

Any spare change, please....?

THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS

Begging is only one symptom of young homelessness. The roots of homelessness go much deeper within the structure and tissue of our society. In this Action Sheet we have explored some of the issues that contribute to young people finding themselves on the street.

We need to recognise that poverty has an increasing part to play in the story. We have highlighted the alarmingly high unemployment statistics among young people who find themselves leaving school with absolutely no prospects of finding a job. Anyone who talks with young people who are unemployed must be struck by the state of resignation that is pervasive - this is how things are and it's as though young people feel they have no right to expect any improvement. This despite the findings by researchers from 14 academic institutions that young people are overwhelmingly committed to being in employment with 75% of interviewees agreeing that to have almost any job was better than being unemployed.

So it is hardly surprising to find young people with extremely low incomes who are unable to cope with the task of establishing themselves independently of their family (if they have one - our next edition will focus on the experience of young people leaving care). And yet we expect all young people to achieve this state. It is interesting to compare the help and assistance that we offer to young people who seek independence through access to further education with that on offer to young people who are establishing independence at 16 whilst unemployed. There are good models of support, advice and information available to students seeking accommodation - why is this not available to all young people?

Young people who beg are survivors. We need to think about how we perceive young people in this situation and what alternatives they have. Less judgement and more understanding. What is your position? Many of us are embarrassed and guilty and often react in inconsistent ways. We suggest it is better to work out how you feel and act on those feelings.

OPTIONS:

- * Give a set amount of money when it's gone don't give any more
- * Give to people you have a particular concern for, such as young women who are most likely to be at risk of violence or abuse
- * In Some Cities and Towns you can support homeless young people who are selling the magazine "BIG ISSUE". This magazine is sold for 50 pence of which the vendor keeps 30 pence. We believe this is a dignified way for young homeless people to earn money, whilst also giving them membership of a supportive group that can and does help the young people find places to live and make creative choices about their lives.
- * You could give your support to organisations that campaign on behalf of homeless young people, we have given their contact addresses below

The sources for the information contained within this action sheet are CHAR (Housing Campaign for Single People) 5-15 Cromer Street, London, WC1H 8LS; BIG ISSUE, 4 Albion Place, Galena Road, London W6 0LT; SHELTER, 88 Old Street, London, 1V 9HU; Campaign Against Poverty, 47 Upper Lloyd Street, Manchester M14 4HY
Donations can also be made to: Crisis North West, 84 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GX

REPLY SLIP

I would like to receive future copies of the Action Sheet. Please send my copy to

Name _____ Address _____

Postcode _____ I would like to make a donation of £ _____

Return to: Community Action Projects, c/o Housing Projects Advisory Service (HPAS), St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ

Young Homeless People Action Sheet

December 1993

Issue No. 1

Why this Action Sheet?

These are hard times to be young and homeless, and it is getting harder and harder for ordinary members of the public to ignore the reality of this. You have only to walk along the streets of any town or city and you soon become aware of this fact. It used to be something we thought happened only in London. After all - we told ourselves - young people have always been attracted to the myth that the streets there are paved with gold. If young people would only stay put instead of gallivanting down South they wouldn't get into such a mess.

But now we're having to wake up to the reality of seeing the same problem on our own doorstep. We walk down any High Street, or through any Arndale Centre and it's rare not to be stopped by someone begging. This is only one expression of young homelessness but nonetheless it is causing many more people to examine their reactions to this increasing problem. How are we supposed to react? Do you give to nobody, or everybody or only to the most polite?

These are some of the questions that we hope to explore in this first edition of our Action Sheet.

But first some information about what we are trying to do.

Who do we want to read this Action Sheet?

We are convinced that there are many ordinary members of the public who worry about what is happening to young people in this situation. After all it could be our daughter or son or friend or relation. We know that there are lots of professional workers and organisations working hard to try and address this problem. But it is difficult for the ordinary member of the public to know what they can do to help. We hope that this action sheet will in a small way fill this gap. We want to try and provide accurate information about young homelessness for our readership - maybe this will help you to challenge negative views that you may hear at the bus stop or on the telly. We also want to try and give you some practical ideas about ways in which you might help. We want to try and ensure that young people's voices will be heard through this sheet - a part of each edition will be devoted to hearing what they have to say.

Who is writing this sheet?

Community Action Projects (CAP) is a small network of people who believe that action by ordinary people is important, we have been involved with homeless young people in Greater Manchester for the past 15 years. During this time we have established a number of pioneering housing schemes for homeless young people which we have run in association with other groups. We always stress the need to listen to what young people are saying about their needs and not to assume that in some way we know what is best for them. Our schemes have been characterised by an emphasis on independence and good quality accommodation. We have written about our work in a number of publications and these have been influential in the development of housing plans for young people nationally.

What we hope to do now

We intend producing four copies of this Action Sheet per year. We hope that you will want to receive the Action Sheet - there will be no charge though donations would be welcome from those who can afford it towards our production and running costs. The cost of the first year's production will in part be met by a generous bequest by one of our young residents who tragically died after a distressing illness. We believe he would approve of our attempt to help more people understand the kind of problems that made his own life so much more painful and difficult than it should have been.

If you would like to receive future copies please fill in the reply slip on page 4.

Any spare change, please....?

Why young people beg

Many of us have been struck by the increasing numbers of young people who can be found in the high streets of our towns and cities begging for money. It is shocking because we associate begging with societies past and present that lack the resources or the will to eradicate poverty. Surely in 1990's Great Britain it is entirely unnecessary for anyone to resort to begging? If this is the case then the young people who beg are clearly imposters, they must be workshy and lazy and are knowingly exploiting the kindness of others. 'Why don't they just go home to their parents', as Mrs T. said: 'There are a number of young people who choose voluntarily to leave home; I do not think that we can be expected, no matter how many there are to provide units for them....those young people already have a home to live in, belonging to their parents' (Margaret Thatcher, Hansard, HoC, 7 June 1988)
If we have never had to beg ourselves, don't know anyone amongst our family or friends who do, then it is easy to jump to these conclusions, but if you investigate further these easy assumptions begin to breakdown.

So what are the facts?:

- * There are approximately 150,000 young homeless people in the UK
- * Homelessness amongst young people is mainly caused by family breakdown, escape from abuse and violence, eviction and lifestyle issues such as sexuality.
- * Young people leaving care are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless. This is due to the lack preparation for independence and the unavailability of support once they have left care
- * Changes in benefit rights mean that 18 - 24 year olds receive a lower rate of benefit than older people. Unemployed 16 - 17 year olds have no automatic right to benefit. It is estimated that almost 100,000 young people receive no benefits. (Young people between the ages of 16 and 17 who have left school are not entitled to claim income support. The government justifies this by saying that it will guarantee every 16 and 17 year old a place on a Youth Training Scheme; however the government has been unable to honour this guarantee)
- * The number of 16 and 17 year olds unemployed in Britain in 1992 was 124,800 (17.6%). For young people of ethnic minorities this rises to 37.6%
- * Young homeless people are often refused one-off payments by social security offices for furniture, which combined with the above changes reduces young people's ability to secure and maintain accommodation
- * There is a shortage of appropriate, affordable rented accommodation as a result of the decline of the private sector, the reduction in the building of public housing, the increase in owner occupation and the increase in homelessness of families
- * There are problems associated with being homeless such as the impact on physical health, the loss of self esteem and an increase in depression and anxiety
- * Exposure to drugs and alcohol, to criminal activities and prostitution is increased which inevitably leads to risks of being criminalised

In these circumstances perhaps it is unsurprising that young people are pushed into the indignity of having to beg. There is a sense of worthlessness and alienation from the wider society which seems to be uncaring and hostile. Yet all young people including homeless young people have much to offer society, they are our future, so why do we do so little to assist them?

NEXT ISSUE: Young homeless people leaving care and the Children Act - what is supposed to happen and what really happens and what you can do about it.

Any spare change, please....?

Why I beg: These are the two views expressed by people when faced with the hard choice of begging for money

Dawn

"I swallowed my pride..... and started asking for money"

'I have been begging for the last six weeks. I started because my social security giro was stopped after I had two stolen from the house I was living in. They suspected fraud and stopped my money, while they investigated the theft. That was six weeks ago and I have had no income since then. I still have my flat but there is no electricity 'cause I can't afford to pay the bills. I tried to get help from the CAB but they can only help try to sort out my problem and they can't do that immediately. My friends have tried to help, but I hate to owe money, so I swallowed my pride and went on the street and started asking for money.'

John

"The first few times I did it I hated myself, its horrible when people just ignore you"

'The first few times I did it I hated myself, it's horrible when people just ignore you...that's the worst, or when you get sworn at and told to piss off. After a while you get a sense of who is more likely to give you money and how to ask and even though it makes you feel shitty you get used to it. In your mind you think about what you will do with the money - a coffee, some food and yes a drink sometimes, as much as anything else to numb yourself from that feeling of being pissed off all the time. I don't know anyone who likes begging, it's just something you have to do ... I suppose I could shoplift, rob from cars, sell my body, but I don't think that's any better do you?'

Why I give or why I don't: These are the four views offered by people when they are approached by someone asking for money

Jane

"I often don't know how to react"

'When I'm asked for money on the street I often don't know how to react, I'm ashamed to say I have crossed over the street rather than have to say no. Sometimes I give and sometimes I don't, it really depends, I suppose, on how I feel on that day. When I think about it I know if I had to beg I would hope that someone would show me a kindness. I am shocked sometimes by the youth of people who ask me for money, especially young girls. I wonder where their parents are and why they have to do it. It can't be right to have to beg at that age, or any age really'.

Graham

"The police should put a stop to it"

'I can't understand or have any sympathy for those young scroungers who ask for money. They are conning well meaning people and have no intention of spending the money on anything other than drink -- the police should put a stop to it - it is against the law you know'

Denzil

"I give money to anyone who asks me"

'I've been there, no money and no where to go, I can't forget how hard that was. I give money to anyone who asks me - I know it doesn't change anything but at least it shows that particular youngster that we're not all too busy getting on with our lives to care'

Pat

"I give money to a homelessness charity"

'I never give to people who ask me for money, I find that it's very upsetting to see young people begging but I really believe it would make no difference if I gave a £1 or £2. In fact it perpetuates the problem - and anyway where do you stop? Instead I give money to a homelessness charity because I know they will do something constructive with my donation.'

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THANKS!

To the 100 plus new subscribers who responded to our request to return the reply slip, we are very encouraged by this response, it may not seem a large response, but it is a great base to build on and has given us the confidence to continue our efforts. Thanks also to those of you who donated money toward the costs of the production of the newsletter. If you haven't already done so, fill in and return the reply slip.

NEXT EDITION

PROVIDING SERVICES FOR YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE

- * Who provides support to young homeless people and does it make a difference?
- * What works? - examples of good practice
- * Find out how you could help

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Young Homeless People Action Sheet

March 1994 Issue No. 2

Can't live at home, can't leave home

The catch 22 facing young homeless people aged 16 to 18 years old

Leaving home is one of the most important steps on the road to independent adulthood. In this second issue of the Action Sheet we examine the reasons why homelessness amongst young people is increasing so rapidly. Our first issue focussed on the reasons so many young people beg on the streets and gave voice to their concerns (see issue 1: "Any spare change please") This is an obvious sign of the existence of homeless young people in our society. So how do they get there?

There are 150,000 homeless young people in Britain. Since 1988 agencies working with homeless people have reported a drastic increase in the numbers of 16 to 17 year olds who are becoming homeless. This issue will consider the role of government and local authorities in tackling the legitimate aspirations of young people to begin to lead an independent life.

LEAVING HOME - A NATURAL PROCESS Leaving home is a very natural process, we all do it sooner or later. For some of us it has to be sooner. It is salutary to remind ourselves of how we made the transition from living at home to becoming independent. For most of us, if we are lucky leaving home is

part of a natural process of making a better life for ourselves - seeking employment; securing a place at college; starting our own family. In doing so we often needed and received support and encouragement for some years - loans of money, gifts of furniture and visits from and to friends and family. The most

privileged of us may find supported accommodation at college, where it is recognised that we all need a helping hand, for instance a college counsellor may be available if we are finding it difficult to cope and an understanding bank manager who may assist us if we get into debt.

SCAPEGOATING YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE

A recent MORI poll showed that almost all young people expect to leave home by the time they are twenty five. Yet, over the last five years or more there has been a concerted attack on some young people who have had to make this transition at an early age. In fact the government seems to be scapegoating some young people who leave home, presenting them as feckless, fun seeking adventurers who should remain in their family homes. A case of "Get on your bike - Not"

The most recent example of this attack on young people is contained in the new proposals announced by the government on 20th January 1994 which were published in the consultation paper "Access to local authority and housing association tenancies". The paper aims to solve the problem of homelessness by redefining the definition of what is meant by 'homelessness'. It does this by excluding from the definition some groups of people currently regarded as homeless. It also relies far more on temporary forms of accommodation rather than offering secure homes.

This will mean that providing a bed for a young person in your home for a few nights, or providing them with emergency accommodation (as many voluntary organisations do) will deny the young person any right to assistance from the local authority as they are no longer "roofless". The implications of this for young people are potentially very damaging with more young people being left to cope on the streets, in unsuitable temporary accommodation or in emergency hostels, with no foreseeable way out.

Another effect of the proposals will be to place the onus on Social

Service Departments (SSDs) to be the main providers of accommodation for young people because of their responsibilities under the Children Act. As we will show, the SSDs are unable to meet their current responsibilities under the act. They will undoubtedly be overwhelmed with the extra numbers of young people likely to need assistance.

LEAVING HOME IN CRISIS

If it was the case that large numbers of very young people were freely choosing to leave home for the bright lights as the government insists then perhaps the increasing restrictions would make sense. Unfortunately the evidence paints quite a different picture. Young people often leave home because they have no choice or they have no parental home to leave in the first place. A common cause for leaving in an unplanned way is conflict at home, events that leave the young person feeling they have no option but to go.

The following commonly reported reasons for leaving in these circumstances include:-

- * Lack of room at home
- * "coming out" as gay or lesbian
- * being a victim of physical or sexual abuse
- * loss of the family home as a result of parents splitting up

Comments by young people about why they left home

MARIE

"I had this job and I thought if I don't take it I'm going to regret it for the rest of my life. I was all for it actually up until the day I got dumped into London and my dad finally left me, I wanted to go running after him and say 'take me home, take me home, I

don't want to do it anymore, it's been a bad mistake.'

DAVE

"My Dad asked me if I was gay, so I said yes it's true, next thing my bags went flying out the door and he said I don't want no faggot in the house, I tried to keep a stiff upper lip until I actually got on the bus and I was approaching town and just burst out crying"

SARA

"I didn't think I was homeless, 'cos I had friends who would put me up. But when I think of it now, it was really homelessness: you had nobody there to help, to take the parents' role"

PAUL

"The childrens home was my home. It was only when I started running away that I classed myself as homeless, but I wasn't in a sense because I still had a childrens home there when I wanted to go back I used to walk the streets at night but then after two days I used to go back. I'd had enough."

BEING IN CARE AND NO SUPPORT

Other young people have no parental home to leave having spent most of their lives in the care of the Local Authority. Each year around 8,000 young people leave care and have no home to return to. Centrepoint, an accommodation project in Soho, London found that 41% of the young people they helped had been in care and nearly a third had spent nearly all of their lives in care before being kicked out when they were sixteen.

THE CHILDREN ACT - A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

So, having dealt with some of the issues that lead 16 to 18 year olds to leave home, why is that our welfare

services have failed to provide adequate support? Agencies working with young people have long recognised that there has been a gap in provision, particularly for young people leaving care (in fact Community Action Projects - authors of this Action Sheet - were writing about this concern ten years ago). Eventually the government responded by including new responsibilities for Local Authorities in the 1989 Children Act. Under this act Local Authorities are supposed to ensure that there is provision for "after care schemes", Local Authorities are also required to prepare young people in their care for independence.

Although there is evidence that some LAs are responding to this need, there is still a long way to go and this progress is being impeded by the constraints on LA funding (it is important to remember that the new Act was not accompanied by additional resources).

What about the young people who have not been in care and need assistance? Importantly and less well recognised is the fact that the Act does give them rights. Under the act SSDs should also ensure that there is provision:

"for young people whose welfare that authority considers likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide him (sic) with accommodation".

It is quite clear that the original intention of the Act is not being fulfilled. This is acknowledged by Tim Yeo, the then junior minister at the Department of Health who admitted;

"The Department acknowledges that there are a number of young people (eg amongst the single homeless) who have not been in care but who

present similar needs to their peers who have experienced the care system. It is the intention that the relevant sections of the Children Act will be applied to the benefit of those who are in need but who have not necessarily been in care."

However, CHAR (The Housing Campaign for Single People) in their 1993 survey have conclusively shown that this is not happening. In the survey they found that only 4% of Social Services Departments interviewed felt that they had the adequate financial resources to meet the needs of homeless young people of 16 and 17 years. Only 10% have a stated policy to accept all homeless 16 and 17 year olds being entitled to accommodation under the act. In this report CHAR urges that all 16 and 17 year olds who approach SSDs for help should be assessed and accepted as being in need and that their welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced without the provision of accommodation and support.

ACTION POINTS

* With the impending local and European elections it would be valuable to find out from your prospective local councillors and Euro MP whether your SSD is treating homeless 16 and 17 year olds as a distinct priority category. Is your SSD one of the 10% who have a stated policy to accept all homeless 16 and 17 year olds under the act? - if not, ask why not? Putting pressure on your local authority councillors and the chairs of the housing and social services committees

to act in accordance with the law, shows that the public is concerned and is demanding action

* Write to your MP and ask how they intend to vote on the recently announced government proposals to reduce access to Local Authority housing only to people who are in immediate crisis and where they have no accommodation. Young people who have been thrown out by family or friends would not be automatically treated as homeless under these proposals

* You could consider becoming a volunteer with a local housing project for young people, or by joining a management committee of a voluntary organisation and using your knowledge or skills to assist the group to develop. To find out how you could help, contact your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) it would be appreciated.

Sources:

Young homelessness a national scandal by the Young Homelessness Group (YHG), 2nd floor, Livonia Street, W1V 3PH

Reassessing priorities - The Children Act 1989 - A CHAR Report by Jacqui Mc Cluske, CHAR, 5 - 15 Cromer Street, LONDON, WC1H 8LF

ACTION POINTS

We hope you enjoy the game of snakes and ladders designed for us by Dave from "Fluke and Black Elephant Graphix". We hope it illustrates the hazards of leaving home in a non jargonised way. If you feel you want to help you could do one of the following:

- Write to John Major in response to his statement on begging. Write to him and ask him not to blame the victims and to understand the issues of social justice and inequalities in society that lead to homelessness.
- Ask your local Councillor/Chair of Housing what provision there is for young people in your area.
- Assist in setting up self-build/co-ops (do you know any buildings that could be suitable)
- This edition has been designed as a game and a poster - can you get it displayed in local libraries/youth centres etc - contact us for extra copies if you want them!!

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Thanks!

- To the magazines Child-

right, Young People Now and Inside Housing for advertising the action sheet.

- To new subscribers who responded to our request to return the reply slip.
- Thanks also to those of you who donated money toward the costs of the production of the newsletter.
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Next edition

Good quality services for homeless young people Who provides support to young homeless people and does it make a difference? What works? - examples of good practice and otherwise

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Young Homeless People Action Sheet

July 1994

Issue No. 3

"A VERY OFFENSIVE PROBLEM....."?

But whose problem is it - find out inside in with "Room at the top???" - a game of hazard, luck and skill played by young homeless people every day.....

John Major hit the headlines recently with his attacks on begging, saying, "It is not acceptable to be out on the street. There is no justification for it these days....It is a very offensive problem to many people who see it.....(In areas that depend on tourism) it is damaging to everyone if that sort of activity continues. If people are in desperately straitened circumstances we have a social security safety net in this country which they can use. I think the law should be used. It is there. It is an offensive thing to beg. It is necessary. If so I think people should be very rigorous with it".

Begging certainly is offensive, but not for the reasons John Major gives. It is offensive that in a developed society it should be necessary for people to beg. As we highlighted in our first issue, many people on the streets are young people - a new kind of beggar who has come into existence largely as a result of the government's own policies. One key reason why young people are now homeless and begging is because when John Major was Social Security Secretary he ended the entitlement of 16 and 17 year olds to Income

Support, thus taking away the safety net which had always existed for young people who were unable to get a job or a training course.

Centrepoint, which houses young people at risk in central London, reacted to John Major's comments by saying, "The reason young people beg is simple - they don't have any money, what does the Prime Minister expect them to do?" Before 1988 surveys by Centrepoint found that none of the young people were begging. Since the government cut benefits for young people the number of young people begging has risen steadily. This is true in the experience of most agencies working with homeless young people.

In recent years members of the public have become increasingly aware of and alarmed by the growing number of young people begging on the street. It is more than ironic that the Prime Minister should react to public concern not by providing constructive answers to the problem, but by condemning the very young people who are suffering from a situation he created.

The answer the Prime Minister

offers is that members of the public should report young people who are begging - so that they can be prosecuted and fined. But since they will not be able to afford to pay fines they will inevitably end up in prison. As we all know it is very costly to keep people in prison (and prisons are overstretched anyway) - so why don't we spend the money on properly supported bedsits and other suitable accommodation? And do we really want to see young people criminalised for being poor? So we want them to mix with hardened criminals and perhaps learn that an alternative to begging would be to turn to crime?

In the inside pages of this Action Sheet we show the processes involved in young people becoming homeless in a visual way - which we hope makes the issues understandable and accessible. It is vital that we understand these processes so that as a society we try to intervene effectively at appropriate stages, offering advice and practical support to young people who are vulnerable. Otherwise we fail those who are supposed to be our future.

"ROOM AT THE TOP"



A GAME OF HAZARD, LUCK & SKILL (WITH THE DICE LOADED AGAINST YOU)

The idea of this game (loosely based on the fabulous game of snakes and ladders) is to turn your personal tragedy of becoming homeless into the glory of becoming a successful home owner! Pit your wits against council officials / muggers / government policy. **There's not much room at the top but there's plenty at the bottom!** Move your counters (not included) around the streets of life doing as your told. To complete, you **must** land on no.49. **No extra** goes if you throw a 6. Good luck. You'll need it...



a fluke and black elephantastic thang ©1994

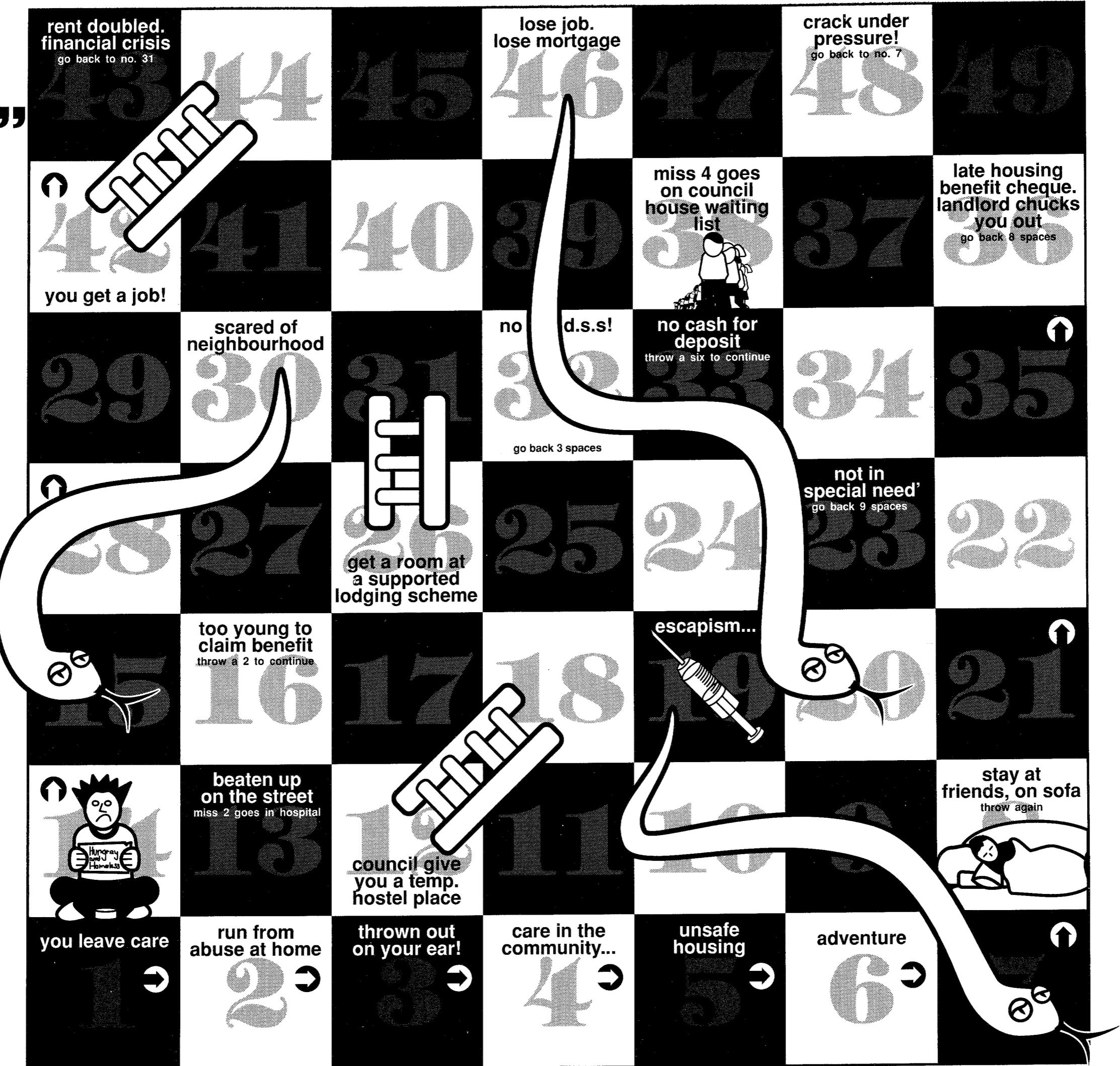
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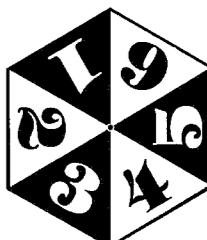
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Hosanna!!! You succeeded in successfully living in your own home. The nightmare of the homelessness of the dark lonely streets is behind you! All is rosy in the garden - life is looking good.

However, beware... Have you paid all your debts? Are those bailiffs knocking on your door? Are the foundations of your house really secure? Are those rising interest rates? Will your past catch up with you? Will you 'go down' next month? Is that a motorway that's being



Young Homeless People Action Sheet

ACTION SHEET INFORMATION

WHY THIS ACTION SHEET?

THESE ARE HARD TIMES TO BE YOUNG AND HOMELESS, AND IT IS GETTING HARDER AND HARDER FOR ORDINARY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO IGNORE THE REALITY OF THIS. YOU HAVE ONLY TO WALK ALONG THE STREETS OF ANY TOWN OR CITY AND YOU SOON BECOME AWARE OF THIS FACT.

WHO DO WE WANT TO READ THIS ACTION SHEET?

WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THERE ARE MANY ORDINARY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO WORRY ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS SITUATION. AFTER ALL IT COULD BE OUR DAUGHTER OR SON OR FRIEND OR RELATION. WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE LOTS OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS AND ORGANISATIONS WORKING HARD TO TRY AND ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM. BUT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE ORDINARY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC TO KNOW WHAT THEY CAN DO TO HELP. WE HOPE THAT THIS ACTION SHEET WILL IN A SMALL WAY FILL THIS GAP. WE WANT TO TRY AND PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUNG HOMELESSNESS FOR OUR READERSHIP - MAYBE THIS WILL HELP YOU TO CHALLENGE NEGATIVE VIEWS THAT YOU MAY HEAR AT THE BUS STOP OR ON THE TELLY. WE ALSO WANT TO TRY AND GIVE YOU SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS ABOUT WAYS IN WHICH YOU MIGHT HELP.

WHO IS WRITING THIS SHEET?

COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS (CAP IS A SMALL NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THAT ACTION BY ORDINARY PEOPLE IS IMPORTANT), WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN GREATER MANCHESTER FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS. DURING THIS TIME WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A NUMBER OF PIONEERING HOUSING SCHEMES FOR HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE WHICH WE HAVE RUN IN ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER GROUPS. WE ALWAYS STRESS THE NEED TO LISTEN TO WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THEIR NEEDS AND NOT TO ASSUME THAT IN SOME WAY WE KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM. OUR SCHEMES HAVE BEEN CHARACTERISED BY AN EMPHASIS ON INDEPENDENCE AND GOOD QUALITY ACCOMMODATION. WE HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT OUR WORK IN A NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS AND THESE HAVE BEEN INFLUENTIAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING PLANS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONALLY.

WHAT WE HOPE TO DO NOW

WE INTEND PRODUCING FOUR COPIES OF THIS ACTION SHEET PER YEAR. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL WANT TO RECEIVE THE ACTION SHEET - THERE WILL BE NO CHARGE THOUGH DONATIONS WOULD BE WELCOME FROM THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT TOWARDS OUR PRODUCTION AND RUNNING COSTS. THE COST OF THE FIRST YEAR'S PRODUCTION WILL IN PART BE MET BY A GENEROUS BEQUEST BY ONE OF OUR YOUNG RESIDENTS WHO TRAGICALLY DIED AFTER A DISTRESSING ILLNESS. WE BELIEVE HE WOULD APPROVE OF OUR ATTEMPT TO HELP MORE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE KIND OF PROBLEMS THAT MADE HIS OWN LIFE SO MUCH MORE PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT THAN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

THANKS!

TO THE NEW SUBSCRIBERS WHO RESPONDED TO OUR REQUEST TO RETURN THE REPLY SLIP, WE ARE VERY ENCOURAGED BY THIS RESPONSE, IT IS A GREAT BASE TO BUILD ON AND HAS GIVEN US THE CONFIDENCE TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS.

REPLY SLIP

I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE FUTURE COPIES OF THE ACTION SHEET.

PLEASE SEND MY COPY TO:

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION OF £ _____

RETURN TO: COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS, C/O HOUSING PROJECTS ADVISORY SERVICE
(HPAS), ST THOMAS CENTRE, ARDWICK GREEN NORTH, MANCHESTER, M12 6FZ

Number 4

Winter 1994

SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE? A CONSUMERS GUIDE

In previous action sheets we have looked at some of the pressures that lead young people to find themselves on the streets, and we have looked at our own responses to begging and homelessness. In this issue we look specifically at what kind of provision is needed to give homeless young people the chance to become independent and make a new start in life.

There are all sorts of models of provision for young people. Should we build more hostels? What about foyers - a new idea from France which links providing accommodation with employment opportunities? Are shared flats or houses a good idea? Would it be better to encourage young people to return home?

It is important when thinking about what kind of provision is needed to remember that what most young people are looking for is independence, and a chance to make choices and decisions about their own future and life-style. Homeless young people are very varied individuals, and they will turn into very varied adults. So there is no one path which will suit everybody.

Some young people need a lot of support and encouragement; they know little about the world or what they want out of it. For others the key issue is independence; they want and need to strike out on their own, make their own decisions and mistakes, choose their own life-style and futures. We therefore need a range of schemes which offer various levels of support. However, any scheme must have its ultimate aim that young people should become independent and self-supporting. In the past too many schemes have been set up which have trapped young people in unsatisfactory shared accommodation.

Such schemes often get started because of assumptions that young people are unable to cope on their own. The experience of Community Action Projects over the years has been that even young people with severe problems can successfully live independently. To assume otherwise is often to trap young people in the very problems from which they are trying to escape.

Schemes have to recognise the need for appropriate support, but in a way which increases independence rather than undermines it. In this issue we look at a number of possible models of provision for homeless young people, and consider their strengths and weaknesses in relation to this key concept of fostering independence and growth.

This is not a theoretical debate. In many local areas councils and voluntary groups will be working on the issue of young homelessness. What provision is there in your area at the moment? How does it rate on the criteria of providing independence and dignity to young people? Is there more that could be done? Are there models from elsewhere which could form the basis of local debate about new provision?

WE HOPE THIS ACTION SHEET WILL HELP YOU TO GET INVOLVED LOCALLY IN A CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE ON THE ISSUES OR EVEN TO THINK ABOUT SETTING UP SUCH SCHEMES IN YOUR AREA

THE 1994 - 95 CONSUMER GUIDE

These are a range of projects that provide for young people in housing need, some are better than others. We believe they all, in some way, embody the right level of support and protection for young people whilst recognising their right to find independence. Not all of these schemes are high cost and in some cases require only the commitment of volunteers to set up:

SUPPORTED LODGING SCHEMES: Lodging or "Landlady" schemes is an updating of another traditional source of accommodation for young people that all but dried up in the last twenty years or was monopolised by students. A number of agencies have established schemes which provide lodgings with families for young homeless people (eg NACRO).

KEY POINTS: Some young people appreciate the home environment and it is a stepping stone to fuller independence. However for other young people the constraints inherent in living within a family are not attractive (a desire to come home late, playing music loud) and they want more independence.

CONTACT: **TANYA ADAMS, NORTH WEST SUPPORTED LODGING FORUM, NACRO, WARRINGTON, 0925 - 245161 - OR - THE NDU, RETURNING HOME NETWORK, CENTREPOINT, BEELLWAY HOUSE, 2 SWALLOW PLACE, WIR 7AA, TEL: 071 629 2229**

NIGHT STOP SCHEMES: This low cost service provides emergency accommodation for young people in the homes of volunteers. Often coordinated by an advice service, these schemes use ordinary homes as a source of overnight emergency accommodation, giving the service more time to find a long term solution for the young person. CAP initiated such a scheme in Manchester in the 1970's.

This is a good option for young people who can be traumatised by their situation, fearing the hostels and nightshelters and appreciate the friendlier non-institutional atmosphere of someone's home. These schemes are particularly necessary in areas where there is no other form of emergency provision for young people.

KEY POINTS: Such schemes can provide low cost, practical support for homeless young people and gives an opportunity for communities to show their concern for young people in trouble. These projects need to be linked to longer term solutions and need to be well coordinated. They provide respite but are not a long term answer. Volunteers need to be well supported and made aware of possible risks inherent in such schemes (the need to provide late night support, being careful over possible breakages and loss of possessions)

CONTACT: **NATIONAL NIGHTSTOP NETWORK - GREG THOMPSON, NIGHTSTOP, 53 CARDIGAN LANE, BIRLEY, LEEDS, LS4 2LE;**

SELF CONTAINED ACCOMMODATION WITH SUPPORT: The level of provision of self contained flats with support has been growing in the last 10 years. These schemes have been developed as a response to the needs of any young people who wish to be as independent as possible, whilst having access to practical and emotional support when needed. Often managed by housing associations, sometimes in partnership with voluntary organisations and increasingly with the support of Social Services Departments looking to provide for young people who have been in care.

KEY POINTS: These schemes were pioneered in the 1970's and 1980's by CAP and other agencies alongside Housing Associations who responded to the inadequacy of types of provision that promoted independence. Transitional provision, that acknowledges young people's aspirations to independence, (whilst understanding that like us all, young people need to gain experience of living away from home) is needed in most communities.

CONTACT: **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS, 175 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, WC1X 8UP TEL: 071 - 278 6571**
(ASK FOR REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT FOR INVOLVED HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS)

THE FOYER: In the same way as universities and colleges provide accommodation, *foyers* proposes to provide accommodation to young people in housing need undergoing training. The Foyer movement is relatively new to this country and originated in France after the 2nd World War, providing accommodation for young people moving into the towns from the countryside seeking work. The first foyers are opening around the country (Salford, Nottingham, London etc) and are receiving support from Housing Associations, businesses and the government.

KEY POINTS: These schemes are attractive to those young people who are seeking training away from their home town or are homeless and seeking work. Concerns have been expressed about the tying of housing and training/employment opportunities, particularly if problems arise. The fear is that the young person could lose both their home and training, if they fall foul of the training programme (or the other way round). There is also concern that the training opportunities offered are in low skill and low pay sectors.

CONTACT: **FOYER FEDERATION (YOUNG PEOPLES ACCOMMODATION, TRAINING AND JOB NETWORK), 91 BRICK LANE, LONDON, E1 6QN TEL: 071 377 9789**

RETURNING HOME SCHEMES: A 1990's variation on the supported schemes described above. These schemes seek to resettle homeless young people in London and in other metropolitan areas by establishing purpose built self contained accommodation for young people in local communities. This is seen both as a preventive measure for those young people thinking of leaving their own community because of the lack of local housing (eg. to move to London or other metropolitan areas) - and - as a point of return for young people who have become homeless in London. There are 14 schemes providing a range of resettlement services and also high quality and accessible housing with support and these schemes have been financially supported by the Government as part of its "Rough Sleeping" initiative.

KEY POINTS: Returning Home Schemes provide high quality self contained accommodation with support. Such schemes often have to charge high rents, which even if they are set at the market price are very expensive for a young person to afford, unless in receipt of housing benefit and income support. Young people *can* find themselves in a poverty trap with little incentive to seek employment or to move on. However, they do acknowledge many young people's search for independent living opportunities. There are 14 funded projects in the UK and are a valuable addition to available provision.

CONTACT: **KIM HITCHCOCK, CDF, 60 HIGBURY GROVE, LONDON NS 2AG - OR - THE NDU, RETURNING HOME NETWORK, CENTREPOINT, BEELLWAY HOUSE, 2 SWALLOW PLACE, WIR 7AA, TEL: 071 629 2229**

SELF BUILD SCHEMES: Another approach to providing accommodation for young people is the self build movement. This movement seeks to provide a home, employment and skills at the same time. These projects are often aimed at young people in insecure accommodation and provides a constructive and long term housing solution, whilst increasing the self esteem and pride of the young person.

KEY POINTS: This scheme will only be attractive to a percentage of young people, however it is an imaginative concept. A study of 10 self build schemes has been published by Charities Projects/Joseph Rowntrees Foundation entitled "*I've started so I'll finish*" available from National Federation of Housing Associations, 175 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8UP

CONTACT: **MS FRANCIS WATSON, COMMUNITY SELF BUILD AGENCY, UNIT 26, FINSBURY BUSINESS CENTRE, 40 BOWLING GREEN LANE, LONDON, EC1R ONE OR THE NFHA (SEE ADDRESS ABOVE)**