalated by a YOT worker because something needed resolving.

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 8.193 There was not a separate YOT accommodation strategy in place:

If we have one [YOT accommodation strategy] it's not one that guides our work and it's out of date. The YOT Plan is quite rigid in what it asks us to do. YOTs didn't have to do a plan last year. The year before what we were required to do was an assessment of capacity and capability which was very detailed and outlined a long term process of continual improvement. ... there wasn't a separate heading for

housing but because it was still a National Indicator it was integrated across the different areas of capability. So there would have been references to accommodation across the overall strategy but it didn't have its own heading.

YOT Manager

8.194 There was a feeling that good partnership working existed between different services, at least at an operational level, and that this was more the result of individuals forging effective working relationships, rather than due to any particular policy or agreement.

8.195 They YOT tended to get hold of information through meetings with Supporting People, housing and other partners, rather than through any systematic process such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The YOT felt 'a little detached but not excluded' from influencing supply. There was a feeling that there had been a beneficial side to the G vs. Southwark judgement in that it had grabbed people's attention and required a number of different parts of the local service delivery to work together more closely.

8.196 From a housing perspective, local working relationships with the YOT were thought to be 'very good' although they did find it difficult to get hold of information and found that they could not get the same (useful) information from Asset as they could from OASys³⁸. It was also felt that the YOT understanding of the local authority's strategic housing role was 'getting better'.

There are competing pressures [between strategic housing and YOT] and while they understand that we have to house young people, they also understand that due to involvement in gangs there are certain young people who cannot be housed in the borough. ... but we do talk and we try to find common solutions.

Housing representative

8.197 From a YOT perspective a key issue in terms of accountability which needed to be addressed strategically, and was linked to the commissioning role within Supporting People, was that:

While landlords have no responsibility to safeguard young men from serious violence, they won't do it. Those young men are the same young men who are causing problems for their tenants and they don't want to do anything to protect them.

YOT Manager

³⁸ OASys is the Offender Assessment System used by Probation services.

Summary and recommendations

8.198 Universally, across all services, there was an underlying principal that the best possible place for a 17-year-old to be was with their family and that this was the most significant factor in determining the young person's future life chances. It was also felt that if this were not possible it was important to try and support a relationship between the young person and family as much as possible. It was also felt that unsupported, temporary accommodation was very much a last resort. This belief was translated locally into a strong emphasis around prevention and mediation with young people and their families, including the local family support service and projects such as a 'time-out' respite scheme.

8.199 In this London borough, involvement with gangs is an increasing issue for all young people and particularly for young people in housing difficulty. Involvement in gangs is problematic both for young people becoming involved in offending and also in increasing the difficulty of re-housing young people. In this area the two largest providers are both situated at the boundary of the borough in areas of known significant gang activity.

8.200 Removing the stigma of a history of offending and the need for a strategic approach to dealing with gangs were raised as key issues which needed addressing as a priority to alleviate housing difficulty for young people:

...there has to be a strategy for the whole country of how to deal with young people who are fleeing gang violence. If each area tries to come up with their own solution it's never going to work. We tried a joint-approach with five [London] boroughs ... it didn't work because those areas are so close. I can take one bus across all those areas. What you need is something where a young person come to you and say they want to leave a gang and you can say, OK, there's a scheme in, say, Birmingham, go there for six months, eight months, get intensive support ... the problem at the moment is each Local Authority is looking for their own solutions. You know? I don't know how you would pay for it though? We have to look at the problem in the way we look at domestic violence.

Housing representative

8.201 The problem and solution of youth gang violence was thought to be directly related to accommodation. The YOT Manager cited John Pitt's research around 'Reluctant Gangsters'³⁹ and the fact that most young people would leave gangs if they could but that this was very difficult because of where they lived. Anecdotally this was backed up by YOT workers' experience in this case study area and was thought to be the most significant challenge around housing young people.

³⁹ Pitts, J (2007) *Reluctant gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*. University of Bedfordshire. <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/reliquant-gangsters.pdf>

- 8.202 More emphasis should be placed on prevention work and sharing good practice of this. On the whole, the best situation for young service-users is to remain or return to the family home. One good example of practice found here was a respite scheme called 'Time Out'. In this initiative the young person and their family enter into an agreement for the young person to live in supported accommodation for 12 weeks before returning to the family home. The young person receives training and support designed to develop a pathway into successful independent living (life skills, career development, etc.). A mediator works with both the family and the young person on the specific areas of conflict likely to lead to the young person being in housing need. In some cases it is not possible or suitable for the young person to return to the family home and the mediator works on securing sustained contact between the young person and their family for ongoing support. This may, for example, include regular visits or weekend stays.
- 8.203 A national strategic lead is required to deal with the increasing problem of housing young people fleeing gang-related activity. Links need to be made between local authorities in different parts of the country. A network of cities and metropolitan areas should be established whereby young people fleeing gang violence, and their families, can be housed in other parts of the country, with a reciprocal arrangement in place where necessary. It is not sufficient for adjoining boroughs/areas to forge an alliance as previous experience has shown that this does not work as the young people are still too close to previous networks.

Case study 5

- 8.204 Case study 5 is a YOT covering a West Yorkshire district with two large population centres and extensive rural areas. The district is the third largest authority in England by area. The estimated total population of the district for 2008 was 403,900 with a youth population estimate (15 to 19-year-olds) of 27,600. The major city in the district has a population of approximately 119,000.
- 8.205 The district has an estimated minority ethnic population of 18% with Asian or Asian British being the largest minority ethnic group at 12% of the local population.
- 8.206 Index of multiple deprivation data indicates that the two major centres of population in the district suffer from high levels of disadvantage. The district ranks as one of the 50 most deprived in England in terms of income and employment and 12th worst nationally in terms of income alone. The district has 34 local super output areas in the worst 10% nationally.
- 8.207 The case study review involved the following:
- a review of key documentation
 - a review of available YOT data
 - in-depth interviews with the YOT Accommodation Officer
 - a series of interviews with key stakeholders and YOT partners including Supporting People Commissioners, Local Authority Housing and Homelessness (Housing Options Service), Head of Service for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) and Supported Accommodation Providers
 - eight one-to-one interviews with young people in supported accommodation.

Supply and demand of accommodation for this group

- 8.208 It has not been possible to calculate demand for accommodation among young people since no agency is collecting this data other than through *Asset* data on young people in housing need.
- 8.209 There is a range of supported accommodation available to young people in the district including a small number of projects specifically targeting young people. The YOT works in partnership with two main voluntary sector providers and a range of smaller agencies to meet the accommodation and support needs of young people. This includes one direct access hostel, some dispersed housing and units of floating support. However, demand for supported accommodation by young people in the district exceeds supply.
- 8.210 Details of the available accommodation and support provision are set out below.

8.211 The YOT, in partnership with a local supported accommodation provider has begun to develop relationships with a number of private landlords who are willing to accommodate young people as long as they have a support package in place. The provider agency is able to offer access to around 130 properties owned by local RSLs or by private landlords and managed by the provider agency which is able to deliver housing management and a support service funded through a housing benefit eligible service charge.

8.212 From the perspective of the Accommodation Officer there is a reasonable supply of supported accommodation in the south of the district including the main centre of population but very little in the north of the district – which includes areas of particular disadvantage and deprivation.

8.213 In addition to accommodation with support and floating support, the YOT has access to two dedicated Housing Support Worker posts funded by Supporting People and seconded to the YOT through a Service Level Agreement with Stonham Housing Association. The service began in September 2008 and is commissioned to deliver 10 units of housing-related support to young people. The postholders take referrals exclusively from YOT caseworkers and the YOT Accommodation Officer and work alongside the Accommodation Officer to provide:

- needs assessment
- support planning
- access to accommodation
- floating support, i.e. support to young people in tenancies
- advocacy
- advice and assistance.

8.214 The workers can support each young person for up to two years if necessary. It is the view of the two workers that at the outset:

Generally young people have no idea where to go and who can help them...

YOT worker

8.215 From the perspective of the Accommodation Officer the two support workers provide an invaluable service and without them he simply would not be able to manage the demands of the role:

I can breathe because I have the support workers in the team.

Accommodation Officer

8.216 The Accommodation Officer, the provider agency Service Manager and the two Housing Support Workers all expressed the view that the posts are particularly effective because they are based within the YOT itself. This gives the two workers easy access to clients and to the range of services and specialist staff at the YOT – making their work both easier and much more effective.

8.217 Young people do have access to Local Authority accommodation but there are considerable barriers in the way. The Team Manager of the Housing Options Young People's Team – the gateway to local authority housing for young people – estimates that there is a waiting list of around 9,000 for council accommodation. Furthermore, in her view, outcomes for young people in tenancies are not good and she prefers to see young people in particular return to their home environment with mediation or go into supported housing.

I would expect all 16 and 17-year-olds to be in supported accommodation.

Housing Options Young People's Team Manager

8.218 It is evident that there is some tension between the YOT Accommodation Officer and the service generally and the Housing Options Team Manager and service on the best options for young people. It is the view of YOT staff that young people are seen by the Housing Options Team as a difficult client group and that the service will try to avoid responsibility for housing them where possible. Furthermore, in the view of the Accommodation Officer, the temporary accommodation offered to young people prior to moving into a tenancy is of generally poor quality with one notoriously bad scheme in the north of the district.

8.219 However, the Young People's Team Manager did highlight two potential new developments in the district aimed at improving housing options for young people in general, including young people. She spoke of her attempts to set up a new Supported Lodgings scheme in the district which she hoped would be live by the summer of 2010, though she did express some scepticism as to how far 'hosts' would be willing to accommodate young people. She also made reference to a new supported housing scheme – along the lines of a Foyer – which would target looked-after children, including young people. It will be located in the main centre of population in the district and commissioned by Supporting People.

8.220 The SP Team Manager confirmed that this development was in progress and she hoped a new unit project offering ten units of accommodation with 24-hour support would be up and running by the summer of 2010. The YOT Accommodation Officer had not yet been consulted on this new supported accommodation scheme.

Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

8.221 The post of Accommodation Officer for the YOT is funded by the Connexions Service through a three-year Service Level Agreement due to expire in April 2011. It is not clear at this stage whether the agreement will continue beyond that date. The postholder previously worked in supported housing. In his view, it is essential that the Accommodation Officer has a background in housing and experience and expertise to bring to the role.

8.222 The current postholder was surprised at the lack of knowledge and expertise within the YOT concerning accommodation and support when

he arrived in post. For example, he stated the service knew nothing about the role of Supporting People and SP funding at that time. He feels he had to and continues to play an educative role for the service, including with Service Managers, in accommodation and support issues:

I am the only person in the team with an accommodation perspective and expertise, which is frustrating. No one else has the expertise or understands the frustrations of the post.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.223 He also feels that because he is not employed at management level, managers in partner agencies and in strategic forums are reluctant to listen to him and acknowledge his expertise. This is exacerbated by his view that:

My message gets diluted by [YOT] managers in strategic forums.

Accommodation Officer

- 8.224 The postholder sees the Accommodation Officer role as both operational and strategic. He spends roughly 55% of his time on operational matters and 45% involved in liaison and networking with other agencies e.g. attending forums and meetings with service managers and staff. The Operations Manager for the YOT plays the lead role in working on strategic issues relating to accommodation and support for young people.

- 8.225 The Accommodation Officer would like to focus more of his time at the strategic level – working on strategic relationships and the development of additional and new provision but feels that too much of his time is taken up with casework. However, this situation has improved through the secondment of the two Housing Support Worker posts highlighted above. These two workers are able to deal with most cases and provide them with the intensive levels of support that would previously have fallen to the Accommodation Officer, but they rely on him for advice, support and assistance.

- 8.226 The Accommodation Officer works with around 30 to 35 young people per quarter. He works in liaison with 25 Case Officers who each carry a caseload of up to 18 young people.

- 8.227 The Accommodation Officer has the advantage of access to a range of multi-disciplinary specialist services and workers within the YOT. This includes:

- Housing Support Workers (as described above)
- Intensive Resettlement Support Team – a team of three workers providing access to accommodation, activities, education and training opportunities to up to 18 young people at any given time with assessment prior to release and service delivery for up to 12 months post release
- specialist drugs workers

- Connexions worker
- Parenting Workers
- Training Co-ordinator
- a Health Team including two nurses
- Education Social Workers.

8.228 The Accommodation Officer spoke positively about support for his role from the YJB. This was expressed particularly in terms of the Regional Forum for YOT Accommodation Officers chaired by a YJB representative. He expressed the view that the forum is helpful and supportive and has improved since the YJB took over the chairing of the meeting and gave it a better focus.

8.229 However, the Accommodation Officer did express some frustration with the role of the YJB, particularly in terms of its impact at strategic forums and discussions concerning provision and development of new provision. The frustration stems from his perception that since the YJB does not have specific funding to contribute to the development or provision of accommodation and support, so its impact and influence are limited. In his opinion:

It's a question for partners and stakeholders of what the YJB is bringing to the table...

Accommodation Officer

8.230 This view is not shared by YOT Managers who are comfortable with the strategic influence of the YOT and support from the YJB to enable the YOT to play a strategic role.

Processes and performance

8.231 The YOT does not currently have an accommodation strategy in place but is working to develop one. The Accommodation Officer is currently working on the strategy with the Operations Manager for the service who is taking the lead role on its development.

8.232 The referral process within the YOT is that a Case Manager will initially identify homeless or housing issues using the Asset assessment tool. Young people in housing need are then referred to the YOT Accommodation Officer who will carry out an initial assessment of each young person. The Accommodation Officer will then refer young people to the Housing Support Workers as appropriate. The Accommodation Officer and the two Housing Support Workers work closely together. Cases are managed in terms of accommodation and support by the Accommodation Officer. Referrals are then made to the Local Authority Housing Options Service (HOS) for assessment and accommodation and/or to voluntary sector providers for accommodation and support.

8.233 The two main partner providers working with the YOT spoke very positively of their relationship and joint-working with the service. Both providers work closely with the YOT Accommodation Officer and staff.

We have regular contact with P [the Accommodation Officer] and a good relationship. It is relaxed, informal and friendly.

We have a very strong, positive and effective working relationship with the YOT and with the Accommodation Officer in particular. I have regular contact with P and we keep each other in the loop. I will let him know when we have properties available and he knows we will take the 'more difficult' young people.

Housing Provider

8.234 One provider agency expressed the view that to help YOT Officers fully understand the issues faced by young people managing their own accommodation it would be helpful if officers came out on home visits with tenancy support workers. They felt that this would strengthen understanding of the support needs of young people in a tenancy and the task of the support service.

8.235 As indicated above, the relationship with the Housing Options Service (HOS) Young People's Team, however, is not so positive at an operational level. There appears to be misunderstanding and suspicion within the Young People's Team as to what YOT workers – in particular the two Housing Support Workers and the Accommodation Officer – are trying to achieve with young people. The YOT staff in their turn feel that HOS staff can be obstructive and unhelpful when dealing with young people. They are critical of the attitude and approach of some staff and feel that the team will try to put obstacles in the way of accepting responsibility for housing and supporting young people, for example, by finding many of them intentionally homeless as a result of their behaviours. Referral procedures and joint working between the two services are in need of improvement.

8.236 In terms of performance, the district performs well against the NI46 Performance Indicator. For the period April to December 2009, 504 out of 523 young people (96.4%) were living in satisfactory accommodation at the close of their order or release from custody.

8.237 The remaining 19 (3.6%) young people can be broken down as follows:

Gender

Male	13 (68%)
Female	6 (32%)

Ethnicity

White	8 (42%)
Mixed	3 (16%)
Asian	1 (5%)
Other	7 (37%)

Age (when measured)

15	2 (11%)
16	8 (42%)
17	9 (47%)

8.238 It is the view of the Accommodation Officer, which was reinforced by the voluntary sector providers in particular, that there are a number of barriers to enabling access for young people to the accommodation and support they need. The main barriers are as follows:

Supply

8.239 As noted above, supply of good quality accommodation with support does not meet demand. This appears to be most acute in the north of the district where there is very little provision other than a small Foyer scheme of 10 spaces and some particularly unsatisfactory local authority temporary housing. Supporting People Commissioners and other partners are aware of the issue and as noted are working to develop new provision. However, the planned new supported housing scheme identified above will be located in the south of the district and young people are very reluctant to move from one area to another.

Intentionality

8.240 The Accommodation Officer and Housing Support workers identify the issue of young people being found intentionally homeless by the Housing Options Service as a major problem. It is their view that the service will use 'intentionality' as a means of sidestepping their responsibility to house young people. Where young people are deemed to be intentionally homeless the authority has no duty to them other than to provide advice and assistance. The issue of intentionality appears to centre on the behaviour of young people in terms of their perceived contribution to family breakdown.

ASBOs

8.241 Young people with ASBOs are much less likely than their peers to be offered local authority housing. There is a review panel process in place for young people who are refused housing but it appears that YOT staff are not invited to attend.

Geography

8.242 As noted above young people are reluctant to move between areas or towns in the district. In cases where they are offered temporary accommodation in another area, even if that is only a few miles from their home town, they often refuse to take up the offer and in some cases will choose to live on the street rather than move areas. This is a particular issue for young people in the north of the district.

Outcomes

8.243 As noted above, the issue of outcomes for young people in tenancies means there is reluctance by the Housing Options Service to offer

tenancies to young people. The HOS Young People's Team Manager is of the view that evidence suggests outcomes for young people are better if they return to the family home with mediation or move into supported housing rather than a local authority tenancy. The Accommodation Officer feels that the HOS service does not recognise the difficulty for many young people in returning home – this option will generally be his starting point but is often impossible to achieve – and he therefore feels it essential that the HOS is much more willing to accommodate young people.

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 8.244 The YOT appears to have strong strategic relationships in place with key partners and stakeholders with the exception of the Housing Options Service. The YOT has particularly effective relationships with Supporting People, Connexions service and voluntary sector providers.

Supporting People

- 8.245 The YOT was consulted by Supporting People Commissioners on the development of the current Supporting People strategy and on its replacement – a new Sustainable Communities Strategy still in draft. The YOT has been represented on the Supporting People Core Strategy Group and will be represented on its replacement – a new Executive Commissioning Group accountable to a Partnership Board which will include YOT representation.

Our strategic relationship with the YOT is generally very good. We are aware of the tensions between the YOT and the Housing Options Service and are trying to help resolve them.

Supporting People representative

- 8.246 The Supporting People Team is planning to launch a new forum for all providers of accommodation and support for vulnerable young people which will include Local Authority Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), Housing Options, YOT staff and provider agencies. The forum is intended to improve working relationships and communication.

Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

- 8.247 In the view of the Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Provision for the Local Authority, the strategic relationship with the YOT is very strong. In his view the YOT is:

not an add-on but a central part of the directorate.

Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Provision

- 8.248 The Service Manager of the YOT is a member of the CYPS Senior Management Team and as such is involved in the development of new strategies and services including the response by the Local Authority to

the G. vs. Southwark ruling. The Head of Safeguarding is also Deputy Chair of the local Youth Offending Board.

We have shared concerns and shared clients and links [between services] are well embedded. This very helpful at a strategic level and from a casework perspective

Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Provision

- 8.249 The Local Authority is in the process of developing a new Integrated Youth Support Model and the YOT is fully involved in this process and it is envisaged that it will become part of a more effective and wider set of services as a result.

Housing Options – Local Authority Housing and Homelessness service

- 8.250 It appears to be the case that relationships between the YOT and the Housing Options Service (HOS) are strained at both operational and strategic levels. At the operational level YOT workers feel that HOS staff can be unhelpful in terms of their attitudes and general approach to young people and the HOS Young People's Team Manager perceives YOT workers as over-assertive and reluctant to cooperate in joint initiatives.
- 8.251 One issue here is likely to be the different targets that each service is required to meet and consequent tensions between services in how those targets are delivered at an operational level. For example, the Housing Options Service has a target in terms of numbers of young people returning to the family home. This means that HOS workers will often advise homeless young people to return to the family home and offer mediation to enable them to do so even in circumstances where the YOT Housing Support Workers and Accommodation Officer might not see this as a viable option.
- 8.252 At the strategic level the picture is better but there is still work to do – for example, on the completion of a joint protocol between the two services on effective joint procedures to meet the housing and support needs of young people, which has been started but not finished. There have been attempts to set up a multi-agency resource panel to help meet the needs of young people with particularly complex needs and challenging behaviours but again this has not succeeded, with each service appearing to hold the other responsible.
- 8.253 There are discussions and meetings taking place at senior levels to resolve the tensions between the two services.

Response to G. vs. Southwark

- 8.254 The Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) Directorate is leading on the Local Authority response to the G. vs. Southwark ruling. In the view of the Head of Service, the authority will face difficulties making an effective response to the ruling in terms of potential demand on increasingly limited resources. He is working with the YOT and with the

Housing Options Service to develop a response, which might include additional resources for the HOS Young People's Team which plays a major role in assessing young people under Section 20 of the Children's Act, but feels it is early days and there is a great deal of work still to do. He stated that:

The YOT is heavily involved in helping to map the implications of the G vs. Southwark ruling
Head of Children and Young People's Services

- 8.255 The Team Manager for the HOS Young People's Team is leading on the development of a new protocol to respond to G vs. Southwark with assistance from a local authority funded specialist housing and legal advice service.

On completion the protocol will be rolled out to referrers and partners including the YOT.
Housing Options Young People's Team Manager

Summary and recommendations

- 8.256 While there are some barriers to enabling young people to access the accommodation and support they need, with issues to be resolved at both operational and strategic levels, overall it appears that the response to meeting the accommodation needs among young people is currently working well.
- 8.257 The role of the Accommodation Officer appears central to this. It is difficult to envisage how this level of success could be achieved or sustained without a full-time officer in post. It also appears to be extremely helpful that the role is a dedicated position and that the postholder has previous experience and expertise in housing, supported housing or support services.
- 8.258 Partnership working between the YOT and voluntary sector provider agencies in particular is extremely effective with the placement of the two Housing Support Workers to the YOT, funded by SP and employed by a leading local provider, a particularly strong and effective example. In the view of the Accommodation Officer, the two workers are invaluable. This model is one that could be replicated in other areas.
- 8.259 Meeting the support needs of young people is a crucial issue. It is essential that as well as good quality housing, young people have access to a support service. Young people in particular are likely to have a range of complex needs and accommodation placements will not succeed if support services are not able to respond to them effectively. It is the view of one provider, for example, that there is an increase in young people being referred into the service with significant learning difficulties who find it very difficult to cope in their own accommodation, even with support. The availability of floating support or tenancy sustainment services is vital alongside a good supply of accommodation.

- 8.260 There is some positive work taking place in the district with private landlords as indicated. The engagement of private landlords in partnership working with the YOT and a local voluntary sector provider is proving helpful in meeting the accommodation and support needs of young people and again could be developed in other areas to improve the supply of housing and support options.
- 8.261 A particular issue to be addressed is the relationship and joint working between the YOT and the Housing Options Service referred to throughout this report. The tension and lack of understanding between the two services and staff is unhelpful at both operational and strategic levels. At an operational level it gets in the way of effective case management and joint working to achieve the best outcomes for young people. At a strategic level, while a number of positive initiatives have been started they are incomplete and the development of effective joint working, new protocols and new services is impeded as a result.
- 8.262 In terms of the YJB, as noted above, the Accommodation Officer spoke positively about support for his role from the YJB and particularly the Regional Forum for YOT Accommodation Officers chaired by a YJB representative. However, he did express frustration with the YJB particularly in terms of its impact at strategic forums and discussions concerning provision and development of new provision, stemming from the perception that the YJB does not have specific funding to contribute to the development or provision of accommodation and support.

Table 8.2: Key accommodation and support provision

Housing/ Support Provider	Project	Age range	Units	Access	Length of Stay	Support	High Risk Clients Accepted	Move-on arrangements
Foundations	YOT scheme	16 to 18	10	Referral by the YOT	Up to 2 years	Intensive support	Yes	Planned move- on after 2 years maximum
Foundations	Dispersed Housing	16 to 24	Up to 130	Referral open to range of agencies including YOT and Probation Service	variable	Visiting support	Yes	Variable
Stonham HA	YOT scheme	16 to 18	10 young people	Referral by the YOT	Up to 2 years	Intensive support	Yes	Planned move- on after 2 years maximum
Connect Housing	Direct Access hostel	16 to 24	8 bed hostel with dispersed housing	Self referral or from other agencies including YOT	Up to 2 years	24 hour staff cover	Based on a risk assessment	Planned move- on after 2 years maximum
Connect Housing	1 self-contained flat	16 to 18	1	YOT only	Up to 2 years	To be agreed	Based on a risk assessment	Planned move- on after 2 years maximum
Private Landlord	1 bedsit	16 to 18	1	Integrated Resettlement Support Service	3 months	Intensive	Based on a risk assessment	Planned move- on after 3 months

Section summary and recommendations

- 8.263 Within some case studies there was an over expectation on the Accommodation Officer to lead on the accommodation application process because YOT Case Managers do not necessarily have the level of understanding to manage the process. Where the postholder then goes on secondment, this leaves a gap within the YOT team.
- 8.264 The secondment of the Accommodation Officer post from a voluntary sector housing and support provider appears to work well in one area and could be replicated in other areas. However, a single Accommodation Officer post cannot cope with demand in large urban areas.
- 8.265 The placement of the two Housing Support Workers into one YOT, funded by Supporting People and employed by a leading local provider provides a model that could be replicated in other areas.
- 8.266 There is also a need for YOT and other frontline staff in services for young people to be trained in basic housing knowledge.
- 8.267 In some areas, the lack of security for future of the accommodation support project work was an issue that placed services under threat.
- 8.268 Moves towards single gateway systems are being welcomed locally but it is recognised that these need to be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of high-risk cases including serious and sexual offences. Some also wanted to see greater flexibility in the system to address individual needs.
- 8.269 There is evidence of a gap in partnership working relating to education and training providers who do not appear to be sufficiently tied in to accommodation providers. Similarly, it was felt by some that more could be done in relation to prevention through education and awareness raising early on.
- 8.270 Partnership working between the YOT and local voluntary sector provider agencies is extremely effective as highlighted by the joint working between the YOT and the St. Basil's agency referred to throughout this report.
- 8.271 In terms of how central government supported local service providers there was some concern that the centre was insufficiently joined up. From the YJB there were also calls for greater support from the Accommodation Officer post.
- 8.272 A particular issue in two case studies to be addressed is that of gang affiliation and gang culture. In the London borough, involvement with gangs is an increasing issue for all young people and particularly for young people in housing difficulty. Involvement in gangs is problematic both for young people becoming involved in offending and also in increasing the difficulty of re-housing young people. In this area the two

largest providers are both situated at the boundary of the borough in areas of known significant gang activity.

- 8.273 Removing the stigma of a history of offending and the need for a strategic approach to dealing with gangs were raised as key issues which needed addressing as a priority to alleviate housing difficulty for young people.
- 8.274 The problem and solution of youth gang violence was thought to be directly related to accommodation. The YOT Manager cited John Pitt's research around 'Reluctant Gangsters'⁴⁰ and the fact that most young people would leave gangs if they could but that this was very difficult because of where they lived. Anecdotally this was backed up by YOT workers' experience in this case study area and was thought to be the most significant challenge around housing young people.
- 8.275 This was also highlighted by the Accommodation Officer in the West Midlands case study as a particular barrier to enabling successful placements in supported accommodation and in securing suitable move-on options for young people.
- 8.276 Young people in particular are likely to have a range of complex needs and accommodation placements will not succeed if support services are not able to respond to them effectively. The availability of floating support or tenancy sustainment services is vital alongside a good supply of accommodation.
- 8.277 The engagement of private landlords in partnership working with the YOT and a local voluntary sector provider is proving helpful in meeting the accommodation and support needs of young people and could be developed in other areas to improve the supply of housing options.
- 8.278 It is recommended that the placement of the Housing Support Workers in the YOT, funded by Supporting People and employed by a leading local provider, provides a model that could be replicated in other areas. Similarly, the model of seconding an experienced Housing and Support worker from a voluntary sector provider to the YOT as Accommodation Officer could be replicated elsewhere where the post is hard to fill.
- 8.279 YOTs might seek to develop arrangements with suitable private landlords to help meet the demand for accommodation.
- 8.280 There should be an increased emphasis on the importance of ensuring support services are available to young people rather alongside suitable housing.
- 8.281 The YJB should consider how it can enable YOTs to have a more effective voice within local strategic forums. Access to a funding stream to contribute to or help 'pump-prime' housing and support developments would be helpful in this.

⁴⁰ Pitts, J (2007) *Reluctant gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*. University of Bedfordshire. <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/reluctant-gangsters.pdf>

- 8.282 Nationally, further research is required to explore the relationship between problems of and solutions to youth gang violence and accommodation. Locally, YOTs in areas where gang-related activity is an issue need to be fully involved in initiatives to help tackle gang affiliation to help overcome barriers to accommodation for young people.
- 8.283 A national strategic lead is required to deal with the increasing problem of housing young people fleeing gang-related activity. Links need to be made between local authorities in different parts of the country. A network of cities and metropolitan areas should be established whereby young people fleeing gang violence, and their families, can be housed in other parts of the country, with a reciprocal arrangement in place where necessary. It is not sufficient for adjoining boroughs/areas to forge an alliance as previous experience has shown that this does not work as the young people are still too close to previous networks.
- 8.284 It is recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on prevention work and sharing good practice of this. On the whole the best situation for young service-users is to remain or return to the family home. One good example of practice found here was a respite scheme called 'Time Out'. In this initiative the young person and their family enter into an agreement for the young person to live in supported accommodation for 12 weeks before returning to the family home. The young person receives training and support designed to develop a pathway into successful independent living (life skills, career development, etc.). A mediator works with both the family and the young person on the specific areas of conflict likely to lead to the young person being in housing need. In some cases it is not possible or suitable for the young person to return to the family home and the mediator works on securing sustained contact between the young person and their family for ongoing support. This may, for example, include regular visits or weekend stays.

Section 9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The YJB's priority in relation to accommodation is to ensure that more young people in the youth justice system have access to suitable and supported (where necessary) accommodation in order to improve their transition to adulthood.
- 9.2 As such, YOTs have several responsibilities in relation to housing issues for young people. The first is to appoint a nominated Accommodation Officer whose role encompasses mapping local provision, identifying gaps in services and providing information to planning forums about the needs of young people⁴¹.
- 9.3 Additionally, YOTs are required to ensure that all young people subject to community interventions or on release from the Secure Estate have suitable accommodation to go to and are required to submit information to the YJB on their performance in this respect.
- 9.4 In seeking to gain a greater understanding of how housing supply and availability is likely to influence outcomes for young people and how the efforts of YOT Accommodation Officers to advocate for young people and influence the strategic priorities of others, the YJB commissioned this audit of accommodation provision for young people.

Supply and demand of accommodation for this group

- 9.5 Part of the problem in understanding the scale of any perceived shortfall in suitable accommodation for young people lies in a lack of data availability and inconsistent recording practices. Data on the demand for accommodation among young people is patchy at best and often data relating to young people including the needs of young people is omitted from the regular assessments of local housing needs being undertaken. There are also inconsistencies in reporting and recording practices that need addressing.
- 9.6 In order to try and fill the gap, respondents to the online survey were to provide data on the number of young people who had a housing need at the start and end of *Asset* within the last 12-month period. Of the 57 who responded, 61% were unable to provide the data because they did not have access to the figures, were unable to source them within the time available or because the YOIS or CareWorks system did not allow the data to be easily extracted. Many respondents expressed concern that the NI46 indicator did not give an accurate picture of accommodation needs among young people since it only reports on whether the young person is in suitable accommodation at the end of the disposal which masks any earlier issues with accommodation.
- 9.7 Of the 21 who were able to respond, the percentage range for those with accommodation needs at the start of *Asset* varied from 0–30% with an

⁴¹ Advice note on vulnerable young people, Youth Justice Board, February 2001.

average percentage of 12% and from 0–18.5% at the end of *Asset* with an average percentage of 9%.

- 9.8 This was consistent with the respondents to the telephone interview with the majority of respondents estimating that of the total YOT caseload those with accommodation needs fell somewhere between 4% and 18%.
- 9.9 Although these percentages are seemingly not high, the most common barrier to securing suitable accommodation for young people was cited by 95% of respondents to the online survey as a lack of availability/supply. This was closely followed by the young person being deemed intentionally homeless cited by 91% of respondents.
- 9.10 The most common reason for housing needs among young people cited in the online survey was a breakdown in relationships with family/relatives. Sofa surfing was also common, which again masked the true picture of homelessness among young people.
- 9.11 Although young people were recognised as often being classed as high risk, a lack of specialised accommodation support and provision was common and in some cases the difficulty in placing young people with high support needs was compounded because referral processes failed to prevent accommodation providers from 'cherry picking' the young people they took. This meant that those in need of higher levels of support were often denied access to accommodation and placed in B&B accommodation that increased their vulnerability.

Role of YOT Accommodation Officer

- 9.12 Only a third of respondents to the online survey were full-time Accommodation Officers and the role is clearly not delivered in a universal way with a degree of variability in terms of how the role was fulfilled with some employed directly by the YOT and others on secondment from another agency or part-funded by other agencies.
- 9.13 Some YOTs had a single postholder with sole responsibility for accommodation issues; others had a number of workers covering different geographical locations or functions. For 41% of respondents the role is a bolt-on to other duties often related to bail, resettlement, courts and custody. For some, this clearly presents issues in terms of their ability to dedicate sufficient time to accommodation support and it was generally recognised by those areas without a full-time officer that such a post would be of benefit.
- 9.14 The majority of online survey respondents (60%) saw the role as a mix of operational and strategic duties and not having a strategic lead within the YOT on housing was seen as a barrier to effective practice.
- 9.15 There was a fairly even split among the respondents between those who came into the role with specialist knowledge on accommodation issues and those who came into the role with no prior knowledge which marks a considerable increase in the number of people coming into post with specialist knowledge in housing/accommodation over the last two years

(i.e. since the 2007 YJB-commissioned study which found that the majority of Accommodation Officers had no such background).

- 9.16 Most respondents to the telephone interview recognised that a background in housing and an understanding of the locality were two key success criteria to fulfilling the position. Where those without prior knowledge had succeeded, this was often as a result of working locally previously or building effective links to other agencies.
- 9.17 Of the range of tasks stipulated in the YJB role description, interestingly, those that featured as less common duties were those that related to undertaking a needs and supply analysis and liaising with housing and accommodation providers to explore options for meeting the demand and increasing the supply. This finding is supported by the findings within the REA of limited data availability on accommodation supply within local Strategic Housing Market Assessments, but also in terms of the respondents' difficulty in responding to questions in the survey about levels of need.
- 9.18 As a more general point respondents to the telephone survey called for greater support from the YJB. Many found the role an isolating one and although the value of regional forums was recognised in terms of offer a place to share and exchange practice, many wanted to feel better supported and lead by the YJB on this issue.

Processes and performance

- 9.19 Respondents to the online survey were asked to rate performance overall on accommodation provision and support for young people in their area. Around a half (47%) felt the performance was adequate although 41% felt that performance was less than adequate. Only 10% felt it was more than adequate.
- 9.20 It was recognised as important to have effective protocols in place to manage the referral and placement process in terms of ensuring the wheels turned smoothly and effective work with partners more broadly.
- 9.21 In terms of local processes, 40% of respondents to the online survey felt local referral and placement processes for young people in their area were less than adequate.
- 9.22 A commonly cited barrier in the referral process related to not being able to find accommodation for those in custody until release – the frustration was clear from YOTs and across the Secure Estate.
- 9.23 Another barrier is posed by the local connections policy. While it was recognised that in some cases the policy was useful to ensure that the young person was not accommodated out of area and away from key links and relationships, at times this posed issues.
- 9.24 There were differences noted between those areas that had developed a single gateway process for accessing supported accommodation against those that had not. For those who had or were moving towards the single

gateway model, the perceived benefits included a reduction in paperwork/applications and the reduction in the possibility of 'cherry picking' by providers.

- 9.25 In terms of exploring the relationship between local processes and performance, those engaged in the telephone interviews felt that the national indicator (NI46) was an ineffective measure of their performance mainly because of the subjectivity of the term 'suitable' but also because it did not provide the YOT with a true or detailed picture of accommodation needs among the client group.
- 9.26 YOT performance in England against NI46 targets has increased year on year since 2006/7, which masks research evidence that suggests otherwise. The 2007 YJB study found the almost three quarters of YOTs indicated that the target presented significant challenges and noted shortages of accommodation relative to the level of need.
- 9.27 As such, there remains concern relating to the performance measure which continues to present an overly positive impression of supporting young people' accommodation needs when practitioners report otherwise.
- 9.28 The definition fails to define suitability for particular accommodation types but allows for a professional assessment by the individual practitioner. Moreover, the measure is a snapshot at a particular point in time and does not ask YOTs to specifically identify those in housing need or to relate the information to outcomes.

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 9.29 One of the criteria for success is solid relationships with key partner agencies – effective partnership working. That said, the challenges of bringing together key players to provide an integrated approach are recognised. Areas that felt they were performing well recognised the benefit of effective partnership arrangements and close links to other partners' strategies and planning processes.
- 9.30 One would expect that having an accommodation strategy that reflects other agencies' work on accommodation would enable the YOT to perform effectively on accommodation; however, not all YOTs have a strategy. Although over half of respondents to the online survey did, over a quarter did not. Interestingly, the remaining 17% – around one-in-six – did not know.
- 9.31 Reasons given for not having a strategy in place varied. Some felt that there was no need for a separate plan because it was covered either within the Youth Justice Plan or plans of other services such as Children's Services – this was notably the case in smaller YOTs. For others, a new or refreshed strategy was being written at the time of completing the survey, while others did not consider it a necessity because of sound existing working practices and relationships. For those in a part-time role or where accommodation was an additional

responsibility, finding the time to produce a strategy was difficult. In some YOTs where no postholder was in place, the strategy was on hold.

- 9.32 As one would expect, those who had indicated that their role was strategic were most likely to affirm that their YOT had an accommodation strategy. Among those who did not know how to categorise their role, none indicated that their YOT had an accommodation strategy, which suggests a lack of clarity over the focus of their own role, therefore impacting on their awareness of the strategies in place and performance.
- 9.33 In those areas that had an accommodation strategy, just under half had been updated in the last 12 months and a similar number were considered by the respondent to be fit for purpose. Interestingly, a fifth of respondents felt the accommodation strategy was not fit for purpose.
- 9.34 By and large feedback on partnership working with Local Authority Housing Options, Homelessness Team and Supporting People was positive but there were concerns about the impact of the move away from ring-fenced Supporting People funding. Comments on other services were less positive and the most common difficulty lay in working with Children's Services.
- 9.35 Overall, the level of support given to young people on community disposals is rated better than that given to those leaving the secure estate.
- 9.36 Respondents to the online survey were asked about attendance and representation at key partnerships and strategic bodies. Representation on local strategic housing bodies (55%), Supporting People core strategic group (57%), and local strategic partnership (59%) were all at a similar level. However representation on the Supporting People commissioning body was less common (31%).
- 9.37 Representation on the local strategic bodies was most likely among those who had an accommodation strategy in place (73%). Only a quarter (25%) of those areas which did not have an accommodation strategy in place were represented at the local strategic housing bodies.
- 9.38 Another concern related to the fact that the YOT did not have a commissioning function on accommodation and as such was reliant on probation representation at the key meetings – which was not undertaken consistently.
- 9.39 The impact of the G vs. Southwark case is clearly affecting local partnership working – most notably between Children's Services and Housing, which in some areas has prompted the need for clearer policies and strategies on accommodating offenders.
- 9.40 In terms of improving relations with the two key partners – Housing and Children's Services, the Southwark ruling is clearly impacting both positively and negatively but this differs by each locality. Some areas have responded well and have reviewed and revised protocols in light of the ruling which has clarified responsibility and process. In other areas the ruling appears to be being ignored, or authorities are slow to react. In

some cases there was evidence that heads of Children's Services were even prepared to face judicial review before amending their practice.

- 9.41 Representation within the YOT at the various groups and bodies showed some links to overall performance. There appears to be some correlation between the overall performance of an area based on whether the local housing authority sits on the YOT management board. A greater proportion of those who indicated that the local housing authority sits on the YOT management board yielded adequate or more than adequate overall performance ratings than for those areas where this did not take place or where it was unknown.
- 9.42 There was some appetite for creative and innovative approaches to budget allocation and management. For example, where YOTs feel local community-based accommodation schemes effectively reduce the necessity to send the young person to custody, could the cost saving transfer to the YOT? Similarly, devolving custodial budgets to local authorities could concentrate the minds of people to get appropriate and decent provision across a county or sub-region probably at a reduced cost than the prison budget.

Feedback from service-users

- 9.43 Some service-users disliked living in hostel accommodation as they did not agree with the rules in place and did not understand the reasons for them. For example, they disliked not being able to personalise the room they lived in. Some service-users disliked living in flats due to their size, location and feeling unsafe. Service-users want to live in a place where they have some independence but access to support when they need it. They think of 'home' as a place to relax, have their own space and feel safe and comfortable.
- 9.44 On the whole, service-users did not see sustaining their tenancy as problematic, although a few indicated they would like support, particularly around budgeting and life skills (e.g. cooking and cleaning). None of the service-users describe any problems in accessing the information and advice they wanted. All young people received support from their YOT worker and were positive about them. No single issue was more prevalent in terms of problems in finding accommodation.
- 9.45 The majority of service-users thought that there was a link between accommodation type/circumstances and their offending behaviour. In particular, hostel and, to a lesser extent, B&B accommodation was linked with an increased likelihood of more frequent and more serious offending behaviour. Service-users thought that if the type and location of accommodation they wanted was available to them it would reduce their offending. Several young people wanted to have more of a say in housing and felt that their own specific circumstances were not listened to.

Case studies

- 9.46 In some of the case studies, there was an over expectation on the Accommodation Officer to lead on the accommodation application process because YOT Case Managers do not necessarily have the level of understanding to manage the process. Where the postholder then goes on secondment, this leaves a gap within the YOT team.
- 9.47 The secondment of the Accommodation Officer post from a voluntary sector housing and support provider appears to work well in one area and could be replicated in others. However, a single Accommodation Officer post cannot cope with demand in large urban areas.
- 9.48 The placement of the two Housing Support Workers in one YOT, funded by Supporting People and employed by a leading local provider provides a model that could be replicated in other areas.
- 9.49 There is also a need for YOT and other frontline staff in services for young people to be trained in basic housing knowledge.
- 9.50 In some areas, the lack of security in the future of the accommodation support project work was an issue that placed services under threat.
- 9.51 Moves towards single gateway systems are being welcomed locally but it is recognised that these need to be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of high-risk cases including serious and sexual offences. Some also wanted to see greater flexibility in the system to address individual needs.
- 9.52 There is evidence of a gap in partnership working relating to education and training providers who do not appear to be sufficiently tied in to accommodation providers. Similarly, it was felt by some that more could be done early on in relation to prevention through education and awareness raising.
- 9.53 Partnership working between the YOT and local voluntary sector provider agencies is extremely effective as highlighted by the joint working between the YOT and the St. Basil's agency referred to throughout this report.
- 9.54 In terms of how central government supported local service providers, there was some concern that the centre was insufficiently joined up. From the YJB there were also calls for greater support from the Accommodation Officer post.
- 9.55 A particular issue in two case studies to be addressed is that of gang affiliation and gang culture. In the London borough, involvement with gangs is an increasing issue for all young people and particularly for young people in housing difficulty. Involvement in gangs is problematic both for young people becoming involved in offending and also in increasing the difficulty of re-housing young people. In this area the two largest providers are both situated at the boundary of the borough in areas of known significant gang activity.

- 9.56 Removing the stigma of a history of offending and the need for a strategic approach to dealing with gangs were raised as key issues which needed addressing as a priority to alleviate housing difficulty for young people.
- 9.57 The problem and solution of youth gang violence was thought to be directly related to accommodation. The YOT Manager cited John Pitt's research around 'Reluctant Gangsters'⁴² and the fact that most young people would leave gangs if they could but that this was very difficult because of where they lived. Anecdotally this was backed up by YOT workers' experience in this case study area and was thought to be the most significant challenge around housing young people.
- 9.58 This was also highlighted by the Accommodation Officer in the West Midlands case study as a particular barrier to enabling successful placements in supported accommodation and in securing suitable move-on options for young people.
- 9.59 Young people in particular are likely to have a range of complex needs and accommodation placements will not succeed if support services are not able to respond to them effectively. The availability of floating support or tenancy sustainment services is vital alongside a good supply of accommodation.
- 9.60 The engagement of private landlords in partnership working with the YOT and a local voluntary sector provider is proving helpful in meeting the accommodation and support needs of young people and could be developed in other areas to improve the supply of housing options.

⁴² Pitts, J (2007) *Reluctant gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*. University of Bedfordshire. <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/reluctant-gangsters.pdf>

Section 10. Recommendations

Supply and demand of accommodation for this group

- 10.1 Data on accommodation need is available from a number of local sources and it is recommended that strategically the local Integrated Youth Support Service takes a lead in pooling local data pertinent to young people. The YOT must be a key strategic partner in this process to ensure that the information collated is also relevant for young people, including those consider high-risk due to their previous offending. Useful information will include the YOTs own data but also that held currently by Supporting People Client Records and Outcomes data, local authority homelessness data as well as data taken from local bespoke needs surveys and strategies produced by local housing associations/RSLs. Common reporting standards/definition need to be adopted, agreed and shared across agencies.
- 10.2 It is recommended that YJB work with YOTs nationally to explore current case management IT systems and ensure that they offer sufficient levels of functionality to facilitate data interrogation and analysis – at present it is not clear that YOIS and CareWorks offer this level of functionality.
- 10.3 There is some evidence that areas with a single gateway into accommodation services are better able to regulate accommodation placements and avoid providers cherry picking which young people they take. It is recommended that this is explored further with a view to providing guidance to YOTs and wider services on models of effective practice.
- 10.4 From 2010/2011 the ring fence has been removed from Supporting People funds which are now included in the local Area Based Grant. There is some concern among practitioners that the removal of the ring fence will mean a reduction in the supply of accommodation and support for young people, including offenders. It is recommended that the YJB seek regular feedback from YOTs to monitor whether this is the case.
- 10.5 Interestingly it appears that one consequence of the G vs. Southwark ruling is that the use of B&B has increased – although because the placement into B&B is made by Children's Service this falls outside of the CLG target. It is recommended that the YJB lobby for the use of B&B as unsuitable to be a formal cross-governmental target.
- 10.6 The existing regional accommodation forums should be promoted as a means of providing support, building confidence and enhancing resettlement resilience. Opening the forums up to a wider number of stakeholders or at sub-regional level should be considered. This could take the form of an online forum which meet periodically (quarterly or six-monthly) to discuss common issues and good practice solutions. This could build on early learning from the YJB pilots running in the North West, South West and London.

Role of the YOT Accommodation Officer

- 10.7 While it is recognised that for smaller YOTs a full-time Accommodation Officer may be a luxury, it is recommended that the YJB highlight that effective practice in terms of fulfilling the role is to have at least a full-time post, preferably filled by someone with prior knowledge of housing and accommodation services and the local area/partnerships involved. Secondments from housing and homelessness teams and Supporting People as was should be considered.
- 10.8 Because operational duties tend to often override the strategic – it is essential that a nominated member of the YOT management team leads strategically on accommodation to ensure the Accommodation Officer is supported and effectively linked into local partnership working on accommodation.
- 10.9 The list of possible duties stipulated by the YJB, although comprehensive, is unobtainable. It is recommended that the YJB consider giving priority to those they see as core duties of the post. It is essential that priority is given to undertaking a needs and supply analysis if issues relating to poor data availability and use are to be improved.
- 10.10 Training should be provided for YOT Accommodation Officers, both in a general sense around core duties and also at a specific, local level. Training should be accredited in some way and could be part of the Certificate in Effective Practice for YOT workers. The training pack could be developed through work with young service-users. Accommodation will form part of the new YJB-led Youth Justice Interactive Learning Space which should help.
- 10.11 YJB should continue to support the development of regional learning networks for YOT Accommodation Officers to share good practice solutions. This should be tied in with better marketing and increased use of the YJB accommodation web forum already in existence where YOT Accommodation Officers can share practice and discuss current issues as part of a 'virtual national network'.

Processes and performance

- 10.12 It is recommended that the NI46 indicator is reviewed and replaced with a more meaningful indicator. At the least, awareness of the definition of suitability specified in the Children Leaving Care Regulations needs to be promoted and policed effectively. Measures need to be taken throughout the order to improve performance against this. Alternatives would be to amend the measure to record the number of times a young person moves on to other accommodation during an order.
- 10.13 Although evaluations of single gateway models have been undertaken, it is recommended that the YJB considers evaluating the impact on such a model on meeting the high support needs of young people.

Systemic relationships and accountabilities

- 10.14 It is recommended that where the housing authority is not represented at YOT board level – this is addressed locally.
- 10.15 Revised protocols and a genuine desire to work together were essential factors in the response to G vs. Southwark. It is recommended that the YJB offers some clear advice and support to YOT Accommodation Officers on the implications of the Southwark ruling for YOTs to enable them to facilitate revised working practices locally.
- 10.16 The tensions that exist in terms of the resettlement from the Secure Estate have already been noted and warrant further investigation, particularly given that the relationship between YOT Accommodation Officers and the Secure Estate received the highest proportion of good or very good responses across a range of partners worked with, although this view was not consistently shared by those working in the secure estate.
- 10.17 The value of having a separate YOT accommodation strategy is unclear; those areas that do have a strategy in place appear to be better linked in to other strategic housing partnerships, but at present (because of time and resource pressures) not all YOTs have an up-to-date strategy in place that is fit for purpose. It should also be recognised that the presence of a YOT accommodation strategy could be a symptom of effective partnership working as much as a cause. Linked to earlier points, it is essential that a member of the YOT management team leads strategically on accommodation to provide drive, commitment and support to the Accommodation Officer. It is recommended that it is of greater value to ensure that YOT targets on accommodation are reflected and locked into local strategies (including housing, homelessness and accommodation support) than it is to ensure that a separate YOT accommodation strategy is produced.
- 10.18 The YJB needs to consider using the conditions of the grant as a lever to improve accommodation provision. The research identified several areas that do not have a named Accommodation Officer and do not have anyone undertaking the operational or strategic functions outlined for accommodation despite this being a requirement of the grant. This needs to be enforced to raise the profile of the importance of this function.

Systematic relationships need to be reviewed in light of policy changes, in particular to consider the impact of the future devolution of custody budgets to local areas and the potential for commissioning of accommodation and the realignment of YOT with regards to Children's Trusts.

Feedback from service-users

- 10.19 YJB should oversee the production of guidelines for providers on involving service-users in ownership of provision and the rules, requirements and design of accommodation. This could lead to the

development of a kite mark of what is good accommodation, developed by young service-users.

- 10.20 An intergenerational model of support (volunteering and mentoring) could be developed to support young service-users in securing and sustaining suitable accommodation. This could draw on existing networks – such as the 1,000 voluntary groups in the Beth Johnson Foundation or the 1,200 groups in Community Works – who are looking for voluntary opportunities working with young people and could provide support around common life skills such as budgeting and managing a home.

Case studies

- 10.21 It is recommended that the placement of the Housing Support Workers in the YOT, funded by Supporting People and employed by a leading local provider provides a model that could be replicated in other areas. Similarly the model of seconding an experienced Housing and Support Worker from a voluntary sector provider to the YOT as Accommodation Officer could be replicated elsewhere where the post is hard to fill.
- 10.22 YOTs might seek to develop arrangements with suitable private landlords to help meet the demand for accommodation. To facilitate this, in some areas, the cost of deposits is met by the local authority housing function and the success of this model could be investigated further.
- 10.23 There should be an increased emphasis on the importance of ensuring support services are available to young people alongside suitable housing.
- 10.24 The YJB should consider how it can enable YOTs to have a more effective voice within local strategic forums. Access to a funding stream to contribute to or help ‘pump-prime’ housing and support developments would be helpful in this.
- 10.25 Nationally, further research is required to explore the relationship between problems of and solutions to youth gang violence and accommodation. Locally, YOTs in areas where gang-related activity is an issue need to be fully involved in initiatives to help tackle gang affiliation to help overcome barriers to accommodation for young people.
- 10.26 A national strategic lead is required to deal with the increasing problem of housing young people fleeing gang related activity. Links need to be made between local authorities in different parts of the country. A network of cities and metropolitan areas should be established whereby young people fleeing gang violence, and their families, can be housed in other parts of the country, with a reciprocal arrangement in place where necessary. It is not sufficient for adjoining boroughs/areas to forge an alliance as previous experience has shown that this does not work as the young people are still too close to previous networks.
- 10.27 It is recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on prevention work and sharing good practice of this. On the whole the best situation for young service-users is to remain or return to the family home. One

good example of practice found here was a respite scheme called 'Time Out'. In this initiative the young person and their family enter into an agreement for the young person to live in supported accommodation for 12 weeks before returning to the family home. The young person receives training and support designed to develop a pathway into successful independent living (life skills, career development, etc.). A mediator works with both the family and the young person on the specific areas of conflict likely to lead to the young person being in housing need. In some cases it is not possible or suitable for the young person to return to the family home and the mediator works on securing sustained contact between the young person and their family for ongoing support. This may, for example, include regular visits or weekend stays.

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Glossary

ABG	Area Based Grant
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CSIP	Care Services Improvement Partnership
CYPS	Children and Young People's Services
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
FQ	Financial Quarter
FW	Final Warning
ISSP	Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LPSA	Local Public Service Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NI	National Indication
PASW	Predictive Analytics SoftWare
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RCP	Rethinking Crime and Punishment
REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment
ROTL	Release on Temporary Licence
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SCH	Secure Children's Home
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SP	Supporting People
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STC	Secure Training Centre
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YOI	Young Offenders Institution
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YOT	youth offending team

