HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE'S PATHS TO HOUSING

Implications for Policy and Service Provision

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Youth Homelessness: Rising Rates in Many European Countries

❑ On average, young people make up 20-30% of the total number of homeless people in a majority of European countries (FEANTSA, 2017a).

❑ Between 2009-2016, Ireland recorded an increase of 93% in the number of homeless young people.

❑ Recent indicators suggest that, in all European countries, 'young people are more vulnerable to severe housing deprivation than the rest of the population' (FEANTSA, 2017b, p. 49).

Programme of Research on Youth Yomelessness

❑ **Programme of Research Initiated in 2004 – Two Qualitative Longitudinal Studies/One Cross-sectional Qualitative Study**

    ❖ **Examining the problem of youth homelesssnes in-depth (small samples with an emphasis on the generation of rich, narrative data).**

    ❖ **Privileging the experiences and perspective of homeless young people.**

    ❖ *Tracking* **the experiences of homeless young people** *over time.*

❑ **Merits of** *Qualitative Longitudinal Research*

    ❖ **Permits the identification of young people's homeless and housing trajectories**

    ❖ **Yields and understanding of the dynamics of change and the factors, processes and experiences that influence change over time.**

    ❖ **Policy relevance.**

What do we know about young people transitioning from homelessness to housing?

Longitudinal studies have bolstered understanding of the dynamics that shape young people's routes out of homelessness:

➢ **Housing availability – rather than individual behaviour – a key driver of homelessness among youth (Cheng *et al.*, 2013).**

➢ **The transition time from homelessness to housing can be relatively short for young people (Milburn *et al.*, 2007, 2009; Braciszewski *et al.*, 2016) and young people can successfully exit homelessness (Mayock *et al.*, 2008, 2013)**

➢ **Key factors that support exits from homelessness include:**

Access to Housing

Social Stability (i.e. engagement in education and employment)

Reconnection with family and family support

Service engagement and professional supports

THE STUDY

RESEARCH AIMS

AND

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

I

STUDY AIMS
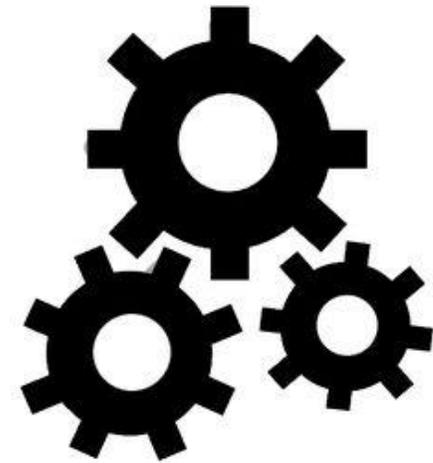
1. Capture the temporal dimensions of the homeless experience

2. 'Track' homeless young people over time to understand their trajectories through and possibly out of homelessness

STUDY DESIGN

A Qualitative Longitudinal Study

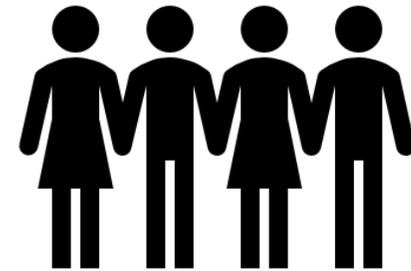**Data Collection at two points in time:**

- Phase 1 (May 2013 - January 2014)

- Phase 2 (July 2015 - April 2016)

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

At baseline (Phase 1), 40 young people aged 16-24 years were recruited to the study.

All except one were living in either under-18s 'out of home' provision or in youth-oriented or adult homelessness services.

FAMILY MEMBERS

Family members of a proportion of participating young people were recruited at Phase I of the study (where appropriate and possible).

10 Family Members participated at Phase I of the study, including 5 mothers and 5 female siblings.

RESEARCH METHODS

Young People | Life History Interviews

Family Members | In-depth Interviews

SAMPLE & RETENTION
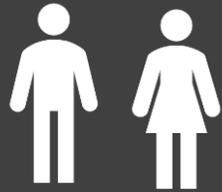
Phase 1

40 Young People

10 Family Members

Phase 2

29 Young People

8 Family Members

Retention Rate

74%

SAMPLE PROFILE: YOUNG PEOPLE

GENDER

AGE

EDUCATION + EMPLOYMENT

SAMPLE PROFILE: YOUNG PEOPLE

PHASE 1

- **Male:** 25 (62%)
- **Female:** 15 (37%)

Phase 2

- **Male:** 17 (59%)
- **Female:** 12 (41%)

GENDER
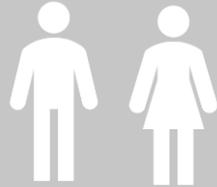
AGE

EDUCATION + EMPLOYMENT

SAMPLE PROFILE: YOUNG PEOPLE

PHASE 1

- **Range:** 16 - 24
  Average: 19.9
  6 aged under 18

Phase 2

- **Range:** 18 - 26
  Average: 21.9
  All 18 or over

GENDER

AGE

EDUCATION + EMPLOYMENT

SAMPLE PROFILE: YOUNG PEOPLE

PHASE 1

- **Education**: Low across the sample
- **Employment**: 0

Phase 2

- **Education**: 8 (27%)

Employment: 4 (14%) + 2 (CE Scheme).

GENDER

AGE

EDUCATION + EMPLOYMENT

Young people with Histories of State Care

CARE HISTORY

34/40 young people

History of State care (n = 26)

Informal care arrangements with family members (n = 8)

CARE PATHWAY OUT OF HOME

14/34 young people

Distinctive due to:

- The length of time in care
- The impact that care experiences had on their lives
- Rarely reunited with families
- Left a care setting to enter homeless/youth crisis accommodation

LIVING SITUATIONS AT PHASE 2

10/14 re-interviewed

- Housed (n = 2)
- ETA (n = 3)
- STA (n = 2)
- 'Hidden' homeless (n = 1)
- Due to leave residential care (n = 1)

Unstable return home (n = 1)

SAMPLE PROFILE: FAMILY MEMBERS

LIVING SITUATION	PHASE 1		PHASE 2
Transitional Housing	2		0
Emergency Hostel	1		1
RAS Housing	2	→	1
PRS	1		2
Owner Occupiers	3		3
Foster Care	1		1

SAMPLE PROFILE: FAMILY MEMBERS

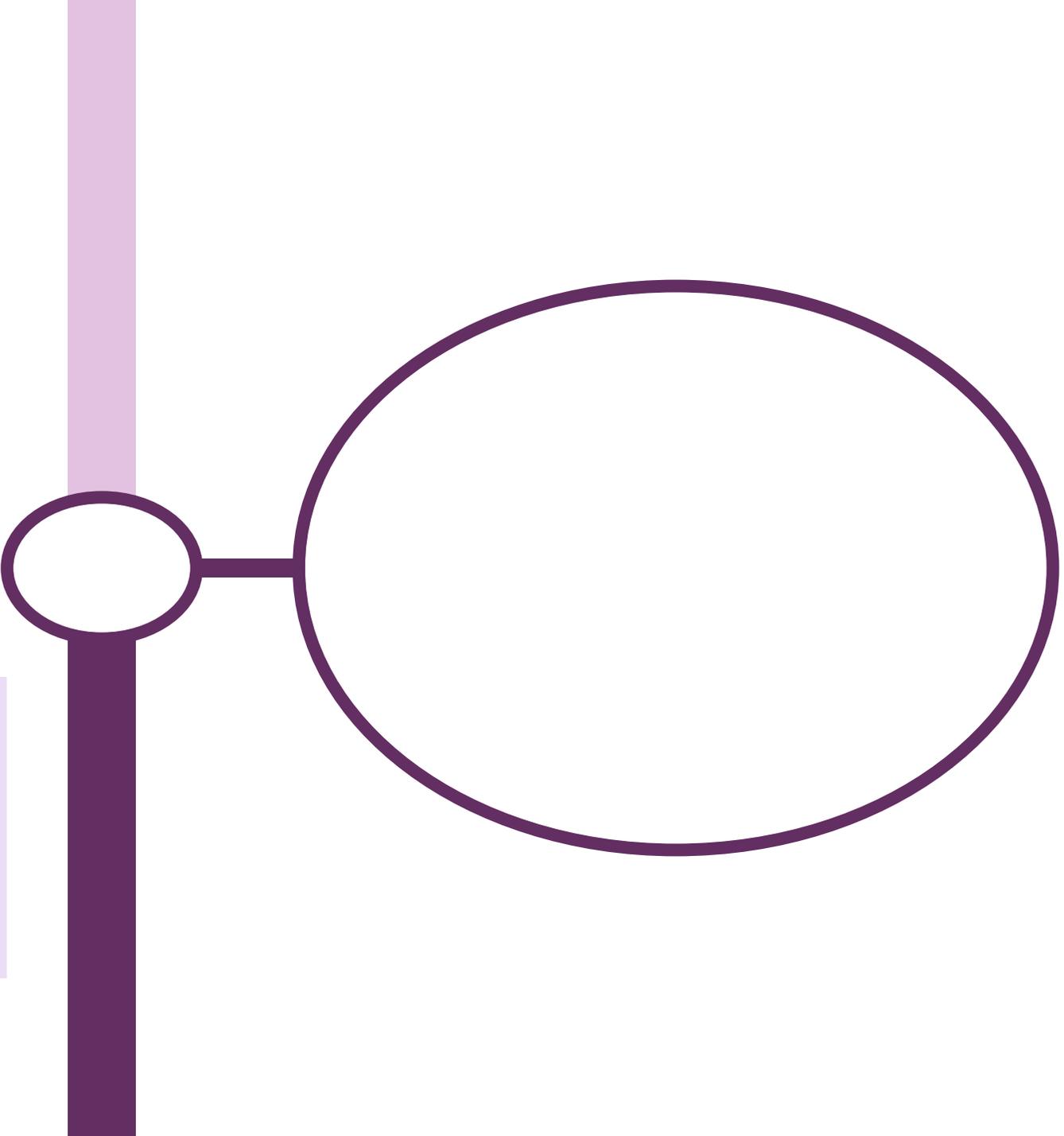| LIVING SITUATION	PHASE 1	PHASE 2
Transitional Housing	2	0
Emergency Hostel	1	1
RAS Housing	2	1
PRS	1	2
Owner Occupiers	3	3
Foster Care	1	1

¼ reported periods of family homelessness as children

Five young people reported periods of homelessness with their own children

Twelve young people were aware of a family member(s) who had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives

FROM HOMELESSNESS TO WHERE?

Two year subsequent to our first contact with the study's young people

Young People's Living Situations at Phase 2, Categorised according to ETHOS (EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCULUSION)
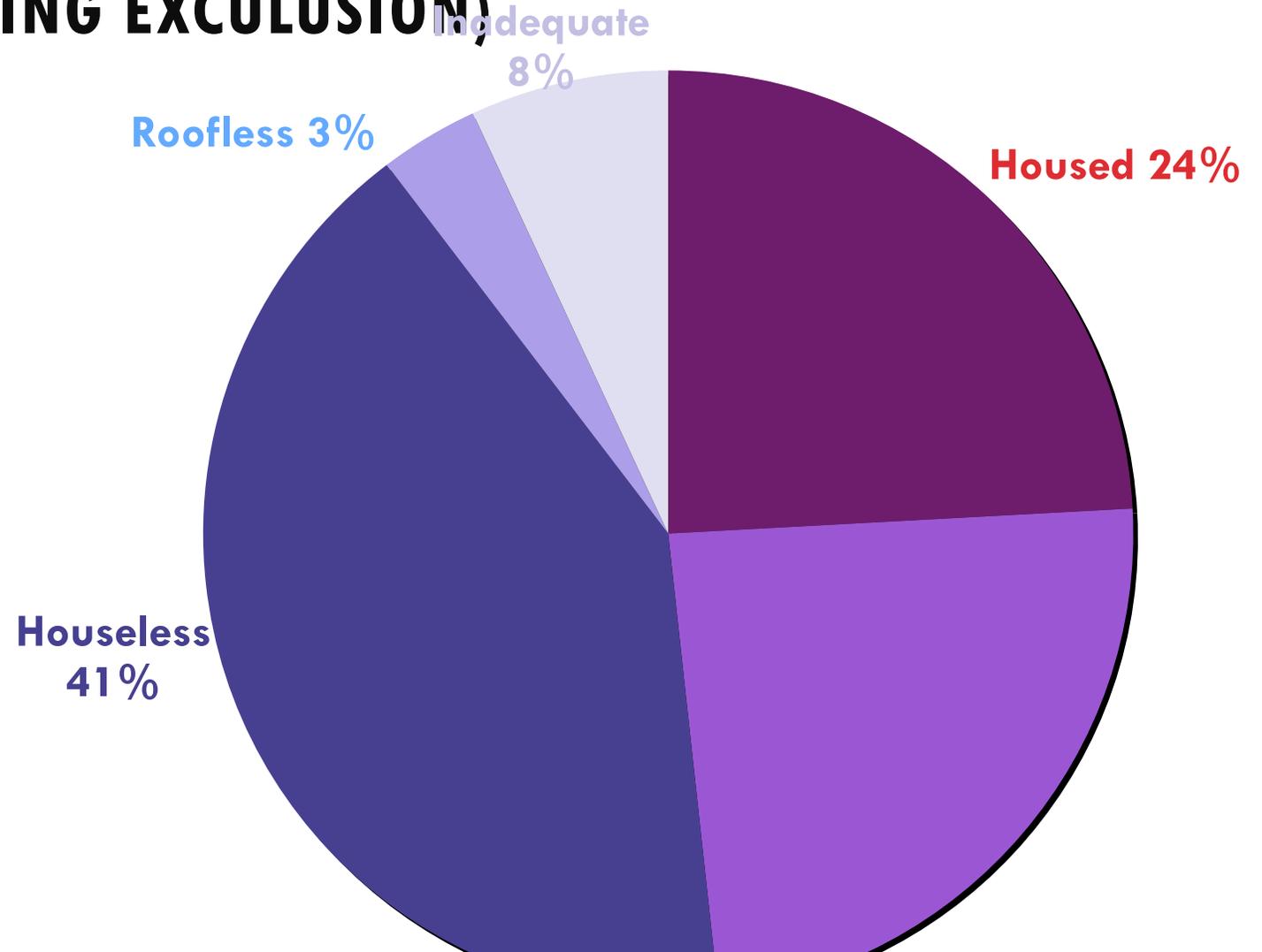
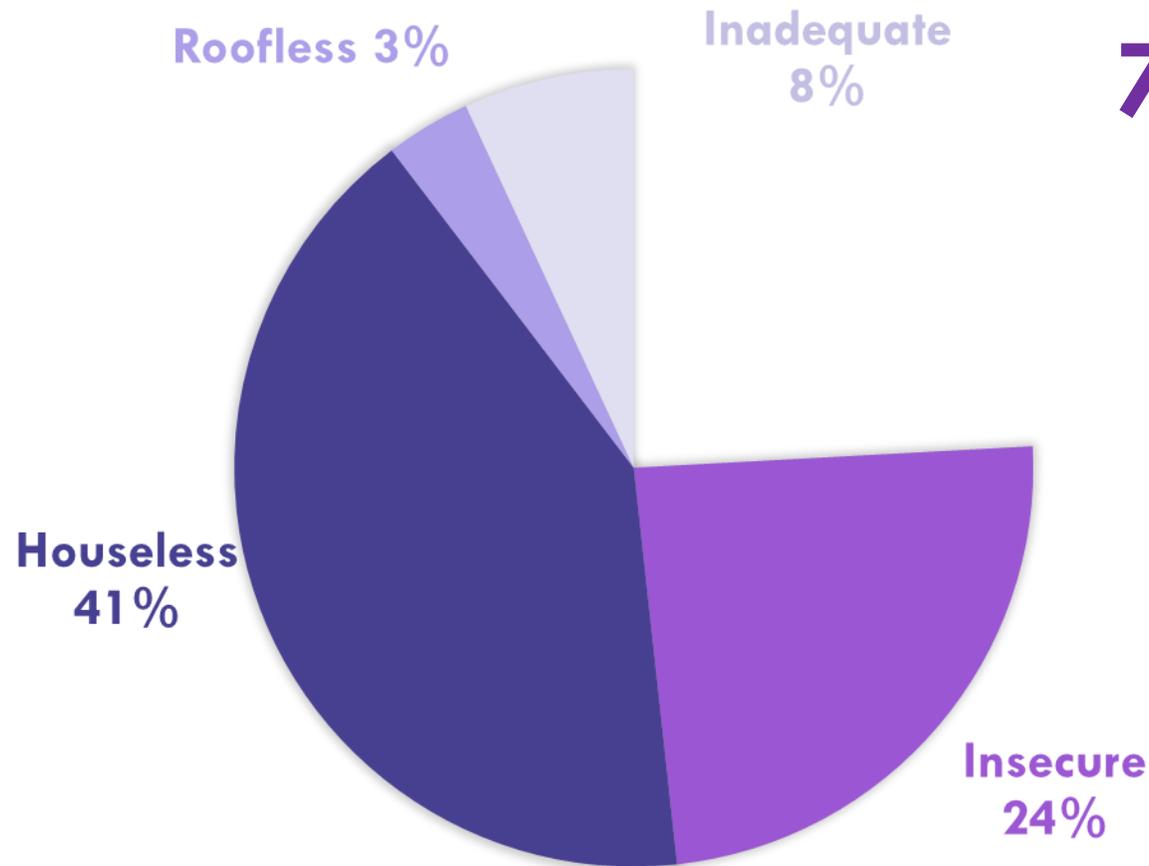## ETHOS CATEGORIES

HOUSED

INSECURE

HOUSELESS

ROOFLESS

INADEQUATE

Inadequate 8%

Roofless 3%

Housed 24%

Houseless 41%

Young People's Living Situations at Phase 2, Categorised according to ETHOS

76% Homeless

- STA
- ETA
- PEA
- Sleeping rough
- Overcrowded conditions
- Unstable return home
- Hidden homelessness
- No legal (sub)tenancy

Roofless 3%
Inadequate 8%
Houseless 41%
Insecure 24%

Young People's Trajectories *through* Homelessness

1 Linear Trajectories through Homelessness (N=7)

2 Non-linear Trajectories through Homelessness (N=13)

3 Chaotic Trajectories and Continuous Homelessness (N=9)

Typically moved 1-2 times

o STA → Mother's House (Fiona, 21)

o Under 18s 'out of home' provision → Residential care → Residential aftercare (Eoghan, 19)
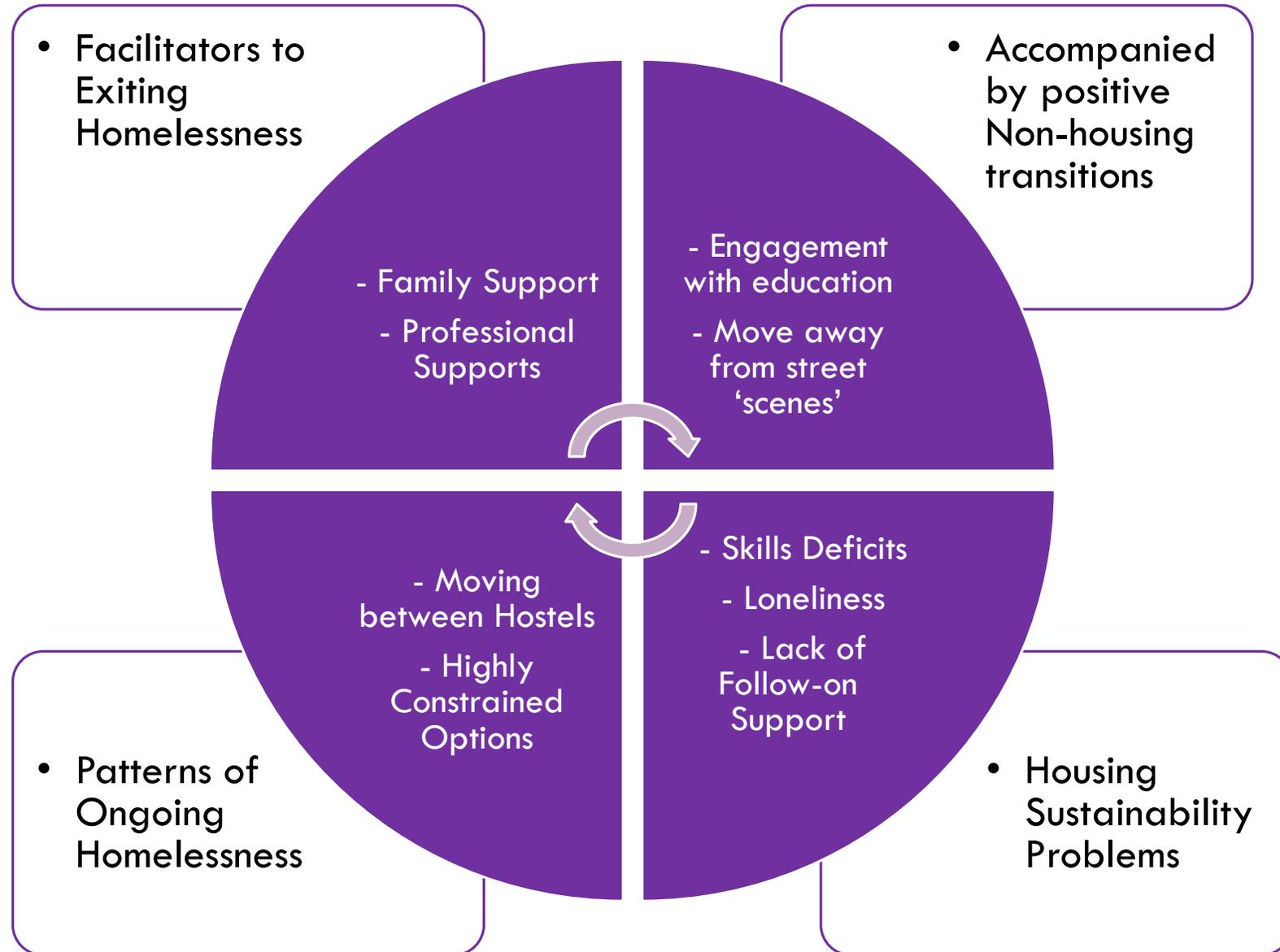
Typically moved 3-4 times

o ETA → PRS #1 → Residential Treatment → PRS #2 → Rough Sleeping (Michael, 25)

o ETA → PRS → Mother's house → Relative's house → ETA → Local authority housing (Collette, 22)
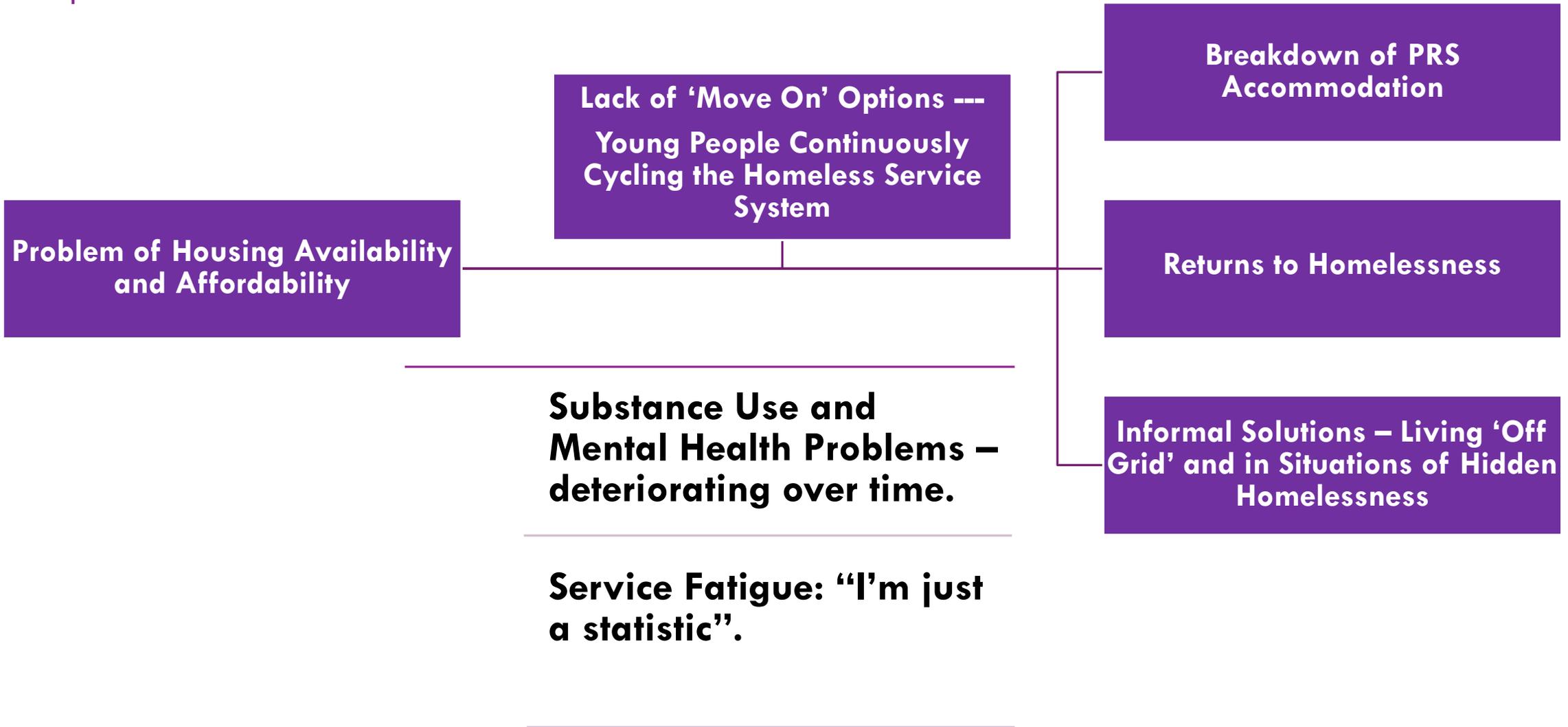
Typically moved between 5 and 9 times

o Under-18s 'out of home' provision #1 → Under-18s 'out of home' provision #2 → Residential aftercare → Friends' houses → Partner's house → Father's house → Friend's house (Alan, 18)

o ETA → Prison → Residential treatment → Relative's house → Friend's house → STA (Aoife, 21)

YOUNG PEOPLE NEGOTIATING A ROUTE TO HOUSING STABILITY

- Facilitators to Exiting Homelessness

- Accompanied by positive Non-housing transitions

- Family Support
- Professional Supports

- Engagement with education
- Move away from street 'scenes'

- Moving between Hostels
- Highly Constrained Options

- Skills Deficits
- Loneliness
- Lack of Follow-on Support

- Patterns of Ongoing Homelessness

- Housing Sustainability Problems

BARRIERS TO HOUSING STABILITY

Problem of Housing Availability and Affordability

Lack of 'Move On' Options ---

Young People Continuously Cycling the Homeless Service System

Breakdown of PRS Accommodation

Returns to Homelessness

Informal Solutions – Living 'Off Grid' and in Situations of Hidden Homelessness

Substance Use and Mental Health Problems – deteriorating over time.

Service Fatigue: "I'm just a statistic".

KEY DRIVERS OF HOUSING STABILITY/INSTABILITY

LACK OF AFORDABLE HOUSING WAS THE KEY DRIVER OF CONTINUED HOUSING INSTABILITY AMONG THE STUDY'S YOUNG PEOPLE.

Those young people who reported lower levels of movement (transience) were more likely to have experienced (more) stable at some stage over the course of the study.

Time spent in short-stay adult homelessness services was particularly disruptive and damaging to young people.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCOUNTS

"Even thought I was eligible for the rent supplement initiative it was still impossible to find housing" (Bryan, 24, Phase 2).

"They don't like the idea of an eighteen-year-old with no history of living on their own. They just look and think, 'No, he's too young'" (Christopher, 18, Phase 2).

"They looked after you and made sure you didn't die but the minute you turn eighteen, just kick you out and having to sleep rough and all" (Ross, 19, Phase 2).

"[Service are just] sent a piece of paper that says, 'Maria, Twenty-six, Ex-addict, Baby'. That's all they get … It's so faceless, you know, it's all paperwork. It doesn't say that a I went into [treatment setting] and got clean and now I have a beautiful baby … And that's sad because you're being judged at your worst moments, always. It's not even five per cent of your personality but it is a hundred per cent of how you're perceived by this system" (Maria, 26, Phase 2).

"When you go in [to private rented housing] and kind of isolate yourself, it does get very lonely. Like they were sying to me there would be people linking in with me but that just gradually went" (Warren, 26, Phase 2).

FAMILY MEMBER ACCOUNTS

"She's [Aoife] not going to find somewhere now, there's nowhere for her to live anyway. Like there's nothing, especially not on rent allowance" (Samantha, Aoife's sister, Phase 2).

"Nobody's helping her. I think Rebeca needs to be put into a drink and drugs facility. She needs to be talked to about relationships, parenting, she needs all that stuff like … I think she could be capable of doing something bad to herself like, you know" (Jacqui, Rebecca's mother, Phase 2).

"I think what Paul, I suppose, would have loved or craved at the time was a bit of security, youknow, because from the time you go in somewhere [STA], it's like you know, it's six months … There's always the worry of like, 'Where am I going to be after the six months?'. I think they need to have somewhere more permanent, bit it a couple of years, just for them to mature, because a lot of them are young, they're very young, you know, they've a lot of growin up to do and that" (Teresa, Paul's mother, Phase 2).

"She [Abigail] had one [aftercare worker], but you only get one up 'til you're twenty-one … So it's all the work to do on her own now … It'll be real difficult for her to find housing. Like I can help as much as I can but I douldn't help that much, to be honest" (Jess, Aaigail's sister, Phase 2).
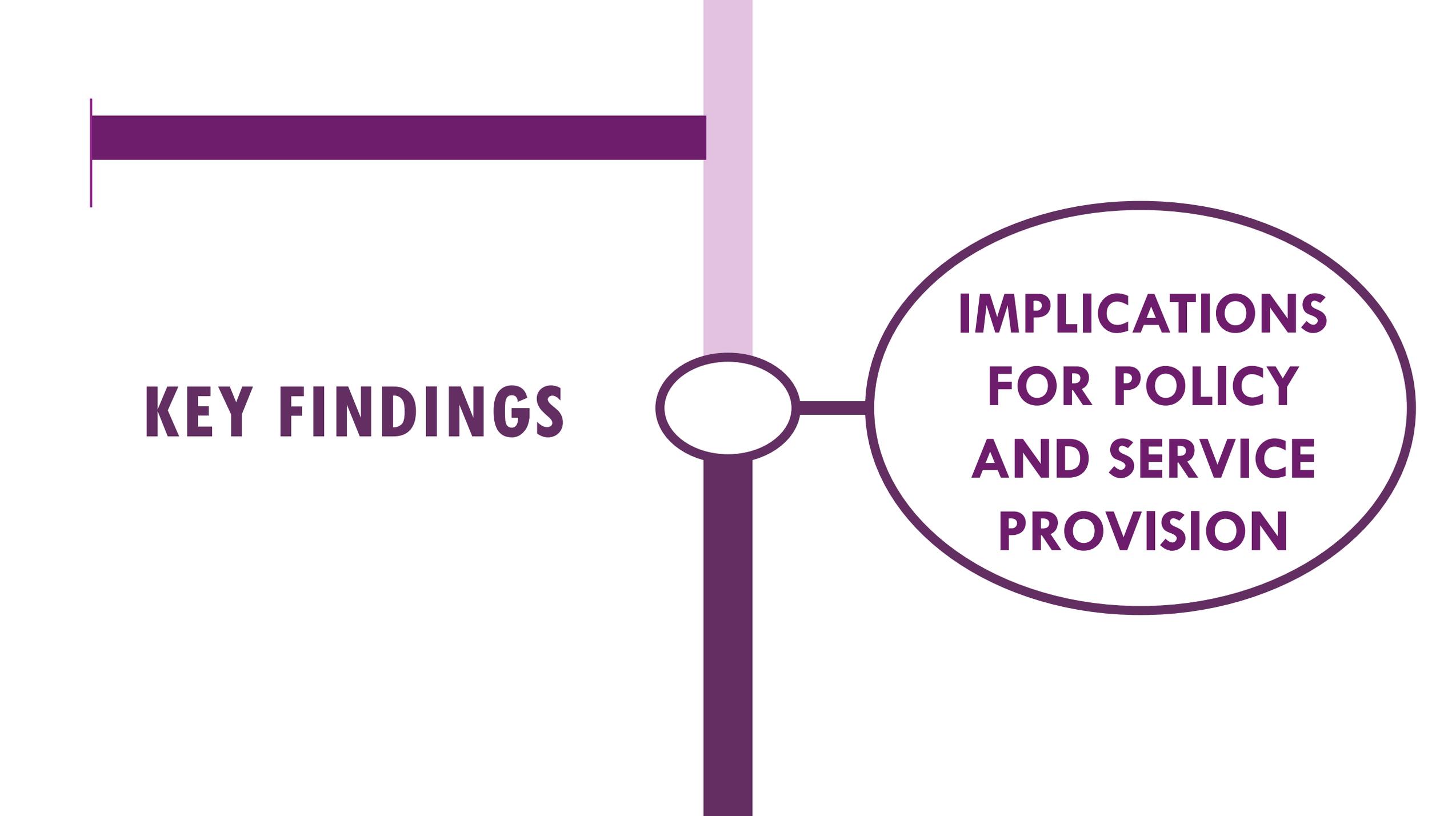
KEY FINDINGS

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SERVICE PROVISION

Key Finding:
YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXIT ROUTES FROM HOMELESSNESS

Low levels of Exiting

Restricted Exit Routes

Reliance on Private Rented Sector (PRS)

IMPLICATIONS

❖ **Interventions remain firmly focused on the provision of short- and medium term (hostel) accommodation.**

❖ **Young struggling to carve a route to stable housing via the PRS.**

HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH

Need to develop flexible models of housing and ensure speedy exits from the homeless service system

Key Finding:
UNSUSTAINED EXITS FROM HOMELESSNESS

Breakdown of PRS Accommodation

Poor Quality Accommodation

Deficits in Living and Coping Skills

IMPLICATIONS

❖ **Solutions to homelessness are not simply about moving into housing.**

❖ **There is a spectrum of personal, social and health needs for which young people may require assistance – these will vary.**

❖ **Young people may face individual level (substance use/mental health/managing peer relationships) that undermine their ability to maintain housing.**

❖**While some may only require short-term assistance, other will need sustained intensive *in housing* support.**

Key Finding:
PATTERNS OF ONGOING/UNRESOLVED HOMELESSNESS

Houseless Youth

Youth Cycling the Service System

Patterns of 'Hidden' Homelessness

IMPLICATIONS

❖ Preventing patterns of repeat homelesssness.

❖ *Tertiary level preventive strategies* – target individuals already affected by homelessness and is "more often focused on minimising 'repeat homelessness', that is, avoiding the occurrence of entirely new homeless episodes" (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick, 2008: 73).

❖ Ensuring tenancy sustainment.

❖Supporting young people to develop positive social networks (Watts et al., 2015).

Key Finding:
FACILITATORS TO EXITING HOMELESSNESS

Family and Informal Supports

Formal (service-based) Support Systems

The PROCESS of Exiting Homelessness

IMPLICATIONS

❖ Developing family reconnection/reconciliation programmes should be a central component of a systems-based approach to ensuring that youth exit homelessness.

❖ Most young people will require and benefit from some level of support as they transition from homelessness to independent living and succeed in attaining broarder life goals.

❖ Some may need ongoing support in relation to education, employment and so on if they are to have a reasonable chance of maintaining housing.

Key Finding:
BARRIERS TO EXITING HOMELESSNESS

Highly Constrained Housing Options

Threats to Housing Security

Substance Use and Mental Health Problems

IMPLICATIONS

❖ **The importance of early/speedy exits: the longer the duration of homelessness, the more difficutl it becomes to exit and successfully sustain an exit from homelessness.**

❖ **Young people who remain in the homeless service system for longer will need sustained and intensive support following the move to independent living.**

❖ **Housing models and Housing First.**

HOUSING FIRST
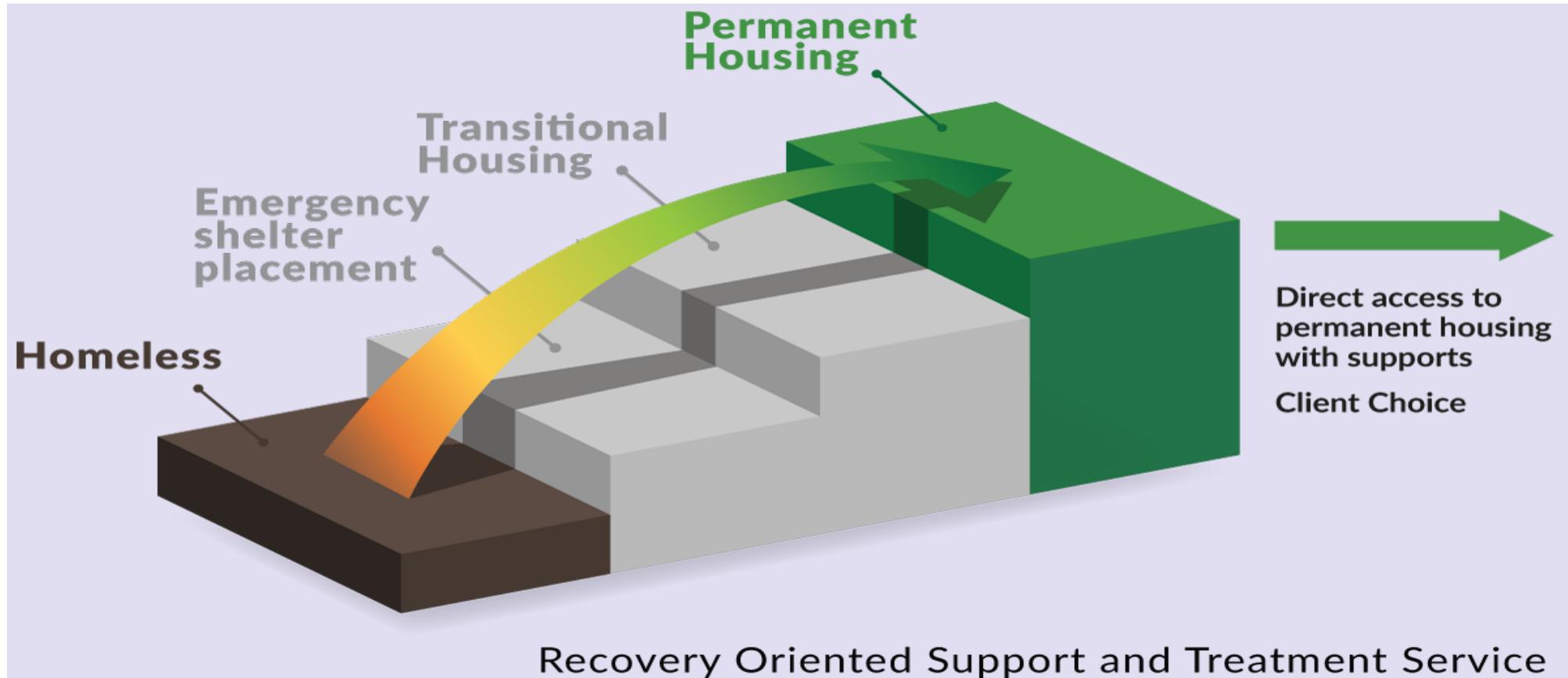
HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH (HF4Y)

Research Base

- Compared to Housing First (HF) for adults, the research base on HF4Y is not well developed.
- An emerging body of research, much of it Canadian-based, suggests that HF can work successfully for young people.

What is HF4Y?

- Lack of consensus on what precisely HF4Y ought to 'look like': Models of accommodation that fall under the HF 'unbrella' have tended to take different forms and include transitional or congregate housing models in some countries.

HF4Y Models

- Models of housing that have a supportive dimension may be appropriate for some young people (Gaetz, 2014; Holtschneider, 2016).
- Equally, many young people who experience homelessness will have success in <u>moving directly to independent housing</u> with support provide in accordance with a thorough assessmement of their needs.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS
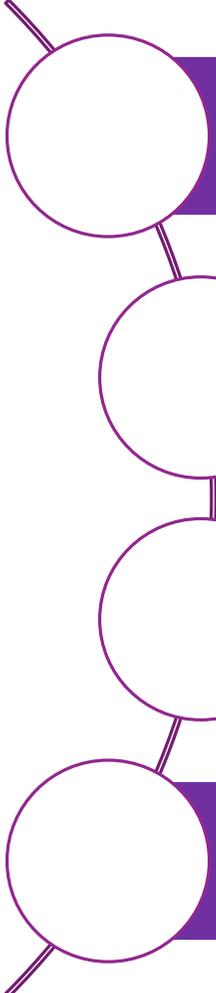
THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF ONGOING CYCLES OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY FOR YOUTH

HOEMLESS YOUTH ARE DIVERSE IN TERMS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS: 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' SOLUTIONS ARE UNLIKELY TO PROVIDE A LASTING RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH HOEMLESSNESS.
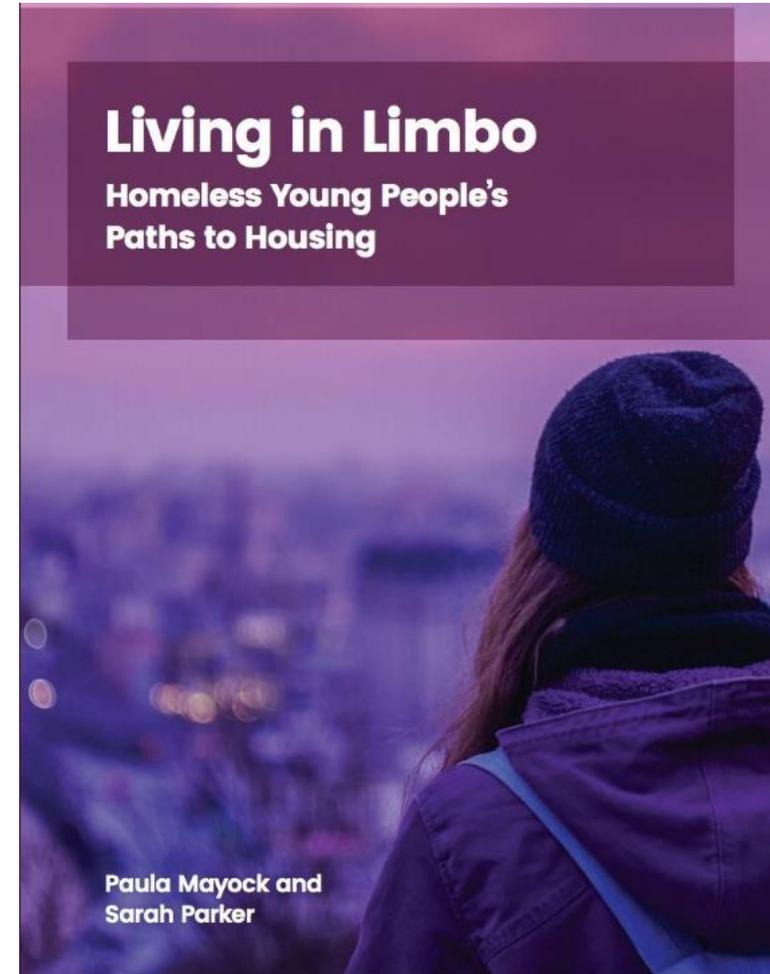
THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS OF HOUSING, INCLUDING HOUSING FIRST, FOR HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE REQUIRES URGENT ATTENTION.

EVALUATION OF HOUSING FIRST MODELS FOR YOUTH IS ESSENTIAL.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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❖ **The Funders of the Research: Phase 1 – Focus Ireland; Phase 2 – Focus Ireland, Simon Communities, Threshold, Peter McVerry Trust and St Vincent de Paul**

❖ **Service Providers who assisted with the recruitment and 'tracking' processes.**

Thank you