

The Broken 'Social Contract' - Episode 3: Housing and Homelessness (Transcript) *Bollo Brook Youth Centre, in collaboration with Renata Albuquerque and Simon Tullett, SOAS, 7th December 2020*

[Intro Music]

INTRO: This is the third in a mini-series of podcast shorts by Bollo Brook Youth Centre for Corridors of Power. Each episode will focus on a different element of the broken social contract. This episode is on housing.

YOUNG PERSON 1: My mum's lived in this country for 26 years, and we lived in a council flat in South Acton. Our rent was about five to six hundred, and over the recent years we've seen it increase greatly. We've seen her get into debt every Sunday, there's a post coming out saying that she's in council arrears. And then, they're knocking down her house, forcing her to move into a new home within the area. So she's being forced to move in to these new overpriced flats. She's already in debt with the housing that the government said is affordable and liveable. So imagine living in a newly built apartment, how's she expected to live? She walked into that threshold in debt. They were charging us three weeks prior to when we actually stepped foot in the house. Her first letter that ever came to our house, our new building, was an arrear of 600 pounds. So, tell me, how was she supposed to live on arrears? If it's not, she can't pay, it's stress. And that's an adult who's lived in the area for twenty six years. So imagine vulnerable kids who have no place to go.

YOUNG PERSON 2: So, I was made homeless at the age of 18 because of my cramped living conditions at my parents' house. Once I got kicked out, I was homeless for a period of time. Then I moved into a hostel as temporary accommodation, and got given a two year tenancy. And it was explained to me that in that two years, if I were to work, I would have to basically pay a large amount of that back into the rent because I would be deemed able to afford it. And everything was fine until I got offered a really good, well-paid job at a company where I could have basically started to not only save, but basically start the kind of right direction I wanted to go in my career. So when I got offered a job, I went to my keyworker, spoke to them, and they told me that I would have to turn it down, because I wouldn't be able to afford paying for council tax and my flat, the rent of the hostel itself and everything put together with this job. And I would actually end up with a lot less than if I were to just not be working and living at the hostel. If I were to get offered this really good job, I should be able to go out and just move into private rental accommodation and start paying for it myself. But I wasn't actually able to save for the deposit and stuff because I'm not allowed to have savings, or if I do, I have to declare it, and then it would just like ruin the whole, support system that I'd put in place for myself. Yeah, so I had to turn the job down.

YOUNG PERSON 3: Basically, at the beginning of this year, it was a time when I found myself homeless basically.

YOUNG PERSON 4: The one thing that was actually the bouncing around like - it wasn't just one person, eventually I got referred to somebody else, and then that person was just gone, like, she just disappeared. If I tried to message her, she would say, no, this is your new caseworker, speak to them. And it was kind of annoying because you kind of like built up a relationship with that person; you felt comfortable with talking to them about your situation, and this long, always repeating yourself. Like nobody wants to keep talking about all the bad things that have happened or their situation. If somebody already knows, then it's just easier for them to deal with, it is easier for them to just understand where your head's at, at that point. So I would just say, that making sure that somebody stays with the same person, and at least that person doesn't have to always worry about

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going through the whole process again and making it tiresome and making it seem like nothing's really happening up.

YOUNG PERSON 1: That's why there's such a high rise in young people living on the street, because the government doesn't really give us a sustainable way for us to really live, even if they do give us spaces, even if it's a hostel or an accommodation. How is a young person, a vulnerable young person, supposed to stay on top of all of that? How are they supposed to do that housing benefit without help? A leaflet's not going to help. The government think that, you know, they can just throw us a bit of money, or a house and just expect us to get on with it. It's good for the now, but when you grow up and move on with life, or within a few months down the line, you're going to be slapped with bills and arrears. And then, what, you turn to where you can get fast money, the only way you know how. What's the solution that we can give to people like my mum? People like my peers. What do you think?

OUTRO: Bollo Brook Youth Centre has been based on the South Acton estate in west London since the 1980s. A hub of constant creativity, Bollo is always looking to push the boundaries of youth expression, whether through arts, music, politics or lived experiences.

For further information on the issues raised here, please contact Colin Brent at bollo@ealing.gov.uk, Simon Tullett at st92@soas.ac.uk or Renata Albuquerque at ra40@soas.ac.uk. Please also visit our website for further briefings (<https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/cop/>), and contact Professor Alison Scott-Baumann and her team for further briefings and access to other experts, at as150@soas.ac.uk.