



Preventing Youth Homelessness in Hertfordshire

Youth homelessness is not inevitable. In Hertfordshire, it's preventable.



“hyh have been a long term partner of Hertfordshire County Council. The support and advice they provide young people is of the **highest quality and has significant impact on the lives of those struggling with housing crisis.**

Their workers are **considerate of the needs of young people and the trauma they experience during housing crisis, but they also provide **clear guidance** to support the best outcome for young people.**

Their mediation services help support families and prevent children from coming into care. They are a **trusted and reliable support for those who do become homeless, helping them to resolve their situation.”**

Tom Snell, Housing Brokerage Service Manager Children's Services Directorate,
Hertfordshire County Council

A Youth-Informed Approach

This strategy has been informed by the voices and opinions of young people in our Hertfordshire community. We recognise the strength, knowledge, and expertise that young people bring to our decision making, providing diversity of perspective, and ensuring our future developments are inclusive, youth-relevant and co-produced.

We surveyed 242 young people aged 10–16 across the county, including those with lived experience of homelessness and considered what they felt was important in the prevention of youth homelessness and how they felt hyh could meet their needs. Our Youth Advisory Board (YAB) took part in strategy development sessions, shaping our priorities and informing how we communicate with young people. Their collective opinions and ideas have been fundamental in determining the focus of this strategy.



“We are the ones living what it’s like, so we know how we would want to help and how to help others our age.”

Young person, Youth Survey 2025



Why We Are Needed



Youth homelessness is increasing across the UK. Last year, 2,376 young people approached their local authority in Hertfordshire for support.

The true scale is significantly higher, with many young people unrecorded — sofa surfing, staying in unsafe environments or moving between temporary arrangements.

Research shows that **54% of adults** who sleep rough first became homeless before they were 25. Early intervention is therefore critical in breaking the cycle.

Where safe and possible, a young person's family home is the best environment for them to thrive. The alternative — homelessness or entry into the care system — is associated with poor long-term outcomes, including a significantly increased risk of mental ill-health, unemployment and ongoing housing instability.

Family breakdown remains the leading cause of youth homelessness. At hyh:

- 80% of 16–24 year olds approaching us do so due to conflict or breakdown at home
- 33% have experienced domestic abuse or substance misuse
- 80% have been exposed to mental health issues
- many face intergenerational trauma, poverty and unstable family dynamics

These pressures often escalate without timely external support, resulting in crisis and homelessness. hyh's services are specifically designed to intervene early, stabilise families and prevent homelessness before it begins.

Our Vision: every young person has a safe home from which they can grow and thrive.



The Reality for Young People in Hertfordshire

**Significant
pockets of
deprivation in
an otherwise
affluent county**

**Complex
family
dynamics**

**Exploitation by
criminal gangs
and others**

**Substance
misuse**

**Cost-of-living
pressures
and poverty**

**Lack of
awareness of
support and
feelings of shame
or isolation**

**Shortage of
affordable
housing**

**Trauma
and adverse
childhood
experiences**

**Domestic
abuse**

**Mental health
challenges**

What We Do to Prevent Homelessness



- **Education:** we educate young people in every Hertfordshire secondary school on independent living, relationships, anger, conflict resolution and where to seek help.
- **Family Support:** we prevent family breakdown through mediation, counselling and wellbeing services.
- **Young Adult Support:** we work with young adults at risk of homelessness through tailored advice and practical assistance.
- **Accommodation:** we provide safe, supportive accommodation through our Future Roots project.

Prevention works: we stop youth homelessness before it takes over.



Our Values

Big-hearted: we are driven by the belief that every young person deserves safety, stability and opportunity.

Expert: we apply evidence of what works, innovate for impact, and share learning to influence broader change.

Open: we are inclusive and collaborative, working with young people, families and partners to design solutions together. Our trauma-informed, person-centred services are free, confidential and non-judgemental.



Our Journey So Far

Thanks to the support of partners and funders, hyh enters this strategy period strong and ready for the challenges ahead, including shifts in local government and a demanding funding landscape.

Over the past three years we have:

Supported around 45,000 young people through education, advice and direct services



Became more youth-led through initiatives such as our Youth Advisory Board



Introduced new services, including Future Roots, counselling and wellbeing support



Invested in digital tools, expanded fundraising, and delivered consistently high-quality services

Across all services, **over 80% of young people achieved a positive outcome**, including improved wellbeing, sustained family relationships, access to education or employment, increased confidence or successful move-on to safe housing.

Our new strategy builds on these strengths and responds to a rapidly changing environment. It remains true to who we are: a Hertfordshire charity with a prevention-first mission, rooted in strong relationships and delivering meaningful impact.





“If it wasn’t for hyh I wouldn’t be in a youth hostel right now and I’m so grateful for that.”

Service user

“Didn’t feel judged at all - felt listened to, valued and understood.”

Parent, after Mediation





Our Home2030 Mission

Prevent youth homelessness in Hertfordshire through education, advice and support for young people and their families.

Prevention is central to everything we do: reducing crisis, improving wellbeing and helping young people stay safely at home whenever possible.

Effective prevention also delivers significant financial benefit, reducing the long-term costs associated with supported accommodation, care placements, emergency housing and health interventions.

By 2030 our goal is to:

Directly prevent homelessness for 2,500 young people

Reduce the risk of homelessness for a further 60,000 young people

Every young person's story is unique — and with your support, thousands more will have the chance to build safe, successful futures.

Our Focus: Who, What and Where

We heard consistently that our strategy should be evolution, not revolution: strengthening what works and scaling our most effective services.

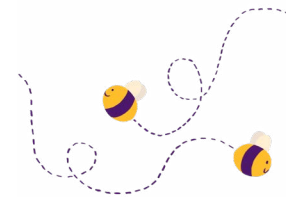
We will continue to focus on:

- Young people aged 10–25
- Our four core service areas: Education, Mediation & Wellbeing, Outreach and Future Roots
- Hertfordshire, the community we know best and serve most effectively



How We'll Get There

Our Four Key Programmes



Prevent More Under-18s from Becoming Homeless

We will:

- Increase education programmes in every secondary school and expand into primary schools
- Launch Upstream, a new early-identification service in schools
- Expand Keeping Families Together (mediation, counselling and wellbeing) to address the leading cause of youth homelessness



Prevent More 18–25s from Becoming Homeless

We will:

- Open a second Future Roots house
- Expand our Advice Line and digital channels, including an AI-supported Live Chat
- Grow our Outreach team to reach more young adults with personalised, practical support





De-stigmatise Youth Homelessness

Shame and fear stop many young people asking for help.

We will:

- Launch a youth-led destigmatisation campaign
- Work across the county to increase awareness and encourage young people to get help before crisis



Build Stronger Partnerships Across Hertfordshire

We will:

- Work closely with councils as they move toward unitary authority structures
- Play a leading role in the Herts Homeless Alliance
- Strengthen relationships across health, education, criminal justice and the voluntary sector

Together, these partnerships will ensure young people receive the right support at the right time.





“My worker was always there when needed, I felt supported and advocated for throughout. I was given updates and reassurance.”

— Service User

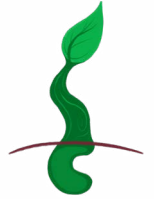
“Young people’s feedback ensures services stay relevant, accessible and genuinely helpful.”

— Young person, Youth Survey 2025



Strengthening Our Foundations

To achieve our goals, we are investing in the foundations that underpin hyh's success:



Youth engagement:

Young people will continue shaping services, campaigns and decisions.

Income generation:

We will grow fundraising, secure multi-year grants and develop corporate and community partnerships.

Service quality:

We will maintain high standards through outcomes measurement, audits and continuous improvement.

Our people:

We will deliver a new People Strategy, investing in development, wellbeing, recruitment and volunteering.

Digital innovation:

We will use technology to increase reach and efficiency while preserving the relationships that define our work.

Equity, diversity and inclusion:

We will ensure our team reflects the communities we serve and that every young person feels welcome and understood.

Safeguarding: We will maintain the highest standards in keeping young people safe.



What This Means for Young People

By 2030, our goal is to support over 67,000 young people. With your support, we will:

- Help more young people stay safely at home
- Provide crisis advice when there is nowhere else to turn
- Equip young people with the knowledge and confidence to avoid homelessness
- Support 18–25s through key transitions to independence
- Build a stronger, more collaborative Hertfordshire community around them

Every one of these outcomes is life-changing.

Looking Ahead



By 2030, we envision a Hertfordshire where:

- More young people feel safe and supported at home
- Families receive help early
- Young adults have pathways to independence
- Stigma is no longer a barrier to seeking help
- Prevention is embedded in policy and local services



Ways to Get Involved

This is the future we are building — together. Thank you for standing alongside young people and supporting our mission.



Raise awareness or campaign:

Help amplify young people's stories and influence change.

Contact us at marketing@hyh.org.uk



Donate:

Your support enables us to prevent homelessness and change young lives.

Visit hyh.org.uk/donate



Volunteer:

Share your skills and time to make a meaningful impact.

Learn more at hyh.org.uk/volunteer



Stay connected:

Follow our progress at hyh.org.uk or on social media.



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[Herts Young Homeless](https://www.linkedin.com/company/herts-young-homeless)

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*Illustrations developed from ideas
created by hyh's Youth Advisory Board*

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Herts Young Homeless

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