This is a summary of a report which was provided to MPs last year. It was written in response to the UK Government banning young people from claiming housing benefit. Those between the ages of 18 and 22 years old can no longer claim support with their living costs in this way.

The report highlighted the following key aspects:

* **Young people, aged 16 to 24, are twice as likely to be homeless** than the typical person
* That figure increases to **14 times as likely if the young person identifies as LGBTQ+**
* The DWP believe **10,000 young people will be affected** by Harrington’s Cut;
* Over **300,000 young people were considered for an exemption, but were dismissed** by the DWP because it would be **too “complex” to identify** them;
* **The number** of charities and organisations using Regulation 55 of the NWA **(which allows them to employ homeless people without pay)** is not known;
* **If 550 people** with complex needs **become homeless** by 2019/20 because of Harrington’s Cut, **it will be enough to wipe out any savings**;
* **The number of places in hostels have reduced by 28%** between 2016 and 2008; this led to young people being given tickets to all-night buses instead of beds;
* For every month spent in formal homeless provision, homeless people have spent an **average of three months sleeping rough** or in “invisible homeless” situations;
* **90% of care leavers, and 30% of non-care leavers have sofa surfed** because they were homeless;
* The typical first age for sofa surfing is aged 20;
* The typical first age for approaching the council for support while homeless is 27;
* Working 10 hours a week or more is enough to lose a grade at A level;
* Employers engaging in previous work placement schemes were given as little as a day’s notice;
* **79% of CAMHS have imposed restrictions** on accepting children and young people that have been referred;
* **2017 is the 40th anniversary of the Homeless Persons Act.**

The report itself is quite long, so only the following areas are detailed here:

* Over **300,000 young people were considered for an exemption, but were dismissed** by the DWP because it would be **too “complex” to identify** them;

This comes from a memo provided by the SSAC, who advise the DWP. It told the DWP that “former children on the edge of care” should be included in the list of exemptions. The SSAC are specialists in the area of welfare, but the care system falls under the education cabinet. It’s understandable that they fell short here, but not so for the DWP to have responded in the way that they did.

“Children on the Edge of Care” is an academic term used to describe young people that should be in the care system or are very close to being in the care system, that are not considered to be “in care”. To be in care, a child would need to be accommodated under the Section 20 of the Children’s Act 1989.

There is no way of recording every child on the edge of care because this bracket includes young people that social services may be unaware of. What would have been more appropriate, and which the DWP should have explored further, is the use the “Child in Need” category. This bracket covers the children on the edge of care that are recognised by social services. There is a census for this category which is kept by the DofE. These children are therefore recorded and could have been made exempt.

The majority of people within the UK are not aware of the Child in Need category. Even those in the working in the care system are often unfamiliar with the term. Unfortunately, children can be looked after and accommodated under Section 17. This makes them appear to be “in care” at the time, but officially, they are not. These are the “Children in Need”. The government argue that this category should be handled discretely because the aim is to keep families together. If people were aware of this category, there may be stigma.

There is also the confusion with BBC’s “Children in Need” fundraiser, which is usually where people are confused. This is completely unrelated to the Children in Need defined by Section 17 of the Children’s Act 1989

This category needs to be brought into the public eye. It’s being used as a loophole to avoid providing children with the support they need and from progressing into “care leavers” in future years. Only those accommodated under section 20 become care leavers.

The DWP announced in March that they would repeal this ban. However, that still hasn’t happened and the department are refusing to set a date.

* **The number** of charities and organisations using Regulation 55 of the NWA **(which allows them to employ homeless people without pay)** is not known;

When the National Minimum Wage was introduced, people were concerned about it’s affect on charities. In particular, there was concern about the foyer design of chrity where service users would work in a commune rather than be paid or pay rent. To prevent these charities from being affected, Regulation 12, (now Regualtion 55) was introduced. This states that a charity does not need to pay an employee if they provide that employee with accommodation.

This sounds fair enough. However, no one is keeping an eye on who these charities are or how many people are affected. It’s led to multiple cases of modern slavery, including a recent winner of the Hugo award for journalism. Daniel Lavelle won the award for writing about his experiences in one of these schemes in the Guardian.

These schemes need to register with a government body and need to be monitored to prevent modern slavery.

* **Bonus: the homelessness reduction act**

Which should maybe be entitled the “homelessness statistics reduction act”. The only figures recorded are those where people are provided with a full housing duty. Under this act, people have to wait 56 days before the council will support them.

The seling point of this act was that if a person presented as homeless before they were evicted, they would be given a partial housing duty as early as 56 days before they become homeless. The reality is that the clock doesn’t start until they first present. Most people do not present until after they become homeless. They are left to fend for themselves and often accept squalor of accommodation to avoid being on the streets.

Once they accept squalor, the council dismiss them as no longer homeless.

This clearly can’t be right. A person should be considered homeless from day 1, not day 56.