

# BEYOND 4 WALLS

## MAKING OUR VOICE HEARD

What young people really think about  
housing and communities





# YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES -LOUD AND CLEAR

## "WHAT'S BEYOND4WALLS?"

Beyond4Walls is a youth research project involving 12 young people aged 14 to 21 from different parts of Glasgow coming together to discuss and explore issues about our housing and communities. Although we're from different backgrounds, we share a common goal of bringing the voices of other young people to a wider audience and helping to make a positive difference.

Over the past year, we have worked together with support from the Poverty Alliance, Children in Scotland and Wheatley Group. We had discussions about how we feel about our communities and took part in community walks around Glasgow. We also carried out a survey to try to find out other young people's views on housing, interviewed our peers and used social media to share our impressions of being a new young tenant. This is called **Participatory Peer Research** meaning that the research was carried out **with** young people rather than **on** young people.

In the group, we shared our views on different topics, like housing support and feeling safe. This helped us learn more about lots of issues and get our opinions heard. It also gave us the chance to affect change in our communities and to challenge the stigma experienced by young people.

Working in this way has helped us develop a range of skills and become more confident.

We would like housing providers to know what young people actually think about their housing and communities instead of assuming what they think. **We think housing providers should listen to young people's voices more often!**

### DID YOU KNOW?

Taking part in participatory research can:

- help you find a job you're interested in
- connect you with people who have different backgrounds and experiences
- help you to have a better awareness of human rights and democracy

## WHAT WE DID AND WHY?

People who have experience of something are the BEST people to influence change! We believe in talking directly to people in communities and then sharing their ideas with decision makers.

Data (information!) is often stronger through peer research. This could be because people are more open to sharing their views with people they can relate to and who speak the same language as them. Doing research this way can feel more comfortable if you're talking about tricky subjects. Participatory research increases the chances for young people to design services that meet the needs of everyone in the community.



## WHAT WE LEARNED

We've found that, through this work, we feel more confident, we know more about our communities and how to communicate with others. It's helped us get better at thinking independently and having a voice in our communities. We feel like we've contributed to our communities by reflecting and conveying others' experiences to shape future policies on housing.

We were involved in all stages of our research and the questions we asked were shaped by our experiences and priorities.



This is more than just research; it's about appreciating the talents and skills within communities and finding a way to build on these strengths. Young people should be at the heart of how decisions are made in communities and this way of working takes steps towards making this a reality.



### DID YOU KNOW?

This way of working is supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC). Article 12 of this convention says that children have a right to be heard and for their views to be taken seriously. Doing research with peers in our communities is a great way to make our voices heard collectively!

## HOW WE DID IT!

WE CHOSE A VARIETY OF METHODS TO GET OUR DATA

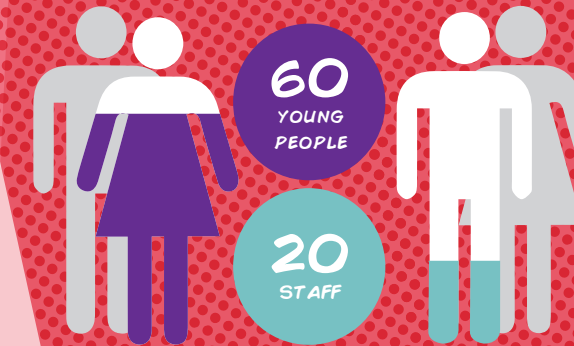
### SURVEYS:

**Questionnaires for lots of people.**

As a team, we designed a survey for young people (16-25) and one for housing staff, then carefully studied the data.

This method is quick and allows you to get the opinions of lots of people easily, especially if you use online tools like SurveyMonkey.

We heard from over 80 people!



### ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS:

**A detailed chat with one person.**

We completed one-on-one interviews with friends or colleagues. This allowed us to ask in-depth questions, building on what we'd learned from the surveys.

### FOCUS GROUPS:

**A chat with a group of people.**

We carried out four focus groups which were larger and livelier, compared with our interviews.

After each interview and focus group, we typed up a copy of every word said. We then studied this, to make sure that we all understood what we'd heard. We grouped the data into themes like safety, youth services and overcrowding. This let us see the patterns!

### ETHNOGRAPHIC WORK:

**Putting yourself in someone else's shoes and recording how you feel.**

We all agreed that the ethnographic work was the most interesting part of this project. As far as we know, this hasn't been done before in housing research, so we felt excited and nervous!

This involved the older research team 'moving in' to a Glasgow Housing Association flat for the day. We were given the keys by a GHA Housing Officer and we considered all the feelings a young person might experience in this situation.

We used 'social reporting' to record our experience. This meant posting updates on Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter – using the hashtag **#TenancyTakeover**. We also recorded thoughts and feelings on SoundCloud and YouTube. We then designed a Storify showing what we'd done and how others had engaged with our research.



#TenancyTakeover



# OUR FINDINGS

## POSSIBLE HOMES AND DREAM HOMES

We found that young people didn't have a good knowledge about housing options, but felt they knew most about social housing. Many expressed frustration and confusion towards the social housing points system and some thought that there's a lack of understanding of the realities of life amongst their peers.

**"He's sheltered, he probably thinks you can get a house easily but... I know it's not that easy."**

Some felt that housing staff worked more with communities nowadays and tried to make things better.

**"I think years ago where areas were rough, [housing associations] kept away. They're going into them, kinda tackling them... playing a bigger part now and they're getting into the community... back in the day, they just dealt with the rent."**

Young people voiced the stigma sometimes attached to social housing.

**"The people aren't going to change. Things might change but it'd go back to this again. The place might change but people would just wreck it again."**

Young people saw a lack of social housing as a barrier forcing them to turn to other options, like private renting, but this made them feel vulnerable to the risk of expensive rents and dealing with private landlords or agencies.

Many shared worrying experiences; like not getting deposits back, hidden costs and 'odgy' landlords.

**"He was like, 'three girls, great, you can pay but you can pay in other ways.'"**

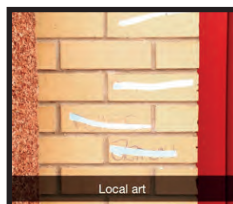
The benefits of social housing were also discussed such as free repairs. There was concern that repair services can take ages and that things often need fixing.

**"They obviously want more people in their houses but they need to take care of them properly."**

Whilst many saw home ownership as an investment, most homeowners we spoke to felt that this had only been possible because they'd got a mortgage as a couple. Secure jobs and two incomes made a huge difference and young people recognised that.

**"...it was pretty straightforward, but [they] know that's not the case for everyone."**

However not all understood what a mortgage was or how they could get one; this was a real gap in knowledge.



Deposits! Savings! Guarantors! All seen as barriers for many. A guarantor is someone who says they'll be your backup for rent or mortgage payments - but not everyone has someone in their life who could do this, and students from abroad need to find a British guarantor; that's a big ask!



Other barriers for young people include access to employment, affordability and budgeting...after all,

**"Money makes the world go round."**

People also told us that choice about where they live and in what type of accommodation was really important.

## STUFF THAT GETS IN THE WAY ON OUR JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

Issues with jobs: Unemployment and lack of jobs were key themes from the study. Young people stressed the importance on finding well-paid, stable jobs but felt there's a lack of these opportunities.

**"There is nothing here, no jobs, no nothing."**

And they couldn't believe that some

**"People from universities are coming out with these degrees and they are working in McDonalds and stuff. What kind of society is that?"**

They connected well-paid, secure jobs with positive housing options.

## MONEY & BUDGETS

Another barrier for young people getting and keeping a tenancy is budgeting. Budgeting on a low income was seen as a critical life skill for a tenancy to work well, but it's hard without support.

**"there's lots of little things that you didn't realise were going to cost you"**

**"keeping on top of rent, setting up gas and electricity, being within budget. It's a hard thing..."**

## GETTING AND KEEPING A HOME: INFORMATION & SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Information about housing options and support should be given as early as possible.

## SPACE & PRIVACY AT HOME

Space at home to learn and do homework is really important but is often not a reality. Many young people felt their housing was cramped with no privacy.

**"We need a bigger house."**

Right now, information is often for 5th and 6th year pupils, meaning younger ones can miss out.

**"We were just going into sixth year and we only found out about it last year. I don't understand like rent and all that ...I think that's unfair because if you leave in fourth year you won't have it. No one tells us. We need to know how to manage money and rent and stuff."**

Young people aren't just looking for general support though. They felt personal, tailored services make the real difference. It's very important they don't feel judged or stereotyped.

**"I think there should be more support for young people and vulnerable people and deprived people."**

Housing officers were seen as crucial in supporting young people. We asked them about training on mental health and child protection.

**"Housing officers don't have the time to help young people in first tenancy any more that they would with anyone else."**

There's lots of paperwork involved in getting your own place - this is challenging and many young people also felt that online information is overcomplicated. They told us that the application process needs to be easier to understand, especially if it's your first time applying!

**"I went down the housing to put my name down for a council house and there were loads and loads of forms that I had to fill in and it was a wee bit off-putting ... it was as if they were trying to kinda make it hard for you...they weren't approachable."**

Young people also felt that tenancy packs had too much emphasis on paying rent and not enough on supporting young people.

**"It's all about the money."**

**"There are six or seven people in the one house with two bedrooms and the loft. Thank god I'm not in the house that often, I just sleep there."**

They saw benefits and drawbacks to sharing a

room with siblings, but sometimes it put pressure on their relationships.

**"You can't really get any privacy because there are three of us in the one room and it makes it harder to have couple of seconds**

## DID YOU KNOW?

**"Not enough financial awareness support, banking information, how to look after yourself, cook, clean and budget money...Young people are not always ready for a tenancy."**

## COMMUNITIES & SAFETY

Young people had mixed feelings about their communities but many reflected on things like lack of opportunities, poor quality housing and concerns about security

**"Everyone you talk to this age wants to leave because as much as people who are teenagers get into bad stuff, they still want to make their lives better and that for their kids. You want to be in a good community."**

**"A home should be a place of safety, hope and no worries."**

Feeling safe was important to young people. They had different ways of keeping safe, including isolating themselves.

**"[I] spent most of the time in the house, apart from taking the dog out ... can't walk anywhere without being scared."**

Broken glass, rubbish and poor lighting means that many parks are not safe.

**"There are bottles and needles, smashed bottles and everything... Once it gets past a certain time, there's places you wouldn't want to go."**

They felt that **regeneration** isn't always done in a way that makes sense and allows for enough green spaces.

**"We had a 5s up the hill but then they destroyed it to build new houses."**

Many we spoke to had witnessed how addiction and people under the influence can make communities feel unsafe.

**"That's a bad place to go at night, because there's a pub people just come out and start fighting."**

The reasons for feeling or not feeling safe were hard to pin down.

**"Depends on the people you go about wae, what you're wearing, who yer wae."**

Things that helped them feel safer and happier included; strong connections to family or friends, good community facilities and good housing.

**"The youth centre gives people a sense of safety and ...a chance of expressing ourselves."**

**"It's a safe place to make more friends."**

REGENERATION: ACTION TAKEN TO MAKE THINGS BETTER IN COMMUNITIES. THIS ACTION AIMS TO ACHIEVE A LASTING IMPROVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY LIKE BETTER JOB OPPORTUNITIES, IMPROVED SAFETY, BETTER HOUSING, A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND MORE GREEN SPACES TO PLAY AND ENJOY BEING OUTDOORS.

**to yourself."**

They recognised that often houses are overcrowded because there's a lack of social housing available.

This makes good youth services all the more important!

Young people told us that sometimes they can't access facilities like WIFI.

**"Naw. No, they don't give you the password. They have it but that's only for the workers...it's in case you go onto stuff yer not supposed tae."**

This was striking because many talked about not having internet access at home and felt it was crucial in their lives. Young people discussed the positives of being able to keep in touch with friends online but also the negatives

**"A lot of hate - people sending death messages, 'you shouldn't be in this world you should go and die'."**

Young people felt that good neighbour relationships made their experience of home better, giving them improved feelings of safety and wellbeing.

**"I love my neighbours, they are great, I am lucky that I have had good neighbours."**

The main issues between neighbours were disagreements around noise levels and anti-social behaviour. A concierge was a popular way to make buildings feel safer.

**"Because you have a concierge in the building that tames down a lot of the violence and your building is always cleaner."**

## DID YOU KNOW?

**"There can be an attitude of 'as long as we get the rent', leaving a young person sometimes feeling overwhelmed by finding themselves alone and possibly too proud or afraid to admit they are lonely and scared."**

## STIGMA (NEGATIVE LABELS)

Many young people shared experiences of being judged because of their age or appearance.

**"See because you are so young and you are staying yourself, your neighbours look at you as if like they don't want to know you because they think 'oh no she's going to cause trouble.'"**

They gave examples of not being able to use local services.

**"[There are] people who are just barred [from the library] because of their age"**

**"Under 18s are banned from the shopping centre after 8 o'clock."**

Stop and Search came up quite a bit in focus groups and interviews.

**"Aye, searched many a time."**

Young people felt they were unfairly discriminated against and some perceived this as an issue for their personal safety.

**"My mum always says, 'safety in numbers' but then [the police] break you up."**

## STAFF SURVEY

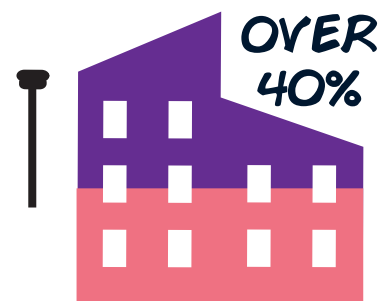
- Over 90% don't think there is enough support for young people to make the transition to independent living
- 100% would direct young people to other organisations for additional support
- They felt the main barriers faced by young people and their housing options were a lack of knowledge, low confidence and financial issues.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S SURVEY

- Half believed they would benefit from good quality information about housing
- Of those who had struggled with their tenancy, most went to family for help
- Looking ahead to the future, most people wanted to own their own home within 10 years
- Employment and affordability concerns were considered the main barriers to getting to where they wanted
- The majority did not know that there was support available when getting your own home for the first time, or where to find it.





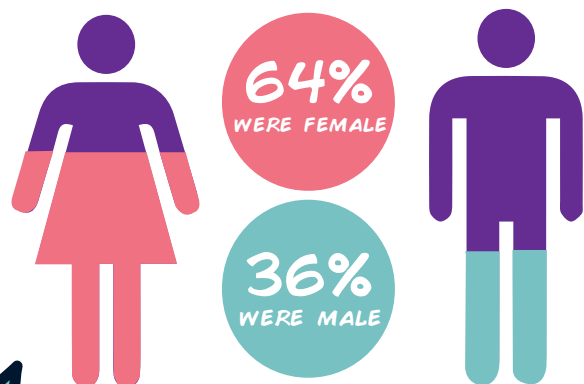


OF PARTICIPANTS WERE LIVING IN SOCIAL HOUSING



OVER 2 THIRDS

FELT THERE WOULD BE BARRIERS TO GETTING TO WHERE THEY WANTED TO BE; MAINLY EMPLOYMENT AND AFFORDABILITY



"WE NEED CLEAR INFORMATION THAT LAYS OUT OUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT WHO WE CAN GO TO IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG OR WE NEED ADVICE."

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

WE CAME UP WITH LOTS OF IDEAS FOR MAKING HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES BETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. THESE ARE NOT ONLY FOR WHEATLEY GROUP, BUT FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED IN MAKING DECISIONS THAT AFFECT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, LIKE THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION BODIES AND COUNCILS.

### EDUCATION

There should be good, clear, information about ALL housing options and budgeting in the Curriculum for Excellence. The earlier the better. It's important everyone who leaves school knows about this!

The best way for us to learn about this is from other young people.

We would also like to have different ways to learn about this online and from teachers.

### INFORMATION SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Young tenants should have access to a peer-led advice and mentoring service.

It's difficult to get it right in housing when it's your first place and other young people can be really helpful by sharing experiences.

Tenancy packs are important for young people! We need clear information on our legal rights and information about who we can go to if something goes wrong or we need advice.

The application process for social housing should be clear and simple.

Face-to-face support services are part of what we need to make a successful journey to independent living.

Internet access is important to young people. Youth services should give us access. We also need support to keep us safe online.

### LINKS BETWEEN HOUSING AND YOUTH SERVICES

There should be closer links between housing and schools and youth services in communities. This will also help to build understanding about housing options and services.

It's important housing staff know what support is available for young people

in communities – it would be good to map this out.

### VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

Young people should have the opportunity to have their voices heard and be involved in decisions about their home and their community.

Children and young people should get the chance to take part in planning things in their communities.

Our voices should be equal to adults and we should have time to participate in a way that works for us.

Community planning includes thinking about spaces to learn, community safety, spaces to play and hang out, new buildings and design, anti-social behaviour and other things...

### HOUSING CONDITIONS AND SUPPORT

Housing should be easy and affordable to heat. There should be information for young people on how to keep down costs for heating and gas.

HOUSING SHOULD BE EASY AND AFFORDABLE TO HEAT!

It's important housing providers improve the way sound carries in properties, especially in areas where young people are going to live alongside wee kids or older people. Sound can cause a real problem for neighbours.

### ATTITUDES

The 'guarantor system' is not fair or clear just now; it would be good to organise research into how this could be improved for young people.

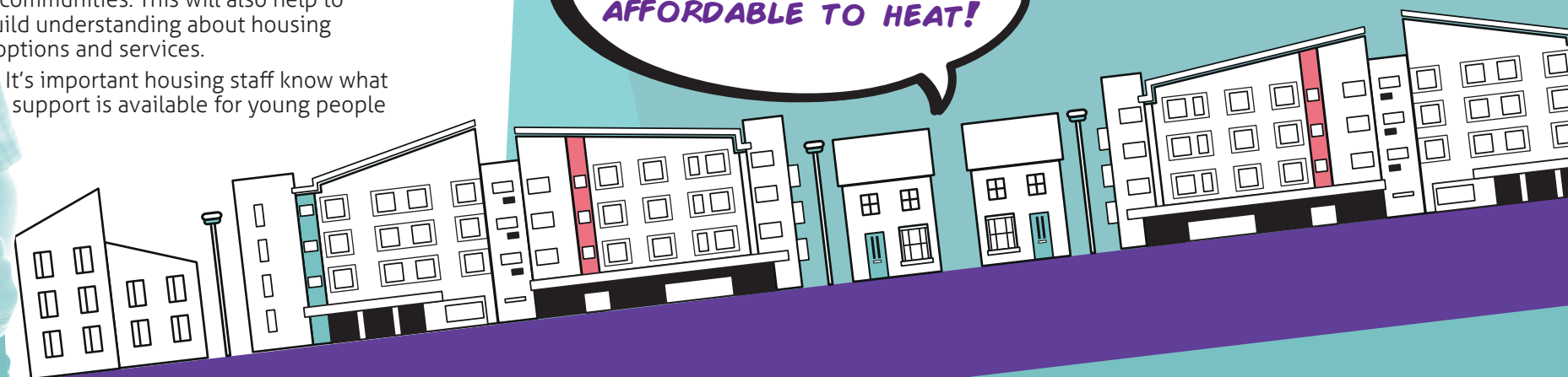
Stigma is a big problem in social housing – we recommend the Scottish Government work with young people to come up with a creative solution to this.

### HOUSING STAFF

Housing staff should have training that supports the wellbeing of children and young people; like spotting the signs of mental health problems, child protection, participation and equal opportunities.

### EMPLOYMENT

We need more job opportunities! More of them, better paid and secure. Wheatley Group could lead the way in developing more employment, accommodation and support for young people.





WE LEARNT A LOT FROM OUR  
RESEARCH AND WE HOPE YOU  
HAVE TOO! IF ANY OF IT HAS  
BEEN DIFFICULT TO READ  
OR MADE YOU THINK ABOUT  
THINGS YOU'D LIKE SUPPORT  
WITH, THESE PEOPLE MIGHT  
BE ABLE TO HELP...

#### **CHILDLINE**

Freefone 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
**24 hours a day**

ChildLine is a confidential helpline  
for children and young people.  
Trained volunteers are on hand to  
provide advice and support.

#### **FRANK**

Freefone 0800 77 66 00  
**24 hours a day**

Information about drugs and  
solvents for those who use  
them, their friends, families and  
colleagues.

#### **SAMARITANS**

T: 08457 90 90 90  
**24 hours a day**

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)  
Confidential, emotional support  
helpline for anyone in crisis.

#### **SHELTERLINE**

Freefone 0808 800 4444  
**8:00am to 12:00 midnight,**  
**7 days a week**

Independent, confidential  
information and advice service  
about your housing rights and  
the law.

#### **VICTIM SUPPORTLINE**

T: 0845 6039 213  
**Monday to Friday**  
**9:00am to 5:00pm**

Offering emotional support  
and practical advice for anyone  
affected by crime.

