

London Housing Strategy consultation Submission from Depaul



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About Depaul

Depaul works in some of the UK's most disadvantaged communities, preventing homelessness and providing support to vulnerable young people. Last year we provided services including emergency accommodation, longer term housing and community outreach to over 3,000 young people. We deliver Alone in London and Nightstop London, pan-London services for young people at risk of homelessness. We are also commissioned by local authorities across the capital to deliver supported accommodation for young people.

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact Dan Dumoulin, Depaul's Policy and Public Affairs Manager: daniel.dumoulin@depaulcharity.org.uk; 07989 404363.

Below are two recommendations around how the Mayor of London could tackle youth homelessness.

1) Invest in truly affordable housing for young people

Young Londoners are among those hardest hit by London's housing crisis. GLA figures show that the number of people aged 16 to 25 sleeping rough in London has doubled since 2010.ⁱ

Young people can find it difficult to afford any housing in London. They are often on low wages; the minimum wage for 18-20 year olds is £5.60. Most people under 35 also have restricted entitlement to housing benefits and, unless they qualify for social housing, are only able to claim up to the shared accommodation rate (SAR). This rate varies from £140.62 per week in Central London to £78.86 in Outer East London.

In 2012 Crisis research found that 0.9%, or 6, of the 670 shared properties advertised in Lewisham were accessible to SAR recipients.ⁱⁱ The availability of shared accommodation for SAR recipients is unlikely to have improved significantly since 2012. Depaul's experience tells us that there is a lack of available accommodation for this group across London. DWP research reports that landlords think these low SAR rates have pushed young people into rough sleeping and sofa surfing.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Mayor should ensure that a portion of the £3.15 billion of affordable housing funding he has secured is used to provide housing that is affordable for SAR recipients. Some of this new housing could be made available to those who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness.

2) The Mayor should use his profile to encourage Londoners to volunteer as Nightstop emergency hosts

In emergency hosting schemes, volunteer hosts give people who need a roof over their head a free, warm bed and a meal for a few nights. While staying with a host the problems that

may lead to homelessness can be addressed and longer term accommodation can be found. Emergency hosting schemes can also prevent young people going into extremely expensive temporary accommodation or children's care systems.

Depaul deliver Nightstop, a safe and quality assured voluntary emergency hosting scheme, in London as part of the London Youth Gateway.^{iv} In 2016 Nightstop London delivered 2,000 bed nights in the homes of volunteer hosts. Nightstop London could deliver many more bed nights if more hosts were available.

The Mayor has a very strong public profile. He may be able to use this to help Nightstop to recruit more hosts and therefore ensure that more beds are available for young people in London with nowhere else to go. Depaul would welcome the opportunity to discuss how the Mayor could do this with his team.

Nightstop is not appropriate for everyone, for example it does not house young people who are judged to present too high a risk to hosts. The Mayor should create a pan-London approach to providing short stay accommodation to prevent young people becoming street homeless, which supplements existing Nightstop provision and works for young people from all of London's diverse communities.

ⁱ See CHAIN data at <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

ⁱⁱ Crisis (2012) No room available: study of the availability of shared accommodation

ⁱⁱⁱ Department for Work and Pensions (2014) *The impact of recent reforms to Local Housing Allowances*

^{iv} <http://www.londonyouthgateway.org.uk/>