IMPACT REPORT 2025-26



TAKING A STAND AGAINST YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

stepbystep.org.uk

Charity No. 900308

STEP BY STEP

Young People. Hard Times. Bright Futures.


“I FEEL LIKE I BELONG HERE AND CAN BE MYSELF. EVERYONE IS SO LOVELY TO ME, AND IT’S A PLACE THAT I CAN CALL HOME.”

WELCOME



DEBBIE MORETON
CEO, STEP BY STEP

> "THERE ARE 172,420 CHILDREN IN ENGLAND LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION..."

When I look at the landscape our young people are navigating right now, it's hard not to feel a sense of urgency.

There are 172,420 children in England living in temporary accommodation, the highest number since records began. For a young person with no family safety net to fall back on, that kind of instability isn't a temporary setback. It can be the moment everything unravels.

I want to be clear about something I believe deeply: this isn't a failure of individual young people. It's a failure of the systems around them, and it is entirely preventable.

That belief is what has driven Step by Step since the day we started, and it drives everything we do today. We support young people across six counties in southern England, through our Foyers, Supported Lodgings, fostering and our Launch advice and wellbeing service.

Our job is more than simply putting a roof over someone's head. It's about the whole person: their emotional wellbeing, their life skills, their education, their route into employment, everything that makes real independence possible. The young people we work with are capable, resilient and building their own futures. Our job is to stand alongside them while they do it, and to challenge the system so they get a fair chance.

I'm proud to present our 2025-26 Impact Report, celebrating our achievements and the young lives transformed.

None of this happens without the people who make it real: our staff, our hosts, our foster carers, our volunteers, our commissioners and our donors, who show up for young people every single day.

Thank you for joining us in taking a stand against youth homelessness.

2025-26 AT A GLANCE

1,245
young people directly supported

4,765
young people reached through community engagement

17.6 YEARS
average age of the young people we supported

SAFE PLACES TO LIVE

See pages 8-13

252
accessed safe, supported accommodation

73%
of young people in accommodation made positive progress

237
accommodation placements available at any one time

WELLBEING & GUIDANCE

See pages 16-19

823
young people supported with early intervention services

2,879
counselling sessions delivered

1,584
guidance, advice and wellbeing sessions delivered

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

See pages 20-21

147
young people supported by our Opportunities Fund

9
young people benefitted from our move on placements

223
Step Chat sessions delivered


LYDIA'S
STORY
WILLIAM MORRIS
SCAN TO WATCH
HER VIDEO

“I LIKE THAT THINGS ARE CONSISTENT AND NORMAL. THIS FEELS LIKE HOME.”

Lydia came to Step by Step after both her parents passed away. Devastated and alone, Lydia needed a stable place to live as well as a great deal of compassion and support.

Lydia was initially given a place in one of our Foyers, living alongside other young people her age. However, she preferred the idea of a family environment and it was decided that our Supported Lodgings service would be the perfect fit.

At first, she was very nervous about living with her host, but after a few meetings to discuss her concerns, she felt ready to move in.

Lydia and her host went on to develop a fantastic relationship, characterised by honesty and openness. The trauma of losing her parents had left Lydia with mental health issues; the host would recognise when she was struggling, not sleeping or eating very much and offer her support.

With such a safe, caring environment to live in, Lydia began to thrive. She did well at college and was accepted into drama school. She decided that she wanted to continue living with her host for the first year of studying, until she feels she is ready to move on to independent living.

Lydia got herself a part time job, enjoying the new responsibility and having her own money for the first time. She has aspirations for a career on the stage and also wants to go travelling to experience different cultures.

Lydia has now joined our Speak Out Group. This is a focus group comprised of young people, many of whom have accessed our services. They feed back on changes and improvements that they feel would benefit their peers. Lydia wants to take on the role of lead ambassador and we know she will bring great energy and insight to the position.

Despite suffering significant bereavement at a very young age, Lydia has displayed incredible resilience and maintains a positive outlook on life. Step by Step will continue to support her until she is ready to move on.

When asked what she thought about living with her host, Lydia told us: “I like that things are consistent and normal. This feels like home.”

SAFE PLACES TO LIVE



178
young people found a safe home through Supported Lodgings

76%
of young people in Supported Lodgings made positive progress

61
young people were found emergency placements, usually the same day

SUPPORTED LODGINGS

Supported Lodgings gives young people a room of their own in a family home, with a trained host alongside them. Hosts offer everyday stability, from a shared meal to help with a CV, while our team provides specialist support.

Young people told us they felt safe, settled and supported. Many said their relationships with their hosts and support workers made the difference. That stability makes everything else possible.

More than three quarters of young people made positive progress towards their goals, and more than two thirds were in education, training or employment. Every young person is different, so our support is too. When a placement wasn't the right fit, we acted quickly to find one that was.

A roof over their head is only the start, so we focused on planned move-ons. That way, young people leave ready for their next step rather than being pushed into it.

SAFE PLACES TO LIVE



87
young people lived in a Step by Step Foyer

47
placements available at any one time

23
young people received high intensity support

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION (FOYERS)

Our Foyers in Aldershot, Basingstoke, Havant and Totton give young people their own room in a shared building, with staff on site day and night. For a young person who has been sofa surfing or moving from place to place, that consistency is where change starts.

Young people used that stability to build the practical and emotional skills they need to live independently and move on to brighter futures. By retaining our Basingstoke contract, we kept that support close to home for young people in the area.

We also strengthened how we work. Young people's own feedback shaped a new set of Foyer policies, covering everything from a young person's first day to their move-on. A new placement review puts each young person's voice at the centre of their plan. It helps us spot barriers early and track progress as it happens. Trauma-informed practice runs through all of it, so young people feel safe as well as housed.

SAFE PLACES TO LIVE



FOSTERING

Step by Step Fostering is fostering that gives back. Our foster carers give children and young people a safe, stable home, with the routine, patience and care they need to settle and grow. Our team supports every carer with training and guidance, so no one is doing it alone.

As a charity, we do fostering differently. Any excess funds our fostering agency generates will go into Step by Step to support our other services. Every foster placement helps a child at home, and will help young people across the rest of our work too.

This year was our most successful yet for recruiting new foster carers, and the service continues to grow. Each new carer means another child or young person with a stable home. It can mean staying at the same school, keeping friendships and having the space to look forward rather than just getting through today.

QUOTES FROM STEP BY STEP FOSTER CARERS

“It gives me the opportunity to be the person I needed as a child.”

“If I were to use one word to describe Step by Step Fostering it would be empowering. Our relationship with our Supervising Social Worker is great; we love having her round for a cup of tea and a nice long chat. She’s really friendly, inviting and shares loads of information with us that helps us along our journey."

“I have recognised that sometimes my foster children just need a cuddle, not because of something they have done but just to feel secure.”


“I AM REALLY HAPPY AND EXCITED FOR MY FUTURE.”

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT



Social Return on Investment (SROI) measures the value we create for society. Instead of only counting what we spend, it asks young people, staff and partners what has changed for them, then puts a value on those changes. That shows the true difference our work makes.

Our most recent SROI was co-produced with an accredited social value practitioner, between April 2022 and March 2023. It found that for every £1 invested in Step by Step, we generated £6.80 in social value, around £24.6 million in total.

Behind that figure are real changes in young people's lives. Young people told us they feel physically and emotionally safer, less scared about their future and more confident in their own decisions. Almost seven in 10 said they now know where to go for help. The analysis was deliberately cautious, so the true value is likely to be even higher.

WELLBEING & GUIDANCE



462
young people received counselling from Step by Step

99%
of these young people progressed positively

2,879
counselling sessions were delivered

COUNSELLING

Our counselling service is free for young people aged 11 to 25. It gives them a safe, confidential space to talk, at their own pace and on their own terms. Our waiting times are shorter than those of other CAMHS providers.

That speed matters. Counselling is a key part of our early intervention approach. It reaches young people before worries become a crisis, and before problems at home, at school or with their mental health can lead to risk factors for homelessness.

Almost every young person (99%) who came to counselling this year made positive progress towards their goals. Counselling helps them build resilience, confidence and the coping skills to manage whatever comes next.

Our counsellors, support workers and admin team made every appointment and referral count. Their care meant young people felt heard, valued and better equipped for safer, happier futures.

WELLBEING & GUIDANCE



263
young people were supported through Launch

1,584
advice and practical support sessions were delivered

47.9%
increase in sessions versus previous year

LAUNCH

Launch is our free advice and guidance service for young people, available in person, over the phone and online. It gives young people one trusted place to start, with support on housing and benefits, education and employment, emotional wellbeing, drug and alcohol recovery, and sexual health.

Problems rarely arrive one at a time, and Launch can help with all of it in one place. New partnerships with Citizens Advice and The Shaw Trust added specialist financial advice and employment support to what we offer.

Our Launch team also supported young people in our Move-On houses, helping them build tenancy skills and keep moving forward.

The number of sessions we delivered saw a steep increase as we responded to increasing demand.

Every conversation, appointment and referral helped a young person feel heard and take a practical next step towards a safer, more independent future.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



147
young people overcame barriers with the help of the Opportunities Fund

9
young people lived in a Move On house

4,765
young people reached through community engagement

OPPORTUNITIES FUND

The Opportunities Fund is available for any young person supported by Step by Step. It is there to overcome any barrier that might prevent a young person from progressing.

Last year, our Opportunities Fund helped 147 young people with everyday essentials that made all the difference.

MOVE ON HOUSES

Our Move On houses in Farnborough, Basingstoke and Bedhampton are there for young people ready to take the next step but unable to navigate a hostile housing sector.

Last year we expanded the service. With ongoing help from our Launch team, young people built confidence and tenancy skills, moved on successfully and reduced their risk of homelessness.

ADVOCATING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

As well as supporting young people, we stand up for them. Last year we produced a campaign film for 18 Isn't Cheaper. The campaign calls out the gap in Universal Credit that leaves care leavers worse off the day they turn 18, and pushes for a fairer system for every young person.

FINANCE

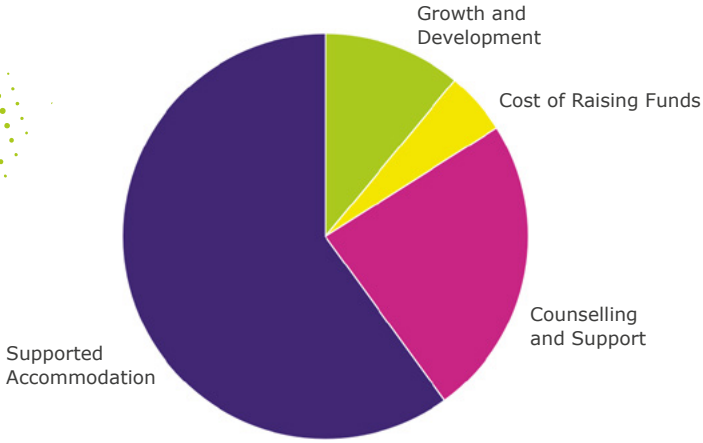
INCOME

	2025-26	2024-25
Local Authorities & Government	£3,696,579	£3,488,248
Fundraising	£849,104	£790,821
Investments	£27,542	£42,947
Total Income	**£4,573,225**	**£4,322,016**

EXPENDITURE

	2025-26	2024-25
Accommodation Services	£3,365,327	£3,199,102
Counselling & Support Services	£766,037	£659,634
Development Projects	£119,164	£116,590
Fundraising Costs	£268,628	£262,001
Total Expenditure	**£4,519,156**	**£4,236,327**

ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT COSTS



WHAT'S NEXT?

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES AT THE HEART OF EVERY DECISION

Young people know best what works for them, so we're making sure they're heard at every level of Step by Step. We're introducing eight key pillars that take young people's feedback all the way to our board, and we're strengthening Speak Out, our youth voice programme.

We're also expanding access to advocacy, careers advice and peer mentoring. That way, young people have the tools and the backing to speak up for themselves, in our services and beyond.

HOMES THAT BUILD INDEPENDENCE

A safe home is the start, not the finish. We're developing an independence skills framework so every young person leaves us with the core life skills they need.

We'll renovate Havant Foyer, explore supporting young people in new areas, and introduce a new approach focused on helping young people keep their homes. For hosts, new regular workshops will build their trauma-informed skills, and new digital campaigns will help us find more people ready to open their door.

SUPPORT WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE ALREADY ARE

We're bringing wellbeing support into the places where young people are already learning. Launch and Counselling now run on site at Godalming College, and we'll explore taking this model into more schools and colleges. Reaching young people earlier means we can help before small worries become a crisis.

We're also working with Citizens Advice Rushmoor, so the young people we support can get specialist advice when they need it.

GET IN TOUCH

STEP BY STEP
Young People. Hard Times. Bright Futures.

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Step by Step Partnership



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FR FUNDRAISING REGULATOR