

Herts Young Homeless – HBS Charity of the Year 2026



We are delighted to announce our 2026 Charity of the Year is Herts Young Homeless (HYH). Throughout the year we will be supporting HYH in various ways which we will display in future Mutual editions.

HYH is an independent charity founded in 1998 that supports vulnerable young people across Hertfordshire who are facing homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless.

HYH works with 16-24-year-olds who are homeless or at risk, and with 10-15-year-olds whose families are experiencing conflict or instability that could lead to a breakdown at home. They also support young adults aged 18+, including care-experienced young people and those struggling with mental health or substance misuse, who need help with housing and support.

The charity provides a wide range of services that includes prevention, early intervention, crisis intervention and independent living support. HYH help young people find stability, build essential life skills, and move towards independence. Their work addresses issues such as family conflict, sofa surfing, financial difficulties, and the challenges that can follow leaving care.

A safe home, supportive relationships, and stability are things many of us take for granted. But right now, thousands of young people in our community cannot rely on any of these. HYH is dedicated to helping them find safety, security, and hope, ensuring they never have to return to the fear and uncertainty of homelessness.



Colleagues Gavin Mullen, Sanja Borg and Kerry Cunningham with HYH Corporate Partnerships Officer Maureen Bridger

HYH vision

Every young person has a safe home from which they can grow and thrive.

HYH mission

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

Youth Homelessness

In 2024, across the UK, over 136,000 16-25-year-olds presented at their local authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness. In Hertfordshire, many young people experience hidden homelessness which is less visible than street homelessness. This can involve long periods of movement between a range of precarious accommodation options such as on friends' sofas or in inadequate or overcrowded conditions.

Often, people are pushed into these situations when constant external pressures and strains build up over time. Many young people have been left carrying a very heavy load on their shoulders. The cost-of-living crisis, low wages and inadequate government support are all examples of pressures that can wear away and eventually, lead to a breaking point. These problems could be lessened with the right support, and this is where HYH step in.

Nearly half of adults experiencing homelessness first became homeless under the age of 20, and this trauma can lead to long term support needs. Therefore, it's crucial to respond to the needs of young people at the bridge between childhood and adulthood. HYH support the unique needs of young people within the wider homelessness system, with tailored, solution-focused support.

Youth homelessness costs £8.5 billion a year according to Centrepoin.

Services HYH Provide

Prevention Education

The first stage in preventing youth homelessness is to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to avert a crisis. HYH offer sessions to students within the county that focus on the topics of homelessness, leaving home, anger management, independent living, managing conflict and healthy relationships. Sessions are interactive, engaging and fun whilst being carefully tailored and structured to complement the PSHE/RSHE curriculum, as well as school and student need.

“I have learnt how hard it is to be homeless and how it is important to reach out when you feel concerned rather than after the crisis.” – Watford Girls School student

Mediation

HYH run a confidential and impartial mediation service for young people and their families where conflict is causing difficulty. Family breakdown is the single biggest cause of youth homelessness, so HYH work hard to strengthen family relationships.

HYH mediators offer fair and unbiased support to help families recognise for themselves what issues need to be resolved and help them move forward in a way that feels fair and practical to everyone involved, resulting in fewer arguments and improved family relationships.

What kind of challenges can mediation help solve?

- Breakdown in communication between parents/carers and young person
- Conflict between family members about boundaries
- Arguments leading to young people being ‘kicked out’ of home
- Heightened emotions leading to conflict
- Arguments between young people and step-parents

HYH Mediation Statistics

- In 2025, **146** families supported
- For under 16s, **93%** remained or returned home

HYH Hub

A single point of contact to access Homeless Prevention Services in Hertfordshire. This preventative, solution-focused service provides:

- An access point for support and advice for 16 & 17 year-olds in housing need
- A resource for young people, families and carers, and professionals to access homeless prevention services
- An assessment of needs and guidance on realistic housing options
- Access to signposting and referrals to support agencies
- Referral into Crashpad hostel bed spaces – depending on availability

The hub acts as a ‘front door’ to homeless prevention services in Hertfordshire. The hub prioritises 16 & 17 year-olds and works intensively with them as well as their families/carers in order to prevent homelessness. The hub assesses and prioritises referrals depending on the situation.

Throughout 2025, HYH supported **16,334** people to improve their lives through education, advice and support.

83% reported improvement in the stability of their accommodation.

Outreach Services

Advice Line

Available via live chat, phone or email, this advice line is for 18-24 year-olds who need guidance on housing-related issues. Experienced advisors are available to talk about housing options, money advice, benefits information and much more. Advisors are also able to signpost individuals to other agencies or services that may be able to help.

Outreach Housing Support

Funded by Hertfordshire County Council, housing related support is offered to 18-24 year-olds who are homeless or are in accommodation and are at risk of homelessness. A priority group for this service is care-experienced young people.

Examples of the support provided include:

- General tenancy sustainment
- Independent living skills
- Finding suitable accommodation
- Income / budgeting/debt advice
- Education and training
- Co-ordinating plans with relevant partner agencies ensuring all support needs are met

HYH also have an Intensive Outreach Service which is specifically designed for those care experienced young people who require more in-depth support.

2025 Outreach Support Statistics

- **181** Referrals
- **90%** of evictions avoided
- **85%** improvement in management of rent payments

Future Roots

In partnership with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, HYH have transformed a 5-bedroom house into a space that houses and supports young people by providing a stepping stone from supported accommodation into independent living. At future roots, HYH provide practical support to help housemates achieve financial stability and the necessary level of confidence and maturity that they need to live independently.

The programme of support includes:

Starting Careers: Helping build CV’s, set goals, and explore opportunities in education, training, and employment.

Relating to People: Learn how to communicate effectively, resolve conflict, and build a positive support network.

Being Healthy: Understand mental health, build resilience, and explore how physical health supports emotional wellbeing.

Building a Home: Learn how to manage a tenancy, look after their own space, and prepare for their own home.

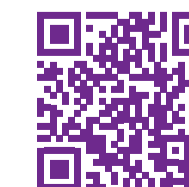
Managing Money: From budgeting to bills – understanding rent, income, and financial planning.

HYH recognise that each individual has areas of their lives that they still need support with. These needs vary from person to person. Support Workers assist each housemate to identify these areas, along with the support needed, so that they can build the necessary skills to take the next steps towards successful independent living.

After successful completion of the programme of support, housemates can access a deposit for private rented accommodation using funds provided by Friends of HYH. All housemates moving-on receive continued outreach support, ensuring a smooth transition into independent living.



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HYH website



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stories of young people
HYH have supported
in Hertfordshire



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