

Spring | Housing
Association



The Benefits of Youth?

Young People, Supported Housing,
Affordability, and Employment:

Learning from the WMCA Rent
Simplification Proof of Concept

Executive Summary

About Us

Spring Housing

Spring Housing Association is a charitable organisation dedicated to supporting individuals and families across the West Midlands who are in need of accommodation and tenancy related support. We work in partnership with the private rented sector and housing associations to deliver both general needs and specialist housing solutions for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We are committed to driving change, influencing policy, and reducing homelessness by tackling systemic barriers and advocating for long-term solutions. Through datadriven insights, impactful research, and best practice sharing, we strive to challenge inequalities, reduce stigma, and influence housing strategies at local, regional, and national levels.

Commonweal Housing

Commonweal Housing is an action learning charity focused on piloting and researching housing solutions to social injustices. We work alongside our partners (typically service providers) to pilot housing schemes, improve them, and work with independent evaluators to glean as much learning as possible.

Our current areas of focus are at-risk youth, criminal justice, and migration, asylum and trafficking, and we also have a modest research programme with a wider remit. Commonweal would like to thank Thea Raisbeck, Spring Housing, and every participant in the scheme for the insights produced by this evaluation.

About the Author

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Thea is also a research associate at the Centre for the New Midlands.

Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks must go to the young people who gave up their time to attend focus groups and interviews, and who generously shared their experiences, alongside their ideas for change. Thank you also to all of the stakeholders who attended interviews and meetings and have continually shown their passion and dedication to finding solutions to this longstanding policy issue.

Thank you to Commonweal Housing for funding and supporting this important work, and for providing helpful comments on earlier drafts. Finally, thank you to representatives from the West Midlands Combined Authority Homelessness Task Force for their support and comments.

February 2026

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Introduction

This small-scale independent research review tracked the progress of participants taking part in a twelve-month scheme devised by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The scheme was proposed by the WMCA as part of the trailblazer deeper devolution deal. ¹ It ran from March 2024 – March 2025 and attracted £4.57m in funding from the Labour Markets Evaluation and Pilots Fund. ²

- The scheme aimed to “test financial support and simplification of the benefits system for young people living in commissioned supported housing who transition into work” ³ and was open to all eligible young people within the West Midlands Combined Authority. ⁴
- The primary method for the review was qualitative interviews with stakeholders involved in the scheme and qualitative interviews with 11 young people who took part in the scheme. 5 of these young people were interviewed towards the beginning of, and shortly after, their time on the scheme. Detailed data and testimony from qualitative interviews can be viewed within The Benefits of Youth: Full Report.
- Whilst the scheme was open to eligible supported housing residents across the WMCA, the majority of the 42 participants lived in Birmingham.

The Rent Simplification Proof of Concept (PoC) Scheme Explained

Once a young person living in commissioned supported housing began earning enough to take them off Universal Credit, at which point their Housing Benefit entitlement is ‘tapered’ in line with their earnings, they were only liable for 13% of their total rent and eligible service charges. ⁵

The remaining 87% of rent was ‘topped up’ by the PoC fund and paid by local authorities direct to the supported housing provider. Participants were able to take advantage of the scheme for a total of six months, although this did not have to be in one continuous period.

The main aims of the scheme were to:

- support young people living in commissioned supported housing to move into work or increase their hours of employment.
- test whether removing barriers and simplifying systems incentivises young people to move into work or increase their employment hours to come off benefits.

Participation in the PoC scheme was voluntary. Young people could choose to stay within the Housing Benefit system when they entered, or increased their hours of, employment.

¹ The Deeper Devolution Deal was announced by Government in March 2023’s Spring Budget. This secured ‘new and significant longer-term funding agreements’ see: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/trailblazing-devolution-for-the-west-midlands/>

² This funding was launched on June 6th 2023. The fund provided £37.5 million to ‘expand the evidence base on what works to improve labour market outcomes in the economy’. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-labour-markets-evaluation-and-pilots-fund#:~:text=The%20Labour%20Markets%20Evaluation%20and%20Pilots%20Fund%20was%20launched%20on,market%20outcomes%20in%20the%20economy.>

³ DWP Guidance (2024), unpublished.

⁴ Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton. During the lifetime of the scheme, Wolverhampton did not have any eligible accommodation schemes. .

⁵ Existing Housing Benefit rules were used to calculate rent and eligible service charges. The 13% figure was arrived at after extensive modeling, as a figure that would leave no one ‘worse off’ if they joined the scheme.

Overview of the Review and Methodology

This Review has not been commissioned by, or designed in close collaboration with, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and thus did not seek to evaluate the PoC under its stated aims and assumptions. Instead, the Review has been designed in consultation with a set of key stakeholders with support from its funder, Commonweal, and from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA): a key strategic partner of the PoC scheme.

The Review was designed with the primary intention of combining evidence and understanding. It aimed to gather rich detail, experiences, and insights into the PoC from the perspective of its beneficiaries – the young people who joined the scheme. It sought to document the changes, benefits, learning, and challenges created by the scheme, as perceived by those living within, and benefitting from, it. It also aimed to document and synthesise insights and learning from accommodation and support organisations.

Primary methods included:

- Literature and Policy Reviews
- In-depth semi structured interviews with 11 young people who joined the PoC scheme
- Follow up, semi structured interviews with 5 young people after their time on the PoC scheme had ended
- In-depth semi-structured interviews with 22 practitioners and organisational leads towards the closure of the scheme
- Interviews with Housing Benefit and Jobcentre Plus personnel
- Regular attendance at a weekly meeting with one commissioned housing provider around the PoC, for the duration of the PoC
- Case studies, created in collaboration with practitioners
- Financial and personal wellbeing assessments with 11 young people who joined the PoC scheme
- Follow up financial and personal wellbeing assessments with 5 young people who joined the PoC scheme



Key Contexts: Supported Housing and Employment

Please note the details in this section were correct at the time of the PoC scheme (March 2024-March 2025) and at the time of writing (June – September 2025)

- The ‘employment trap’ or ‘benefits trap’ faced by residents of supported housing is a perennial, longstanding issue. The crux of this issue is that when an individual earns enough to come completely off Universal Credit, they will no longer be automatically entitled (or ‘passport’) to receive 100% of their rent and eligible service charges ⁶ through Housing Benefit. Instead, they will be subject to income-related means-testing under current Housing Benefit rules and will have to contribute towards the cost of their rent.
- This has caused barriers for supported housing residents, including:
 - Fears around navigating a complex ‘in-work’ benefits system.
 - Worries that being liable for part, or all, of high supported housing rents could lead to rent arrears, debt, or eviction.
 - A longstanding culture within some supported housing environments of discouraging residents from moving into employment due to concerns around affordability and the perceived high potential for the accrual of rent arrears.
- Affordability or viability issues for those working, or considering employment within supported housing are, arguably, further compounded by rising supported housing rents (MHCLG and DWP, 2023).
- A key reason for this steady rise in supported housing rents is seen to be the reduction in external funding for support. ⁷ Funding for support was cut by 75% between 2010 and 2020, and recent estimations suggest there is currently a funding deficit of £1.6 billion per year (National Audit Office, 2023; National Housing Federation, 2024).
- Funding for support costs cannot be recovered through Housing Benefit. However, the reduction in support funding has led some providers to recoup some of this funding deficit through ‘intensive housing management’ ⁸ (IHM) costs, which can be recovered through Housing Benefit ⁹ (MHCLG and DWP, 2023, Hector, 2023). This results in a situation where, arguably in some cases, residents in employment are paying the price for the funding crisis within supported housing.

⁶ These are service charges that, under Housing Benefit Regulations, would be covered as part of a claimant’s entitlement.

⁷ Such as through commissioned contracts via local authority funding following the removal of the ringfence for Supporting People funding in 2009

⁸ This term does not appear in Housing Benefit regulations, although government guidance does acknowledge the terminology

⁹ Support costs cannot be covered through Housing Benefit and must be funded externally, or provided by a third party on behalf of the landlord

Affordability and 'being better off'

Example A, below, is shown in full to clarify how the PoC scheme works and how the examples have been calculated. Please see the full report for extensive calculations on a range of scenarios, including a discussion of concepts of 'affordability' in housing contexts.

Example A: Existing Housing Benefit rules: National Minimum wage, ¹⁰ 'fully supported' accommodation for a 19-year-old. (Housing Benefit rules and tapers accurate at time of writing. 'Feels like' figures derived by dividing weekly money after housing costs by number of hours worked) accommodation for a 19 year old.

Existing Housing Benefit Rules

	19-Year-old on National Minimum wage	Universal Credit
Weekly take home pay	£309.18 (39x £8.60 NMW ¹¹) (£17,440.80 gross per annum / £335.40 per week equivalent ¹²)	£71.92 ¹³
Weekly eligible rent (+£12 HB ineligible service charge)	£428.76	£428.76
Weekly Housing Benefit entitlement	£265.65	£416.76
Weekly rent liability (+ £12 ineligible service charge)	£163.11	£12
Weekly money after housing costs	£146.07	£59.92

**£86.15 per week 'better off' in full-time employment than on Universal Credit.
Can 'feel like' working for £3.75 per hour or 'losing' around 22 hours
of work per week.**

¹⁰ Note that the National Minimum Wage increased to £10 per hour in April 2025, after the PoC scheme had closed.

¹¹ Note that the National Minimum Wage increased to £10 per hour in April 2025, after the PoC scheme had closed.

¹² Tax and NI based on 2023-2024 tax year.

¹³ 2024 – 2025 benefit rates, in line with the timeframe over which the PoC scheme was in operation. Section X analyses young people's experiences of re-entering the Housing Benefit tapering system for the 2025-2026 tax year.

PoC Scheme:

	19-Year-old on on PoC scheme	Universal Credit
Weekly take home pay	£309.18 (39x £8.60 NMW) (£17,440.80 gross per annum / £335.40 per week equivalent)	£71.92
Weekly eligible rent (+£12 HB ineligible service charge)	£428.76	£428.76
Weekly payment under PoC entitlement (13% of £416.76 + £12 ineligible service charge)	£66.19	£12
Weekly money after housing costs	£242.99	£59.92

**£183.07 per week 'better off' on PoC than on Universal Credit.
£96.92 per week 'better off' on PoC than under Housing Benefit rules
'Feels like' working for £6.23 per hour**



Key Policy Contexts: Young People

Please see the full report for a more detailed explanation and examples of the following issues:

- Unlike those living in ‘general needs’ housing (social and private rented), who have their housing costs calculated under the Universal Credit rules, those residing in supported housing have their housing costs calculated under the less generous Housing Benefit rules.¹⁴ This puts supported housing residents at a distinct disadvantage when they enter employment.
- Young people are viewed as being at further disadvantage within these systems. Firstly, single individuals under 25 with no disabilities, children, or caring responsibilities are subject to a lower ‘standard allowance’ under the Universal Credit system than those over 25 in the same category. In line with this, the corresponding ‘applicable amount’¹⁵ within Housing Benefit, or the level of earnings before entitlement is ‘tapered’, is also set at a lower rate for under 25s. This, in basic terms, means their benefit entitlement begins to be affected at a lower earnings figure than those over 25.

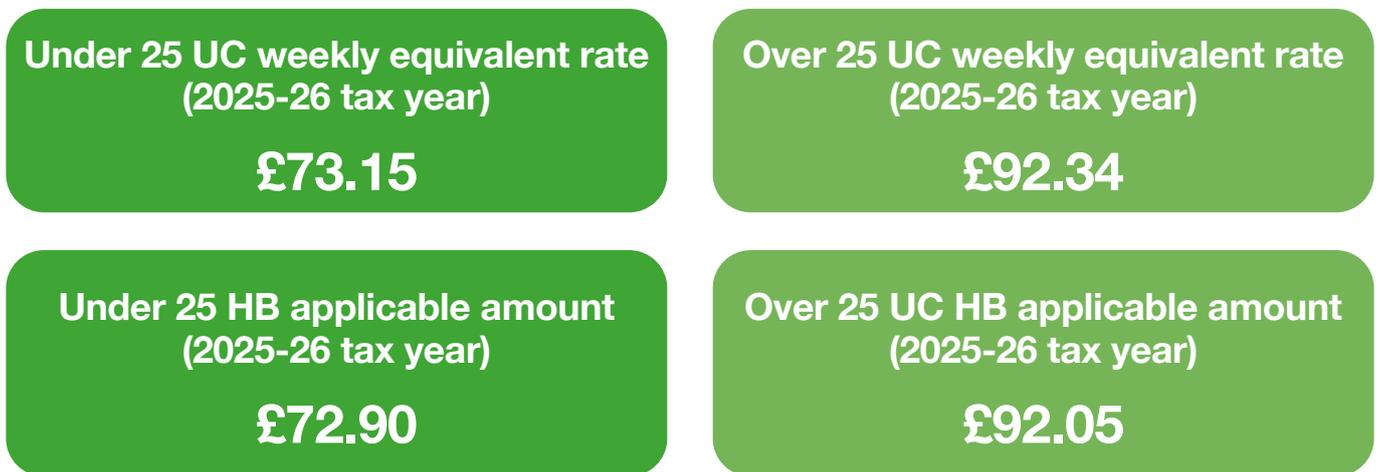


Figure 1: Universal Credit weekly rates and ‘applicable amounts’ within Housing Benefit. Comparison between under 25s and over 25s

- The complex interactions between earnings, Universal Credit, and Housing Benefit, is a key contributor to the frequent – and often justified – perception that increasing employment hours beyond a minimal level is unviable, or not financially worthwhile.
- Youth unemployment is continually rising, and unemployment when young can have multiple ‘scarring effects’ in later life, (McQuaid, 2017). Unemployment when young leads to a ‘higher likelihood’ of lasting longer-term economic effects such as decreased future earnings or persistently lower wages (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011).
- The Get Britain Working white paper (DWP, et. al., 2024) and Pathways to Work green paper (DWP, 2025) have cited young people not in work or learning (NEET) as a key target for reforms.
- There are well-established, strong and positive correlations between employment, mental health, and personal wellbeing. This relationship is bi-directional and cyclical, with poor mental health increasingly cited as a barrier to, particularly, young people entering the workplace (Casey and Elliot, 2025). This can particularly be the case for those young

¹⁴ Supported housing currently remains under Housing Benefit for distinct reasons. This includes the flexibility to provide payments for short term stays, the option for rental costs to be paid directly to the landlord, and the ability for local authorities to (in theory) scrutinise and provide oversight of claims by housing providers operating within their locality – something Universal Credit cannot facilitate (See Raisbeck, 2019, Webber, et. al., 2023).

¹⁵ This figure is set by the Department for Work and Pensions and is designed to reflect the cost of the claimant’s basic living needs.

people experiencing homelessness, who may have increased burdens caused by struggling to afford to live, and the absence of peer or parental support (Webber, et. Al., 2023; Centrepoin, 2024).

All of these factors increase the imperative to seek long-term solutions to disincentives to entering employment within supported housing.

On 26th November 2025 as part of the Autumn Budget, the government announced that they would be “reducing the financial cliff edge for claimants in supported housing and temporary accommodation from Autumn 2026 – To improve work incentives, the government is adjusting how earnings are treated for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants in supported housing and temporary accommodation, so that most claimants will not be subject to reductions in income for working more hours”.

This development means that claimants will be able to keep more of their earnings before being subject to the Housing Benefit tapering system (known as ‘earnings disregards’).

Although public detail was still limited at the time of this report going to print in January 2026, this is something the Youth Chapter Collective – a coalition of over 150 youth homelessness charities - had for some time been calling for through the ‘Make Work Pay’ campaign.

The work of the PoC scheme also highlighted the issues of affordability in supported housing and allowed the DWP to elevate the importance of this issue and push for change.



Interview Participants: Characteristics and Outcomes

Of the **42 young people**
across the WMCA who joined the PoC scheme,
11 were interviewed for this review.



Participants' **ages ranged from 19 – 24,**
and **3 participants had originally**
entered the UK as a refugee.

All participants were in the 'All work-related activity group'
for Universal Credit purposes. ¹⁶

¹⁶ Sometimes known as 'conditionality groups'.



At the closure of the PoC Scheme:

8 young people had sustained their employment



3 of these young people were made permanent employees following a probationary period.



1 young person received a promotion and a pay rise.

1 young person had moved to private rented sector accommodation



2 young people had moved in with friends to continue working

8 young people remained in their original supported accommodation

Within 8 weeks of the PoC scheme closing, of those who had gone to live with friends:

1 young person had secured council housing



Within 8 weeks of the PoC scheme closing, of those who remained in supported housing:

1 young person had moved to a Live and Work scheme



2 young people had moved to affordable housing projects

1 person had secured council housing

This left 4 people in their original supported accommodation. 3 had stopped working due to affordability concerns and were claiming Universal Credit.

One had continued working in a full-time, permanent role.



Key Findings: Scheme design and administration

- 'Take up' of the scheme was lower than anticipated, with 42 participants across the WMCA area. The relatively short timeframe and perceived complexity of the scheme coupled with demand-side impediments such as job availability; structural impediments such as a lack of 'move on' accommodation, and personal issues facing some young people led to an overall conclusion that the scheme could not have the impact or generate the 'take up' envisaged.
- One of the most significant issues identified by practitioners and providers was how complex, rigid, and unclear the PoC was in practice. This had dual consequences:
 - **It reduced the number of young people eligible or able to join**
 - **It created further fear and mistrust of benefit systems for young people, and for practitioners**
- Overall, providers felt that the scheme increased their workloads and created significant additional work for certain staff members. Attempting to work intensively and responsively with young people around a novel intervention with its own 'teething problems' and complexities was often a demanding task.
- However, the young people interviewed felt, for their part, that the administration was simple, and they appreciated having one clear and consistent payment to make each week.

Key Findings: Young People: Attitudes and Motivation

- All young people who joined the scheme said they were ready and very willing to work, had worked before and recognised the value in doing so, but were actively holding off due to affordability concerns and fear of benefits delays and complexities.
- No participants interviewed had ever been directly deterred from working before the PoC scheme, but most believed they would not be able to afford to stay in their accommodation if they worked, or if they worked 'over 16 hours'.
- The fear of unaffordability and of accruing rent arrears due to high rents was integral to all young people's previous decision-making around employment.
- In particular, there was some fear and mistrust of benefit systems amongst young people, and a legacy of negative experiences some had previously had whilst in employment and living in supported housing contexts.
- Work within supported housing was positioned as a 'risky' activity and, as with all such activity, the decision to participate in the PoC scheme was based on a balance of losses and gains. The perceived inevitability of rent arrears after their time on the scheme ended was a key 'loss' that directed decision-making. Arrears were seen to jeopardise future housing prospects or to risk a return to homelessness. This was a significant cause of anxiety for those participants interviewed, but they all had decided to 'take the risk' and join the PoC scheme.

Young People / Employment

- All participants interviewed were glad they had joined the scheme and felt that the benefits outweighed any concerns about the scheme ending.
- All participants felt profound relief that they were no longer experiencing severe hardship and trying to 'survive' on Universal Credit, although the 'legacy' of living in poverty stayed with them.
- Separate from, but linked to, the relief participants felt that they no longer had to 'struggle' financially to the same extent were the clear positive benefits all felt from being in full-time employment.
- Employment engendered numerous positive benefits for participants beyond poverty alleviation.

This included marked improvements in confidence, self-esteem, mental health, anxiety, social lives and sociability, and loneliness alleviation.

- Employment was seen to engender structure, and create meaning in their daily lives, inducing feelings of pride and dignity.
- Employment also helped with their self-identity, which included setting an example to siblings or living up to family expectations. It was clear that homelessness could be a very isolating and lonely experience, and that being in employment was helping young people to feel more integrated into society and, often, family.

“Things like travelling to another city, leisure, sight seeing, that’s another world to me it would be too stressful and I would feel too guilty buying anything that wasn’t basic. It’s opened things up for me, my life up”

Raya

“My mum is definitely happy I’m working, it feels good to tell her about what I’m doing at work, feels like I’m getting somewhere now”

Joe

“It will allow me to socialise and have a budget for socialising and now I can be a bit less hard with myself, I mean we all do deserve to treat ourselves but I just haven’t been able to do that but now since the PoC I feel like I’m a bit less restrictive with myself so I have managed to save, get my social life back, budget better, be less stressed”

Zane

“Mentally, getting out and being around people with work is really good for me. I have a lot of energy and being in a hospital environment and active, it helps me, feels like real life. Work definitely makes it less lonely”

Jay

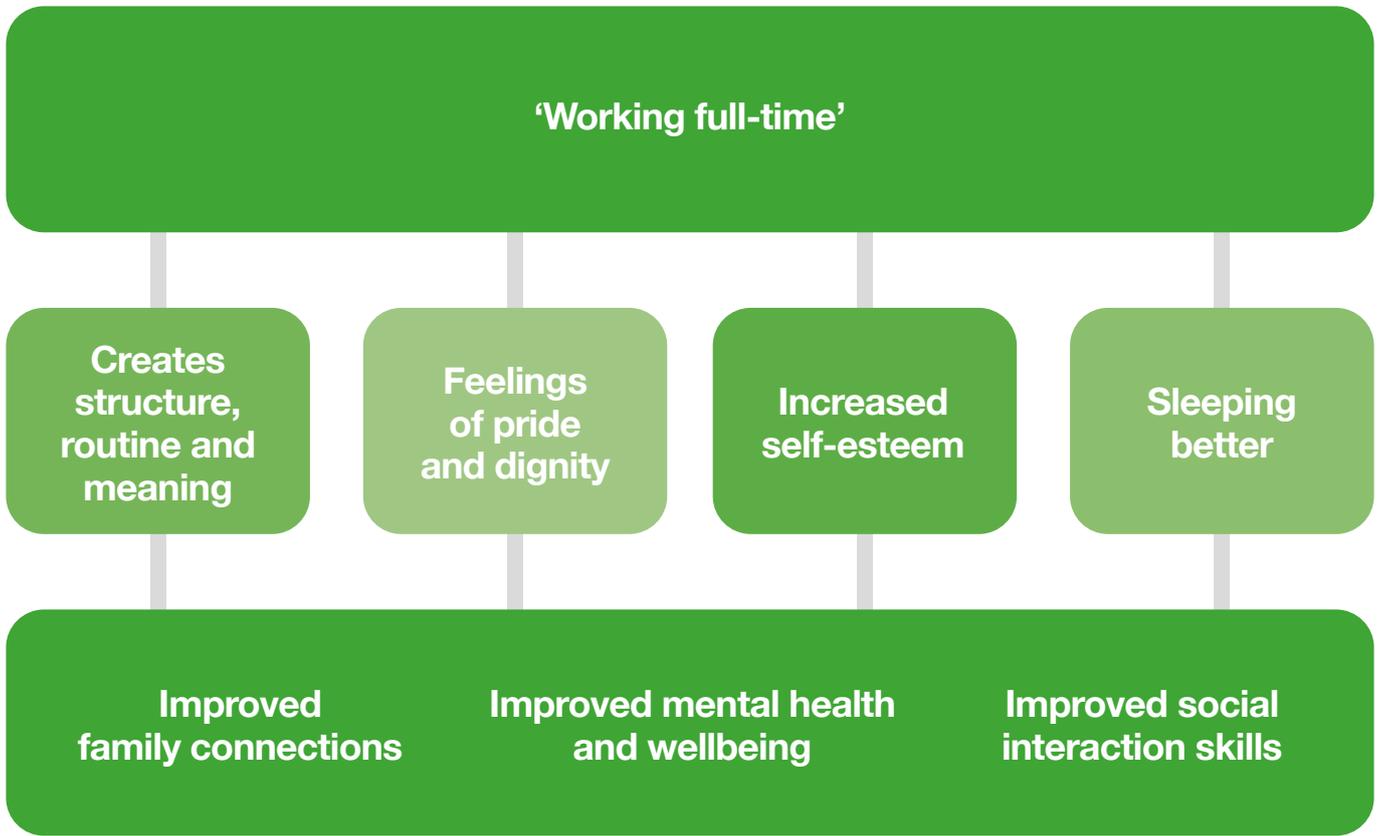


Figure 2: The benefits and impacts of working full time for PoC scheme participants



Conclusions

- The ‘problem’ of young people in supported housing entering employment or increasing their hours is a composite of intersecting structural, systemic, cultural, and individual issues.
- The interplay between Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, supported housing, and employment is too complex, disincentivises employment, and often does not alleviate hardship. However, the design of the PoC scheme in many ways ultimately replicated the complexity, uncertainty, and mistrust inherent to existing systems, which often compounded young people’s and providers’ fears of the ‘perils’ of entering employment. This was largely due to the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which was not always well-understood, and led to delays in payments and decisions, alongside rejected claims. In addition, the nature of the funding, which sought to prove the PoC itself incentivised entry into the labour market often left providers finding it difficult to ‘prove’ the motivation of a young person.
- Future schemes should adopt flexible ‘success’ measures, that understand the variance in ‘points of departure’, and do not rely on time-sensitive progress or behavioural change. This is more likely to align with government aspirations for ‘good’, meaningful employment for young people, that both foster and enhance security.
- The ‘benefits trap’ of supported housing and employment, and the ensuing impacts on young people, can be understood and approached as an individual, economic, and social issue. However, it must also be understood as an issue of social justice; an issue that can thwart opportunity, security, and growth. An issue that can work against what supported housing should – and strives – to be.
- We must not ignore that the ‘problem’ of employment and supported housing affects all residents, regardless of age, to varying extents. Whilst the iniquities within benefit systems and the ‘scarring’ effects of youth unemployment arguably create an additional imperative to seek solutions for this cohort, it is important that this problem is seen for what it is: an overall problem of complex benefits systems, practitioner misunderstanding and misinformation, ‘baked in’ disincentives for both resident and provider, and resultant organisational cultures that thwart the appetite and acumen to work within the existing system.

Overall, the concept of the PoC - to simplify, introduce certainty, and ‘make work pay’ should be acknowledged as a progressive step. External factors such as the time-limited nature of the funding and utilisation of a fund tied solely to improving labour market outcomes impeded ‘take up’ of the scheme. Internal factors such as the perceived complexity and inflexibility of the scheme and some concerns over how ‘realistic’ the ‘top up’ payment was also impacted upon both take up and perceptions of the scheme.

Further interventions and pilots should retain simplification and affordability as primary aims, but ensure durations are longer, and that personalisation, flexibility, and housing options are all built into design and monitoring.

The announcement in the Autumn 2025 Budget should go some way towards addressing the issue of affordability in supported accommodation. However, this research report has shown that high supported housing rents, the complexity of the Housing Benefit system, fear and mistrust of benefit systems and difficulty navigating between them, uncertainty around payments for those on fluctuating wages, and longstanding organisational, systemic, and cultural barriers mean that the ‘issue’ of supported housing and employment for young people remains important for policy and practice.

Recommendations: Central Government

Department for Work and Pensions

Making the system more transparent, more equitable, and less complicated

REC 1: Once a resident in supported housing enters full-time employment, their weekly rent liability should be reduced to the core rental charge, with the remaining service charges ‘topped up’ by Housing Benefit for a defined period of time and combined with intensive move on support from providers.

REC1: Suggested Model:

A new initiative to be trialed with commissioned supported housing providers in the West Midlands Combined Authority. ¹⁷ This would require a flexible external funding source.

The scheme length is recommended to be 3 years in total, with young people able to access the scheme for up to 1 year.

The scheme will have the following features:

True ‘simplicity’: a flat rate rent that residents pay upon entering full-time employment that is not tied to existing benefits systems. This would be at social rent level for equivalent accommodation or the core rent of the property; whichever is less.

Mentors and advisors attached to the scheme to provide intensive and tailored support around employment, goals, and future planning.

Bespoke employers attached to the scheme who are also able to provide ongoing ‘in-work’ support. These employers would sign up to a good practice charter and attend awareness training around employing young people who have or are experiencing homelessness.

A tailored package of support provided to those who enter employment through the scheme that includes budgeting, financial literacy and independent living.

Trusted ‘Move on’ accommodation providers attached to the scheme.

Young people who maintain employment for three months and have completed budgeting, financial literacy and independent living work **will have their deposit paid or receive a ‘move on grant’** to help them secure and settle into independent accommodation.

Frontline workers and young people must be part of design, planning, and frequent review processes. They must also form part of a monitoring and improvement board for the pilot.

The pilot should take an action learning approach and be prepared to flex and adapt as it progresses.

REC 2: Create a guidance manual for supported housing providers around employment, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

REC 3: Ensure that the national rollout of the Youth Guarantee scheme includes pathways, solutions, and support for young people who are experiencing homelessness, in transient or temporary forms of housing, or who cannot remain in the family home.

¹⁷ This recommendation is targeted at the WMCA as this was the site of the original PoC scheme and is the area experiencing some of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the country. This scheme is not limited to the WMCA and can be trialed in any local or combined authority area. Similarly, this scheme can be adapted and trialed with any group of residents of supported housing, not just young people.

Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

Ensuring the facilitation of employment is included in national supported housing policy and guidance:

REC 4: The National Supported Housing Standards within the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act (SHROA) should reflect and respond to the challenges faced by supported housing residents when gaining, and maintaining, employment.

Guidance around the Standards should acknowledge:

- (i) **the financial and systemic barriers many residents face around entering employment** and
- (ii) **the flexible, contextual approach needed within the Person-Centred Standard** to evidence any outcomes attached to progression into employment.

REC 5: Guidance for the creation of Supported Housing strategies within the SHROA should support local authorities to assess and promote the need for supported housing that facilitates employment.

This should acknowledge:

- (i) **Strong messaging** that evicting residents or advising them to leave upon entering employment is not in alignment with a local authority's aims
- (ii) **Assessing and incorporating the local need for supported housing providers** who facilitate and support employment; including providers that can evidence they have bespoke schemes available ¹⁸ within their existing portfolio or their proposed schemes.

¹⁸ Such as a 'rent relief' scheme that, for a time-limited period, reduces the resident's rent liability to an affordable level once they enter employment



Recommendations: The West Midlands Combined Authority / Mayoral Combined Authorities

As this study took place within the WMCA area, these recommendations are focused there. However, these recommendations are relevant for all combined authorities.

REC 6: Broadly, the WMCA should work collaboratively and creatively to

- **dismantle housing access, affordability, and sustainment barriers linked to low wages**
- **ensure employment and employability initiatives acknowledge and address the barriers** to accessing employment created by both housing precarity and high supported housing rents
- **cater sufficiently for young people in low wage or early career employment** who are not able to remain in the family home

Ensuring working young people can access secure, genuinely affordable accommodation

REC 7: The WMCA should ensure their work to increase housing supply across the region has a strong focus on affordability. This must include a definition of ‘affordable’ that acknowledges and caters for young people, on low incomes, and without family support. A portion of affordable housing must be developed and delivered with this cohort in mind.

Ensuring youth employment schemes and initiatives understand and incorporate housing circumstances

REC 8: Schemes to improve and increase young people’s skills and employability, such as the WMCA’s Youth Plan and the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, must incorporate clear housing pathways and tailored housing advice. This should be targeted at supported housing residents for whom entering employment could mean jeopardising their accommodation.

Create joined up strategies and deliver joined up thinking around homes and jobs

REC 9: The WMCA should focus on encouraging the region’s housing and employment directorates to acknowledge and understand the links between homes and jobs, particularly for young people and those in lower income quintiles. The WMCA should lead on communicating this link and supporting schemes that work to ensure people’s housing or family situation does not prohibit or discourage them from entering and sustaining employment.

Recommendations: Local Government

Supporting the development and commissioning of schemes that align with local needs and priorities:

REC 10: Local authorities' homelessness strategies should align with their supported housing strategies and seek to commission, or support the development of, accommodation that genuinely meets the local needs of those experiencing homelessness.

This could include:

- (i) **Commissioning accommodation** that can cater specifically for those already in, or ready to enter, employment.
- (ii) Where relevant, **ensure commissioned supported accommodation providers are aware of the systems around employment, Housing Benefit, and supported housing** and are able to advise their residents competently.

Providing a short-term safety net for those who enter employment and have high housing costs

REC 11: Local Authority Housing Benefit departments should include those in high cost supported housing who gain employment as a priority group for Discretionary Housing Payments.



Recommendations: Practice and Further Research

Supported Housing Providers should:

REC 12: Ensure all staff are sufficiently and regularly trained around the interaction between employment, supported housing, and Housing Benefit.

REC 13: Create clear communications for residents around their right to seek employment whilst living in supported accommodation, and how they will support residents to maintain their accommodation and, where appropriate, seek timely alternatives.

Researchers and Advocacy Organisations

REC 14: Further research is needed to show the extent that this issue is contributing to repeat homelessness. The issue of employment and supported housing is widespread, longstanding, and not restricted to young people. It is currently unknown how many people who are in employment are unable to access safe, vital accommodation, are forced to give up their employment in order to access a place to stay or asked to leave supported housing upon gaining employment.



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We would like to thank the West Midlands Combined Authority Homelessness Task Force and the Centre for Personal and Financial Wellbeing at Aston University for their support of this report.



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