

Housing schemes and poverty alleviation

Initial findings

- The current harsh financial climate poses several challenges for poor young people when it comes to housing – with increased financial pressure on poor households, reductions in welfare and social housing supply, cuts to local services and constrained access to private housing due to high prices.
- Social housing organisations routinely address poverty-related issues such as financial exclusion, debt or unemployment through activities designed to increase independence and employment prospects.
- Many projects run by housing providers have the potential to prevent or alleviate poverty amongst young people by improving personal skills, employability, confidence and the ability to maintain independent living.
- Projects which help young people are not always aimed specifically at them as a target group; for instance, schemes aiming to help vulnerable single parents may in practice cater almost exclusively for young people.
- Poverty among young single households is clearly associated with employment. Even among those in work, being poor is associated with working in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Overview

Young people in poverty have a variety of personal circumstances, such as being homeless, out of work and not in education, or in low-paid work but unable to access decent housing. Housing providers can play an important role in tackling poverty for this age group (16 to 25 year olds) through their service provision – not only through temporary or long-term housing, but also by providing advice, assistance with training and education, and schemes to support access to the private rented sector.

A research project exploring how housing providers can alleviate poverty amongst young people in the UK is studying support schemes that have the potential to reduce housing and living costs. This includes schemes aimed at reducing fuel bills, increasing incomes by improving employability, locating housing near to jobs, increasing the capacity for unsupported and supported independent living, and tackling the wider factors that cause or are caused by poverty.

The aim of the project is to identify measures that work in tackling poverty amongst young people. The research could lead to an increase in good practice that improves the quality, scale and effectiveness of housing and related services provided to young people in poverty.

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Initial findings - continued

- In England, poor young single person households are most likely to be tenants in social housing (71 per cent), as compared to 26 per cent of all young single person households (figures from the English Housing Survey 2012/13).
- Becoming a social housing tenant is likely to have positive impact on young households' gross income, housing quality and financial prospects – although whether these improvements last in the long term has not been proven.
- Future funding of the housing schemes included in the study is often precarious and dependent on negotiating deals with partner organisations and funders.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The role of housing and housing providers in tackling poverty experienced by young people in the UK is a research project funded by the ESRC and the Public Policy Institute for Wales, as part of the What Works in Tackling Poverty research programme. The two-year project, which started in 2014 and will finish at the end of this year, is led by Professor Michael Oxley and Anna Clarke at the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research.

Web: www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/Projects/Start-Year/2014/role-housing-housing-providers-tackling-poverty-experienced-young-people-UK/Project-Website

FURTHER INFORMATION

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