

# Home Alone? Practitioners' Reflections on the Implications of Young People Living Alone

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## Abstract

*The rise in solo living has been one of the most significant demographic shifts of recent decades, with particularly rapid growth amongst younger age groups, yet remains relatively absent from social policy literature. This article argues that practitioners believe young people aged 16-24 living alone in social housing are at greater risk of difficulties in their housing journeys, particularly those who experience cumulative disadvantage. Despite this, those under 25 are rarely recognised as a priority category in policy terms. Drawing on interviews with housing practitioners, this article examines practitioners' responses to the multiple obstacles young people living alone in social housing can face, using a case study of living alone in a semi-rural area of North East England. Findings indicate that practitioners consider young people living alone as facing a multitude of barriers in their solo living transitions that are not being addressed by current policy frameworks.*

**Key words:** Solo living, young people, social housing, shared living, single homelessness

THE RISE of solo living is one of the most significant demographic trends of recent decades, with a growing body of literature covering various categories of people living alone, for example: elderly women (Evandrou et al., 2001), adults of working age (Wasoff and Jamieson, 2005), people in particular geographic locations (Hall and Ogden, 2003), and more recently the experience of widows and widowers (van den Hoonaard, 2009). Although living alone is not new, the scale on which people live alone and make transitions into solo living at all stages of the adult lifecourse is a phenomenon whose growth has been particularly marked over the last 30 years (Chandler et al, 2004, Gordon 1994, Hall and Ogden, 1997, 1999, 2003; Heath and Cleaver, 2003).

As Palmer (2006:1) explains, 'living alone' is not the same as 'being single', and it is important to make this distinction as only half of single people actually live alone, while those living alone may be in 'living-apart-together' relationships (Haskey, 2005). 'Living-apart-together' (LAT) is being in an intimate relationship with a partner who lives somewhere else and is increasingly recognised and accepted as a specific way of being in a couple (Duncan and Phillips, 2010). Lone parents are also single but live with dependent children. Meanwhile 'concealed households' are where individuals neither own nor rent the property that they are living in. Most people in concealed

households do not have dependent children, and this category may include adults living with their parents or parents living with their older children (The Poverty Site, 2011). Solo living is thus a living arrangement rather than a marital status, and can include people who are single, married or formerly cohabiting but separated, divorced, widowed or those with partners who are not co-resident. Although debates remain around how to define solo living, for the purposes of this research solo living refers to an individual living alone in a household without a cohabiting partner, dependent child or other adults. Much previous solo living literature on those living alone at working age focuses on people in the age group 25-44. Although this group has seen the fastest growth in solo living across recent decades, the implications of solo living for young people aged 16-24 and their housing transitions has been somewhat overlooked.

This article draws on fieldwork undertaken for a research study investigating solo living in a semi-rural area of North East England. Initially, the research did not specifically focus upon young people living alone; however, as the fieldwork progressed, it became evident that this was a clear concern for the majority of practitioners interviewed. Therefore, the study became more focused upon the difficulties young people living alone in social rented accommodation can face in their housing transitions, from the perspective of housing practitioners. The discussion was then framed by a consideration of policy implications for young people aged 16-24. Heath (2008) notes that social class plays a key role in determining young people's housing transitions, with the young middle classes enjoying 'privileged pathways' into independent living, whilst those from working class backgrounds experience more challenging transitions. The transitions of less privileged young people living alone and how existing policies respond, or fail to respond, to their needs is a central concern of this article. However, it must be noted that this paper is not suggesting that all people living alone or indeed all young people living alone are isolated and excluded; rather, it is highlighting that for some young people, particularly those living in social housing, solo living can represent a multi-faceted experience, encompassing barriers and issues that should be considered when discussing solo living and young people.

## Solo Living and Young People: What's The Problem?

Whilst solo living is not a radical new development, recent decades have seen a huge growth in the number of one person households, leading to a relatively recent heterogeneous category of people (Chandler et al, 2004; Gordon, 1994; Hall and Ogden, 1997; 1999; 2003; Heath and Cleaver, 2003; Molgat and Vezina, 2008; Wasoff and Jamieson, 2005). Despite a growing literature on solo living, what is absent from these accounts is a specific focus on how policy impacts upon young people living alone, and practitioners' responses to these issues. Only a minority of studies explicitly address the housing experiences of young people living alone (Heath 2008; Jones, 1995; Molgat and Vezina, 2008) with relatively little attention being paid to this issue from a policy perspective within the literature. The literature on the recent rise in solo-living amongst working

age adults situates this in recent demographic and cultural changes across Europe and elsewhere. Much of the solo living literature has focused on young professionals choosing to live alone as a privileged lifestyle choice; in other words, 'elective' lone living. In the USA, White (1994) suggests that there is a strong cultural preference for privacy and independence, and if individuals have sufficient resources one of the ways they can fulfil such values is by living alone, whilst Beck-Gernsheim (2002) makes a similar argument about the impact of individualisation on family life in Germany. Indeed, as Chandler et al (2004:2.12) observe, the rise of solo living is frequently seen as an indicator of 'individualisation' both in the UK and elsewhere. Debates surrounding individualisation are further summarised by Jamieson et al (2009) and more recently in relation to youth housing transitions by Nico (2010).

The decision in this research to focus upon young people aged 16-24 in social accommodation was threefold. Firstly, in terms of the scholarly literature surrounding solo living and youth transitions, a 'prolonging of youth' is apparent with the term 'youth' often being used to refer to those into their mid-thirties (Molgat and Vezina, 2008). Indeed, Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Young People' programme focused upon young people aged 16-25 (Jones, 2002) and national bodies often define the lower age band as the statutory minimum school leaving age in their country, with the British Office for National Statistics defining 'young adults' as aged between 16 and 24 years of age (Office for National Statistics, 2004). Secondly, a number of public policies, such as the National Minimum Wage and unemployment benefit Jobseeker's Allowance, have age restrictions which mean differing implications for those aged 25 and under. Finally, research has suggested that young people's experiences in their transitions into adulthood can have lasting consequences as they progress throughout the life course (Thompson et al, 2002); hence, the housing journeys of young people living alone are of key importance within sociological and social policy debates.

Within the youth literature, there has been much discussion on youth transitions, including transitions into education, work, relationships, housing and crime (for example, see MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Webster et al, 2004; Ford et al, 2002; Furlong et al, 2003). This paper does not endeavour to unpack these discussions any further. However, they do not focus upon research relating to young people and solo living. Youth researchers have pointed to a distinction between 'standardised' biographies on the one hand and 'choice' biographies on the other, whilst solo living literature has discussed 'elective' and 'forced' solo living. This paper attempts to combine these perspectives in order to draw attention to young people living alone who can find themselves on the receiving end of cumulative disadvantage, and argues for current policy frameworks to recognise that young people living alone can face a multitude of barriers in their complex journeys into adulthood. In an economic climate where youth unemployment is rising and housing markets are becoming increasingly fragmented, alongside the rising number of one person households, young people living alone can be at particular risk of facing relative poverty and social exclusion when making the transition to independent living.

## Methodology

For the purposes of the research, housing practitioners were identified as respondents for both substantive and practical reasons; housing practitioners would be able to provide an insight into how young people experience living alone in social housing accommodation whilst being able to reflect on possible policy suggestions and solutions. The sampling strategy allowed for housing practitioners who engaged with young people living alone to participate in the research. In total, twenty four semi-structured face-to-face qualitative interviews were undertaken with housing professionals from County Durham in the North East of England, UK. Ages ranged from 20 up to 59, with 11 of the sample being female and 13 male. All of the participants had at least one year's experience of working in housing. Following completion of the fieldwork, interviews were analysed thematically through the use of NVivo qualitative data analysis software, and the key themes are discussed in the findings section.

Of course, when looking at any case study of a particular locality, it is important to stress that issues of generalisation and external validity need to be considered (a context to the research locale is provided below). Therefore, this article does not suggest that housing practitioners in other areas would report similar issues facing young people. Instead, the article is intended to bring attention to the importance of the housing transitions of young people living alone. Further information about the research locale further strengthens the decision to focus upon young people living alone from a housing practitioner perspective. The North East has a reasonably high level of one person households at 33 per cent when compared to other regions in Britain, which tend to hover around 30 per cent. This number of one person households in the North East is expected to rise to forty percent in 2021 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM], 2006); therefore, solo living is a particularly topical issue for housing professionals in this geographical area. Wear Valley in County Durham is a mixture of rural and urban areas with a population of 62,300. Over 60% of the population live in settlements of less than 10,000 people. Despite its attractive setting, many of the County's settlements suffer from high levels of deprivation, coupled with severe difficulties in accessing jobs, learning and services. Unemployment in the County is highest in Wear Valley, with numbers of Jobseekers Allowance customers concentrated here.

County Durham itself has one of the highest levels of Incapacity Benefit recipients in England, (35,200) accounting for approximately 12% of the workforce. The county has a tradition of deep coal mining; all of the mines have now closed, and despite financial investment, pockets of high unemployment and social deprivation remain. Of the dwelling stock in the area, social housing accounts for 14.2%, higher than the North East average of 12% (ONS, 2008). As the housing practitioners in the locality largely engaged with people living in social housing accommodation, it was decided that interviewing those who work within a housing arena would allow for an exploration of their views on possible barriers and policy implications that can affect young people living alone in this semi-rural area of North East England.

## Findings: 'What Happens When Someone Turns 25 anyway?'

The shift towards solo living for young people was seen as a continuing process by practitioners, taking complex twists and turns. Often, young people churned between different housing situations, including social housing, parental homes, private renting, hostels and staying with friends in relation to other transitions, such as employment and partnership status. These transitions, combined with a problematisation of young people, can result in even greater fractured episodes for young people. The following section outlines the key issues raised by the housing practitioners.

### **Social Exclusion and Living Alone**

An overarching finding was a problematisation of young people living alone. The majority of practitioners agreed that young people seeking a tenancy alone can be seen as more of a 'risk' than, for example, a couple in their early thirties. Assumptions that young people living alone would find it difficult to maintain a tenancy and would be generally unequipped to live independently were often present:

*A lot of them, they don't even know how to turn the washing machine on let alone sort themselves out and keep themselves out of debt...it's just parties and loud music all the time. They don't think, 'Well this is my house I need to behave in a certain way'.*  
(Tenancy support officer, housing association).

Essentially, although respondents were eager to stress that clear discrimination was not present, an underlying prejudice towards young people living alone could be found amongst interview responses. This problematisation is symptomatic of a wider discourse whereby young people are portrayed as troublesome and undeserving (France, 2008). The research found that for some young people, these perceptions can be a reality as a result of multiple barriers to living alone. For example, for young people who either received benefits or were earning a low income, access to housing can be hugely challenging. Meanwhile, a young single man may not be considered a priority for housing associations or local authorities in relation to a family with dependent children, and it may be suggested he should return to his family home (Jones, 2002). Yet for some young people, returning home is not an option if their route into solo living is an outcome of problems which caused them to leave the family home. As one respondent stated:

*Young people living on their own are seen as less of a priority when it comes to finding a suitable tenure for them...yet if you're got dependent children you get more points for that, so a young single mother with dependent children has more chance of getting housed than a young male single person looking for a house.* (Deputy Director, local council).

The situation can become more problematic if the young person living alone is unemployed or in a

low paid job. This was illustrated by practitioners in this study who identified unemployment as a significant problem for young people living alone that can exacerbate other issues:

*Obviously I'm not saying it's like clear discrimination but if you see a young lad who's wanting a house on his own, he might be out of work, and then on the other hand you have a family with kids and they're working the safest bet would be with the family. I'm not saying that's how it works but it's just prejudices I suppose.*

(Tenancy Support Officer, local housing association).

For example, young people in one person households who are unemployed may be at risk of finding themselves more cut off and isolated than those who are unemployed and living with someone else, as one practitioner states below:

*Not only do they miss out on the social side of work, sometimes they haven't got anyone at home to talk to either...it would drive me mad being that cut off, especially in some of the little villages round here.* (Tenancy Enforcement Officer, local housing association).

Leyshon and DiGiovanna (2005) affirm that the housing transitions of young people in rural areas are affected by two key challenges: a decline in housing options and availability, and increased housing costs. Rural areas have higher levels of owner-occupation and private rented housing in comparison with urban areas, and limited availability of social housing (Ford et al, 1997). Owner-occupation is beyond the means of most working-class young people, especially in rural areas, while the declining availability of social housing reduces their housing options further (Heath, 2008). This highlights the need for supported housing schemes in rural areas for young people living alone.

The often considerable negative financial impact of living alone may be ignored or overlooked in such debates. As Lewis (2005:7) puts it, 'despite stereotypes about lofts and lattes, there is considerable poverty among people living alone'. For young people living alone, the risk of poverty is increased, not only for those on low incomes, but for any young person living alone during the first year (Iacovou and Aassve, 2007), as one tenancy support officer confirmed:

*The thing is when you have young people who have had a difficult upbringing, sometimes they've care leavers and y'know they are living on their own, often they don't know where to go for help or what help is out there, and it's my job to help them figure it out but it's tough to see.* (Director of Housing, local council).

Facing relative poverty can cause young people's solo housing transitions to become increasingly fractured and challenging. This sentiment was echoed by one housing practitioner who observed

that young people living alone can struggle to cope with often multiple disadvantages. For example, low income when living alone means negotiating mounting levels of debt, missing bill payments and the risk of social exclusion. As one housing officer from a local council stated:

*I know some of the young people we deal with have such a hard time, they're forced into living on their own cos they have nowhere else to go to but they can't really afford it, so they're missing out on paying this bill or that bill and then they get into debt here and there and it all mounts up.* (Housing Officer, local housing association).

Indeed, statistics indicate that young people living in the social housing sector report the highest levels of arrears (Survey of English Housing, 2009). They also experience higher levels of difficulty in comparison with other age groups in the same tenure. In the housing association sector, 13 per cent and 17 per cent respectively of households headed by either 16–24 year olds or 25–34 year olds had experienced rent arrears in the previous year (compared with 9 per cent of all housing association renters). The failure of many local authorities to provide social housing to under-18 year olds can lead many young people living alone towards the private rented sector instead, as the quotation below supports:

*The thing is there aren't enough houses anyway, let alone for say a 16 year old wanting a house on their own, so if that's the case and they desperately need to move out for whatever reason say they've got no choice in the matter then private renting can be the only available option which comes with its own problems anyhow.* (Housing Officer, local council).

Many under-25 year olds already face considerable challenges in relation to their housing transitions. For those in receipt of Housing Benefit, those challenges can be multiplied. The Single Room Rent (SRR) regulations can often result in a shortfall between rent and Housing Benefit payments, and has also created a situation where landlords are reluctant to let properties to some young people living alone. The following section explores issues for young people under 25 in terms of the welfare state and living alone.

### **Young People and Policy: The Importance of Age**

When asked about other possible barriers for young people living alone, age discrimination within the welfare state was frequently cited. Those aged 18–24 year who are living alone are not recognised in any of the priority groupings (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007), for example, in relation to Jobseeker's Allowance, the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the exclusion of young people under 25 from claiming Working Tax Credits, unless they have dependent children. The NMW was initially only available to young people over the age of 18, but in 2004 under 18s were included on a 'development rate' that was linked to commitment to being involved in training.

Essentially, the age banding gives different income protection for different groups. For example, from October 2009 the 16 – and 17-year old NMW rate was set at £3.57 per hour, whilst for those aged between 18–21 it is £4.83 and the adult rate (those aged 22 and above) is £5.80. Although the government has promised to extend the adult minimum wage rate to 21-year-olds from October 2010, those aged 16-21 will remain disadvantaged. The justification for this decision was based upon the assumption that a higher NMW may have acted as a deterrent to young people staying in education, although, in reality, little evidence supports such a position (France, 2008:500). It may also in part be due to the notion that those aged 16-21 tend to live in their parental home. Such a notion ignores the experiences of young adults leaving care and those forced to leave the parental home through adverse circumstances. Problems with this approach are recognised by the Low Pay Commission, who argue that the rationale behind paying 21-year olds a lower rate than 22-year olds does not always seem logical, is unclear and should be abandoned (Low Pay Commission, 2007). However, the new Age Discrimination Act (Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, 2006), while offering added protection to young workers in the workplace, does not cover the NMW.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) also discriminates against those aged 16-24. Young people in this age bracket receive a reduced rate of £50.95 per week, which compared to the over 25s rate of £64.30 is £13.35 less per week, or £53.50 less each month. France (2008) notes the discrepancy in age banding between the JSA (full rate entitlement at 25) and the NMW (full rate entitlement at 22), and that such age variations in benefits receipt means that some of the most vulnerable have 'an insecure safety net that may not guarantee protection at a time of high need' (France, 2008:500). In an era of economic recession, with mass youth unemployment on the increase, the logic and rationale of this policy leaves young people, and particularly those living alone, at greater risk of vulnerability in their progression into adulthood. The following section suggests some possible policy solutions that could address barriers to solo living for young people.

### **Advice and Support**

Solo living for some young people is not a choice, with returning 'home' often not an option. Respondents stated that frequently young people living alone turn to housing practitioners for advice on budgeting and managing their tenancy. It was suggested by one tenancy support officer that workshops offering guidance on budgeting and successful tenancy management could be implemented, which would allow young people living alone to become aware of how they can negotiate their progression into independent living:

*One of the main things I get asked about is budgeting...people living on their own can find it hard to manage everything, I'm always drawing up budget plans and making sure that they know what financial help they can get, stuff like that so if we had specific workshops that could be really useful. (Tenancy Support Officer, housing association).*



What's more, steps to reduce the immediate impacts of living alone upon the most vulnerable, such as ensuring that everyone living alone has access to information about water metering and council tax discounts, can help, a point that was suggested by one homelessness officer:

*It's really important that young people who start living on their own know exactly what help there is on offer because too often we see people getting into a mess with finances because they don't know how to cope living on their own. (Homelessness Officer, local council).*

Indeed, as Heath (2008:4) confirms, young people living in social housing report the highest levels of difficulty in meeting their housing costs. The findings therefore suggest that young people living alone can require greater advice and guidance in their housing development.

### **Shared Living Arrangements, Supported Housing and Homelessness**

Heath (2008) notes that the evidence presented in her review of youth housing transitions suggests that the proposed measures relating to home ownership following the Housing Green Paper in 2009 are largely peripheral to the most pressing concerns of the majority young people. These are: gaining access to affordable and decent quality housing which meets their specific needs as they make the transition to adulthood; having access to support and guidance throughout this process; and being treated fairly in relation to the Housing Benefit system. Housing practitioners indicated that steps are being taken to provide shared living arrangements for those without dependent children who find themselves homeless or in need of assistance with their housing needs. One practitioner spoke of plans for an old block of flats in which it is difficult to sustain a tenancy, being converted into a form of shared living accommodation for those aged over 18 who are either homeless or had experienced problems maintaining a tenancy. The scheme is designed to 'encourage people to make a go of living on their own, to find out how to look after themselves when they first live on their own and to be able to deal with a tenancy' (Housing Officer, housing association). It is hoped that the scheme will also tackle issues relating to social exclusion and isolation, as the shared living arrangement would allow for those living there to access support and help from each other in order to maintain their tenancy successfully. These forms of supported accommodation all share a commitment to providing protected spaces in which young people are able to learn to live independently and to acquire a range of key 'life skills'. However, these schemes are not new: how much can they really contribute to ensuring young people's housing transitions are successful?

Young homeless people who do not fall into any of the priority categories are in jeopardy of being overlooked by current policy frameworks. At present, homeless legislation in England and Wales offers help to either those under 18, those over 60 or those with dependent children. The Homelessness Act (2002) extended the definition of those in priority need, broadening the categories to include 16 and 17 year olds, those leaving care aged between 16 and 20 years, and those under the threat of violence. Quilgars et al (2008) remark that this measure has resulted in

greater levels of support for under-18 year olds, and that youth homelessness rates are now in decline. Young people whose needs are prioritised under the 2002 Homelessness Act are offered access to supported accommodation provided by local authorities, housing associations and other third sector organisations, or are able to gain support from a floating support worker. Other groups, such as care leavers and disabled young people, also benefit from specialist provision, which has been well documented in available literature (for example, see Stein 2009; Wade and Dixon 2006; Dixon and Stein 2005; Biehal and Wade 1999).

Provision of targeted support is variable for young people living alone, not least because of a lack of appropriate accommodation within the direct control of local authorities. Yet, as respondents highlighted, this may leave young people living alone aged 18-24 struggling to become re-homed if they break up with a partner or have a dispute with family or friends:

*Young people who are homeless can find it even harder living alone than others, y'know sometimes they're care leavers or are recovering from mental health problems and things like that, and on top of that they've got to deal with trying to find a home and sort themselves out...it's a nightmare really. (Homelessness Officer, local council).*

As Kenway and Palmer (2003) estimate, a large number of single people experience homelessness, somewhere in the range of 310,000 to 380,000 a year. Harding and Willett (2008) point out contradictions in social policies that underpin single homelessness, placing further pressure on the supply of emergency accommodation and therefore increasing the chances of a young person living alone becoming, and remaining, socially excluded.

## Discussion: Negotiating Barriers into Solo Living for Young People

In order to avoid and move beyond negative connotations of young people living alone, firstly it is important that housing practitioners and others are aware of the hurdles young people can face in their housing journeys and consider possible solutions that may make solo living an easier route for young people who either choose to live alone or need to live alone. A greater focus upon addressing the problems faced by young people living alone would be useful, highlighting the need for a multi-dimensional approach that involves not only greater focus upon housing and related social policies, but also social and cultural issues that exist in conjunction with this. Again, young people living alone who lacked support from others can find it difficult to achieve a successful housing experience. Such accommodation could include access to sports and leisure facilities in addition to welfare services. Of course, as with other forms of supported housing, the availability of affordable 'move-on' accommodation remains a critical issue.

Secondly, there are no obvious housing options for young people living alone on a low income if

their existing housing is no longer adequate; often, they cannot afford to buy and can experience difficulty in accessing social housing. In an era of increased solo living, shared housing may be considered a viable option for certain young people. Similarly, in an examination of housing practitioners' and young people's views towards youth housing (ECOTEC, 2008) practitioners provided examples of new initiatives across the UK with shared living arrangements, citing one organisation that developed an intermediary shared living arrangement where young people could benefit from peer support as well as support from practitioners to address a perceived gap between 24-hour supported accommodation and independent living.

Thirdly, the extent to which young people are forced to live in shared housing against their will remains a crucial concern. Kemp and Rugg's studies of young people (1998, 2001) found that most respondents recognised the advantages of shared living, including sharing living costs, mutual support and the benefit of company. The prospect of sharing with strangers was nevertheless a source of considerable anxiety. A more recent evaluation (Harvey and Houston, 2005) similarly finds that many claimants shy away from shared accommodation and thus face a higher shortfall in terms of housing benefit. The prospect of having to share with older people was noted to be particularly daunting, especially for female claimants. This reinforces the argument that it is the prospect of living with strangers which is at issue here rather than sharing per se. The expectation of sharing is also particularly problematic for care leavers, who may have had negative experiences of shared living in the past (while care leavers aged 21 and under are exempt from the SRR, those aged 22 to 24 are not). Of course, concerns regarding shared living are not exclusive to young people as Jamieson et al (2009) found in their study of older people living alone. However, the cumulative disadvantage outlined in this paper suggests that the housing journeys of young people living alone should be considered further in policy arenas.

Finally, in relation to youth homelessness, recent legislation perhaps offers some cause for optimism. On 1 April 2010 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published revised statutory guidance for children's services authorities and local housing authorities about their respective duties under the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year old young people. Young homeless people living alone need to be assured of priority access to supported housing if they require it, alongside access to appropriate move-on accommodation.

## Conclusions

With solo living projected to rise and become an increasingly permanent demographic feature in coming decades, together with fragmented housing markets and further predicted youth marginality, a clear and comprehensive approach to youth housing is required. The research has highlighted the need for a greater focus upon the needs of young people living alone in social

housing. Housing practitioners indicated that young people can face multiple barriers in their housing transitions, ranging from social exclusion as a result of relative poverty, unemployment, a shortage of accommodation for young people living alone in rural areas together with a lack of tailored advice and support. Possible solutions of shared living and supported accommodation must be considered in relation to the complex needs of young people who in some circumstances make the transition into living alone against their wishes. Whilst shared living may be a viable option for some young people living alone, for those who are particularly vulnerable, such as care leavers and single homeless young people, shared living may prove to be a further obstruction in the search for a successful housing outcome.

Above all, the research suggests that at a time of increasingly fractured transitions for young people, together with growing numbers of one person households, the issue of young people living alone is of increased importance to social policy. This study shows that research into solo living from the perspective of those living alone aged 16-25 is crucial in order to fully understand the transitions faced by the growing number of young people living alone. Despite this, the case study from practitioners' perspectives allows us to reaffirm the importance of articulation between youth studies and youth policy-making. The need for a greater focus upon ensuring young people living alone are given access to clear support and guidance throughout the process of solo living is crucial. In equipping young people living alone with greater support and providing guidance in their housing journeys, it is hoped this will help distance young people living alone in social housing from negative perceptions of them as inherently 'risky' or intrinsically problematic.

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