



**YMCA**

# Transitional Housing **Guide to Development**

We believe every young person  
should have a safe place to stay.



## YMCA is the oldest and largest youth charity in the world, set up in England in 1844.

In the 176 years since, YMCA has evolved into a global movement through World Wars, pandemics and financial crises to help more than **64 million** people across **120** different countries today.

YMCA is the largest voluntary provider of supported housing for young people in England and Wales. With **8,800** beds, our holistic support connects more than **20,000** young people each year with case workers and provides access to life skills, healthy living activities and budgeting sessions designed to help them to live independently.

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## The Challenge

The challenge of living independently, having moved through various types of supported accommodation is significant. A lack of affordable options, coupled with lack of tenancy history, or inability to provide a deposit or rent in advance prove to be impossible barriers for many. The result being a person otherwise ready to move on is trapped in an expensive service, whilst also 'bed blocking' and preventing a safe place becoming available for someone needing to escape domestic violence or rough sleeping.

- ▶ In 2019/20, **288,470** people were declared homeless or threatened with homelessness in England. More than **60,000** were aged 16-24.
- ▶ In Wales, **26,943** people were declared homeless or threatened with homelessness in 2018/19, with at least **6,600** aged 16-24.
- ▶ This equates to **185** 16-to-24-year-olds declared as homeless or threatened with homelessness, every day across England & Wales.

YMCA is tackling this challenge head on. Our Transitional Housing model is an outcome of ongoing dialogue with young people we support. It is also an opportunity to be part of the solution and there are an increasing number of examples across England & Wales that demonstrate the impact of this approach.

This brochure profiles Transitional Housing and the people we seek to support. We know we are making an impact, but we also know that by working in partnership we can achieve so much more in ensuring that every young person has a safe place to stay and is supported to achieve their potential.

**“My life in the hostel feels like it has just been on hold all this time - moving on to a safe place that I can afford would mean everything to me and let me get on with my life again.”**

## Transitional Housing Model

The need for increased delivery of homes in the UK is well documented. It is also widely recognised that young adults, even many who are in employment, are finding it almost impossible to access decent housing within the private rental market.

Over the past 20 years, YMCAs have focused on providing supported housing for young people most in need in the UK. However, we know that not only is our traditional client group facing increased difficulties in accessing suitable supported accommodation (leading to increased levels of homelessness and rough sleeping), but also increasing numbers of young people without significant support needs are finding it harder to find homes they can afford.

The housing system in the UK is seeing the impact of decreasing social housing, increasing private rented sector, Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowances that are far from market rents, and the roll-out of Universal Credit. Frequently, we are seeing it is young people that are being significantly and negatively affected and unable to access suitable and affordable accommodation.

YMCAs have come together to address these issues by developing this new housing model designed specifically for young people with low – often short-term – support needs. Furthermore, these low support needs are only apparent whilst they learn to live independently for the first time.

This new model, which we call Transitional Housing, is not intended to provide permanent, long-term homes, but rather to be a secure stepping-stone to enable young people to start on a career and gain positive experience of holding a tenancy, so enabling them to progress to the private rented sector or home ownership.

Transitional Housing particularly seeks to address a long-standing challenge of traditional supported housing - that high service charge levels make going to work and paying rent prohibitively expensive, thereby trapping young people in benefits dependency.

Key findings from research on what people that are in supported accommodation want from Transitional Housing include:

- Independence combined with access to support when needed was a fundamental motivation for moving on from hostel accommodation
- Safe, clean, and well-managed accommodation located in a neighbourhood that is familiar and with good access to public transport
- Decent access to preparation support for holding a tenancy - a short course delivered in advance through YMCA (where not already and as needed)
- Affordability – being free to work and save

The following design example sets out a typical layout for a transitional unit that has a gross internal area of 33sqm. This provides for a bedroom that can accommodate a double bed and a large lounge and kitchen/diner area. This design is based on previous Transitional Housing designs used by YMCAs. Affordable and Social Rent programme can both be considered for Transitional Housing.



**Transitional Housing created a distinct and much needed opportunity for people living in supported accommodation to move on in a planned, supportive way - allowing those next steps to be taken in confidence.**

## Who

### Target Audience for Transitional Housing

- Young people who have been in supported accommodation but no longer require the level of support provided there, especially those who are ready and able to enter employment
- Young people entering employment, perhaps for the first time, and on relatively low incomes
- Young people with low or occasional support needs who need to leave their family home due to tension or lack of appropriate space
- Young people moving to new areas in order to access employment
- Young people who cannot access home ownership or the private rented sector, whether due to affordability, lack of tenancy history, or inability to provide a deposit, rent in advance and/or agent's fees.
- YMCA's Impossible Homes report, which charted how young people tried to move on over two years, found that 44% of young people living in supported housing felt that the cost of rental deposits were holding them back from leaving supported housing.

**“ Given the choice between more space and higher rent or less space and lower rent, I would absolutely prefer somewhere smaller - I just want my own front door and some peace. ”**

## Partnerships

In our desire to help people in our communities to belong, contribute and thrive, it is critical that we provide greater choice of accommodation and support as well as options that allow people to work and live independently. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed many to their limits whilst also showing what is possible when the sector, organisations and individuals come together. The impact of the pandemic is only just beginning to be felt and it is expected that housing needs will continue to increase. Now is the time to act. Now is the time for innovation.

If you are a potential partner who can help accelerate the scaling of YMCA Transitional Housing schemes, please contact Head of Business Development – Graham Oatridge  
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Registered Company No: 73749

Homes and Communities Agency No: LH2204



YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION