

What is 'suitable' accommodation?

Summary of NCAS survey on how to define suitable accommodation for care leavers

February 2010

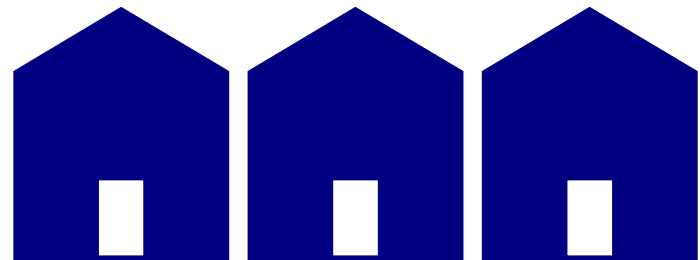


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Introduction

The government is reviewing the guidance and regulations that outline what local authorities should provide for young people in and from care. One of the new elements in the draft guidance and regulations is a list of questions that local authorities should ask to determine whether a young person's accommodation [in an unregulated setting] can be considered suitable or not (Schedule 6 of Care planning regulations). The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) conducted a quick online survey with care experienced young people and those that support them to find out what they thought is suitable accommodation for care leavers, using the list of questions in the regulations and additional issues highlighted through our work on accommodation for care leavers. This report summarises the findings.

Despite a short deadline for responses 93 people responded to the survey. NCAS would like to thank all those who completed the questionnaire and helped us circulate the survey including the members of the Alliance for Child Centred Care and the Associated Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children.

Recommendations from findings

Regulation 6, which provides a checklist for defining suitability of accommodation is a positive development, but needs to be firmed up to reflect the views of young people and those that support them. State of repair, safety/security, location, support and affordability were all priorities that people identified prior to being asked about the specifics of Regulation 6 and four of these are already included in the Regulation. However the detail of what these categories include needs more work. We suggested several additional questions in this survey that respondents felt were as important as the issues already included in Regulation 6. The survey illustrated that it is difficult to narrow down the list of questions to ask to determine suitability, as all but two of the questions were considered important by over three quarters of respondents. However, it still gives a clear steer on what young people and those that support them feel is important. Below we outline our recommendations based on the survey findings.

Expand the list in Schedule 6 and add an additional category of 'affordability'

- Young people and the people who support them have clear views on what constitutes 'suitable accommodation for care leavers'. We do not think the original Schedule 6 list (see Appendix 1) was drawn up with consultation from young people and those who work with them. Therefore it is imperative that the government take on board the findings from this survey and revise the Schedule 6 list.
- We suggest that when revising the Schedule 6 list the table which ranks the questions in order of importance on page 7 is referred to and that the categories in Schedule 6 are expanded to include 'affordability'.

- As part of this exercise the government should also review all of the comments supplied and ensure that the concerns and issues raised are addressed in both the Care planning guidance and Planning transitions to adulthood guidance, which are currently under review.
- A formal response from DCSF to the survey would be welcomed and we would circulate this to participants to show how their views have influenced the policy-making process.

Clarity on process for checking suitability for care leavers: the need for practice guidance?

- This survey focussed on the matters to consider when assessing whether accommodation is suitable, rather than the process for making the assessment and recording the decision. NCAS believes there needs to be more detail in the guidance on Care planning and Planning transitions to adulthood on how a worker and young person would work together to check the accommodation is suitable and how this information will then be recorded.
- In addition, if there was a dispute between the parties, e.g. the young person felt the accommodation was suitable but the worker disagreed, there is currently not sufficient information on what would happen in the guidance on Care planning and Planning for transitions to adulthood. There is also no mention of how young people could complain or challenge a decision on the suitability of a property they do not agree with. Further detail on this is required.
- A practice guidance/handbook for young people and workers giving more detailed information on the process of defining suitable accommodation, including the process of assessment, recording and challenging decisions may be helpful.

Link to statistics

- The government already collects information on 'suitability of accommodation' for care leavers at 19th birthday - the guidance to collection of these statistics should be expanded to reflect the changes in the guidance.
- NCAS would also like to see the statistics gathered at regular intervals and at a later age (i.e. 20 and 21) to show ongoing outcomes for young people.

Conclusion

Accommodation is clearly a big issue for care leavers – reflected in the quick and high response rate to this survey and numerous other research reports and accounts from young people. With the suite of guidance and regulations currently being revisited the government have a real opportunity to improve outcomes and experiences for young people leaving care. We hope they take on board the findings from this survey.

Methodology

Schedule 6 of the draft Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (see Appendix 1) includes a list of ‘matters to be considered’ before placing a child in accommodation in an unregulated setting under section 22C(6)(d) of the 1989 Act. This is also highlighted as the list to refer to when assessing the suitability of accommodation for care leavers [‘relevant and ‘former relevant’ young people] in the draft guidance on Planning for transition to adulthood for looked after children. The list is divided into the following six categories:

1. General/state of repair
2. Safety
3. Location
4. Support
5. Tenancy status
6. Young person’s views

NCAS used this list of questions and categories as the basis for the questionnaire and added additional questions and a new category (‘Affordability’), based on our previous work looking at accommodation standards.

Below is a complete list of potential questions to assess suitability of accommodation which we included in the survey. Questions in red/bold are the ones included in the draft Care Planning regulations (Schedule 6) - the other questions are suggestions from NCAS.

Category	Matter to consider / Question to ask to assess suitability of accommodation
1. General / state of repair	(a) Does the accommodation comply with official standards e.g. decent homes for social housing?
	(b) How many rooms are there in the property?
	(c) Has the young person access to means to sit and relax; and sit and eat a meal?
	(d) Are there enough facilities being provided for the number of people who will be sharing the house?
	(e) Furnished or unfurnished? If furnished - is the furniture in a good state of repair?
	(f) Does property has the floor coverings, furniture, furnishings and equipment? If not have they got the means to?
	(g) How is the property heated?
	(h) Is there access to food preparation and storage facilities 24 hours a day?
	(i) Is there access to utilities and services , including heating, hot water, electricity, water, telephone, television aerial*
	(j) Is the house free of damp and/or mould?
2. Safety	(a) Does the landlord possess a current gas safety certificate?
	(b) Are there policies and procedures to maintain safety such as fire drills?

	(c) Is the relevant fire safety equipment available, fitted and in working order?
	(d) Is there a system to establish who is at the door without compromising security (e.g. peep hole; chain; CCTV)
	(e) Is the accommodation secure - burglar alarms/ locks on the windows?
	(f) Has the young person got their own room and can they lock it?
	(g) Have any live-in landlords or those with access to the property been CRB checked?
	(h) Has the young person got their own key?
	(i) Have the previous tenants all returned their keys?
3. Location	(a) Is the area convenient for access to education, training, employment?
	(b) Proximity to public transport?
	(c) Community safety - is the area safe at night (including information about local crime characteristics)?
4. Support	(a) How will housing related support respond to the young person's assessed needs?
	(b) Where accommodation is to be provided in a domestic setting (not with former foster carers) how have hosts been selected, assessed and trained?
	(c) Was assessment subjected to independent scrutiny? Who by?
	(d) How are supported lodgings providers supervised? What arrangements are in place for keeping their suitability under review?
	(e) Has the young person got contact details for support with 24 hour access?
5. Tenancy status	(a) Does the young person understand the nature of their rights and responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement?
	(b) Has the tenancy been interdependently scrutinised and the young person been provided with independent advice about the implications of their accepting this tenancy?
	(c) Is it clear who has the responsibility for repairs?
	(d) Are all the charges are detailed in the agreement (e.g. deposit; rent, service charge)?
6. Young person's views	a) Does the young person think the accommodation is suitable?
	b) Does the accommodation meet the young person's assessed needs and aspirations, as set out in Pathway plan?
	c) Does the young person understand how the position of accommodation and related support is intended to respond to their assessed needs as set out in their pathway plan?
	d) Has the young person got a welcome pack with essential information regarding the property e.g. repairs, health and safety, complaints, contact numbers, local amenities etc.?
7. Affordability	a) Is it clear what the charges cover?
	b) Can the young person afford rent/accommodation on the income available to them?
	c) Are utilities available are competitively priced?
	d) Does the landlord have insurance in place for the buildings and their contents and are there arrangements to insure the young person possessions?

** Additional categories of utilities added*

We wanted to find out which categories and ‘matters to consider’ are considered essential and should thus be included in the regulations. We asked respondents to rank each issue in order of importance with 1 being ‘not at all important’ and 5 ‘very important’ (respondents also had the option of responding ‘don’t know’). For each category respondents were also given the option of adding additional questions or issues that they thought should be included.

Summary of findings

Overall, all questions bar one, were rated as ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (4 or 5) by a majority of respondents (over two thirds).

- The only question where less than half (39%) rated it as important or very important was 2(b) “How many rooms are there in the property?”
- Only 69% rated the question about independent scrutiny as important. However, a significant proportion also answered ‘don’t know’ to this question, suggesting that many may not have understood what ‘independent scrutiny’ entailed.
- For the remainder of the questions 77%-100% rated them as ‘important’ (4) or ‘very important’ (5).

Given the high proportion of respondents who rated all questions either 4 or 5, we have ranked the questions in order of percentage of respondents who thought the question was “very important” (5).

Table: Ranking of matters to consider

Ranking	Category	Answer Options	% seeing as "very important"
1	7	b) Can the young person afford rent/accommodation on the income available to them?	81%
2	1	(i) Is there access to utilities and services, including heating, hot water, electricity, water, telephone, television aerial?	81%
3	2	(a) Does the landlord possess a current gas safety certificate?	78%
4	2	(f) Has the young person got their own room and can they lock it?	77%
5	2	(h) Has the young person got their own key?	76%
6	1	(h) Is there access to food preparation and storage facilities 24 hours a day?	75%
7	4	(e) Has the young person got contact details for support with 24 hour access?	74%
8	5	(d) Are all the charges are detailed in the agreement (e.g. deposit; rent, service charge)?	74%
9	1	(j) Is the house free of damp and/or mould?	73%
10	5	(a) Does the young person understand the nature of their rights and responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement?	73%
11	1	(d) Are there enough facilities being provided for the number of people who will be sharing the house?	71%
12	7	a) Is it clear what the charges cover?	71%

13	2	(i) Have the previous tenants all returned their keys?	71%
14	1	(a) Does the accommodation comply with official standards e.g. decent homes for social housing?	71%
15	2	(c) Is the relevant fire safety equipment available, fitted and in working order?	68%
16	1	(g) How is the property heated?	68%
17	5	(c) Is it clear who has the responsibility for repairs?	68%
18	2	(g) Have any live-in landlords or those with access to the property been CRB checked?	66%
19	6	a) Does the young person think the accommodation is suitable?	66%
20	6	b) Does the accommodation meet the young person's assessed needs and aspirations as set out in Pathway plan?	66%
21	1	(c) Has the young person access to means to sit and relax; and sit and eat a meal?	65%
22	7	c) Are utilities available are competitively priced?	64%
23	3	(c) Community safety - is the area safe at night (including information about local crime characteristics)?	63%
24	2	(e) Is the accommodation secure - burglar alarms/ locks on the windows?	62%
25	5	(b) Has the tenancy been interdependently scrutinised and the young person been provided with independent advice about the implications of their accepting this tenancy?	61%
26	7	d) Does the landlord have insurance in place for the buildings and their contents and are there arrangements to insure the young person possessions?	59%
27	1	(f) Does property has the floor coverings, furniture, furnishings and equipment? If not have they got the means to?	59%
28	4	(b) Where accommodation is to be provided in a domestic setting (not with former foster carers) how have hosts been selected, assessed and trained?	59%
29	6	d) Has the young person got a welcome pack with essential information regarding the property e.g. repairs, health and safety, complaints, contact numbers, local amenities etc.?	58%
30	4	(d) How are supported lodgings providers supervised? What arrangements are in place for keeping their suitability under review?	57%
31	2	(b) Are there policies and procedures to maintain safety such as fire drills?	57%
32	4	(a) How will housing related support respond to the young person's assessed needs?	56%
33	6	c) Does the young person understand how the position of accommodation and related support is intended to respond to their assessed needs as set out in their pathway plan?	55%
34	3	(b) Proximity to public transport?	54%
35	2	(d) Is there a system to establish who is at the door without compromising security (e.g. peep	54%

		hole; chain; CCTV)?	
36	1	(e) Furnished or unfurnished? If furnished - is the furniture in a good state of repair?	51%
37	3	(a) Is the area convenient for access to education, training, employment?	51%
38	4	(c) Was assessment subjected to independent scrutiny? Who by?	42%
39	1	(b) How many rooms are there in the property?	16%

NB: Category 1 - General/state of repair; Category 2 - Safety; Category 3 - Location; Category 4 - Support; Category 5 - Tenancy status; Category 6 - Young person's views.

Detailed findings

Q1. What do you think makes accommodation suitable?

Please list three things that you think are essential to stating that accommodation for care leavers is 'suitable'.

Respondents had clear views on what was important in ensuring accommodation is suitable. Analysing the first answer people gave shows that the most important thing for just over a third of respondents was safety, followed by the location and availability of support.

- Safe - 34% (28/82) *'secure and safe place to live in'*
- Location/area - 12% (10/82)
- Support - 12% (10/82) *'help and support is on hand'; 'there are people available to help me at weekends'*
- Good state of repair - 9% (7/82) *'tidiness of house'; 'to be nice environment'; 'modern'*
- Affordable/cost - 5% (4/82)

Other issues that were mentioned by a small number of people included:

- Accommodation is permanent
- Near college/work/family
- Have own room
- Other people who live there are friendly
- Heating and cooking facilities

Looking at what people answered for their second and third important aspect of what makes accommodation suitable similar themes arise: affordability; safety and support. In addition people mentioned that the accommodation should be clean; homely; warm; close to local amenities such as shops and a place where you can enjoy yourself.

Q2. General state of repair

Ranking of issues/questions

All issues, except for the number of rooms, were deemed important. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 'important' (4) or 'very important' (5) ranged from 83% to 100%. The six issues deemed important by over 90% of respondents were:

- Is there access to utilities and services, including heating, hot water, electricity, water, telephone, television aerial
- Is there access to food preparation and storage facilities 24 hours a day?
- Is the house free of damp and/or mould?
- How is the property heated?
- Does property have the floor coverings, furniture, furnishings and equipment? If not have they got the means to?
- Are there enough facilities being provided for the number of people who will be sharing the house?

Is there anything else that you think is central to making sure that the accommodation is in a good state of repair? If so what?

Most additional issues raised were covered later in the questionnaire under the 'Safety' category, including several comments around the security and health and safety of the property, suggesting a great deal of overlap between the two categories. These have been included under Q3.

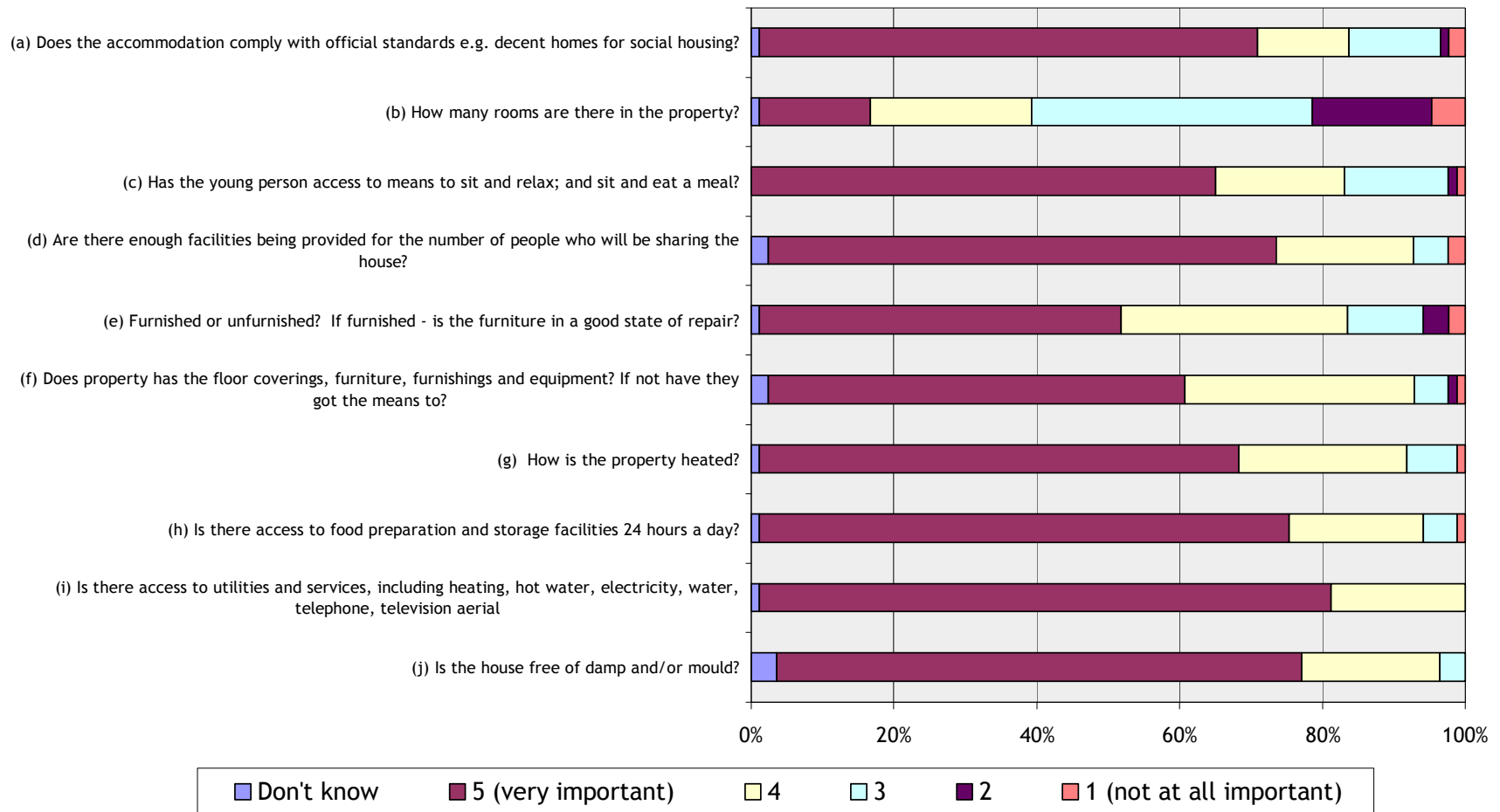
One person noted that it was difficult to rank the issues as they should all be considered essential stating: *"I can't believe you would even consider that there needs to be a scale of how important the above things are. As corporate parents would you consider anything less than very important for your own children?"*

Another response reflected the need to ensure checks are actually carried out: *"it is essential that the relevant department actually checks to assess state of repair because usually they do not bother!"*

Additional suggestions in the category of 'general state of repair' included:

- Make sure there are no vermin
- Energy efficiency
- Good relationship with a housing provider
- Surrounding properties condition
- Decor
- Are electrical outlets properly maintained and in good repair?
- Double glazing
- Thorough cleaning of property
- Any repairs carried out before young person [moves in]
- Is heating controllable?
- Do windows allow ventilation?

State of repair



Q3. Safety

Ranking of issues/questions

There was clear consensus from respondents that the issues relating to safety were important. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 'important' 4 or 'very important' 5 ranged from 77% to 95%. The two issues deemed important by over 90% of respondents were:

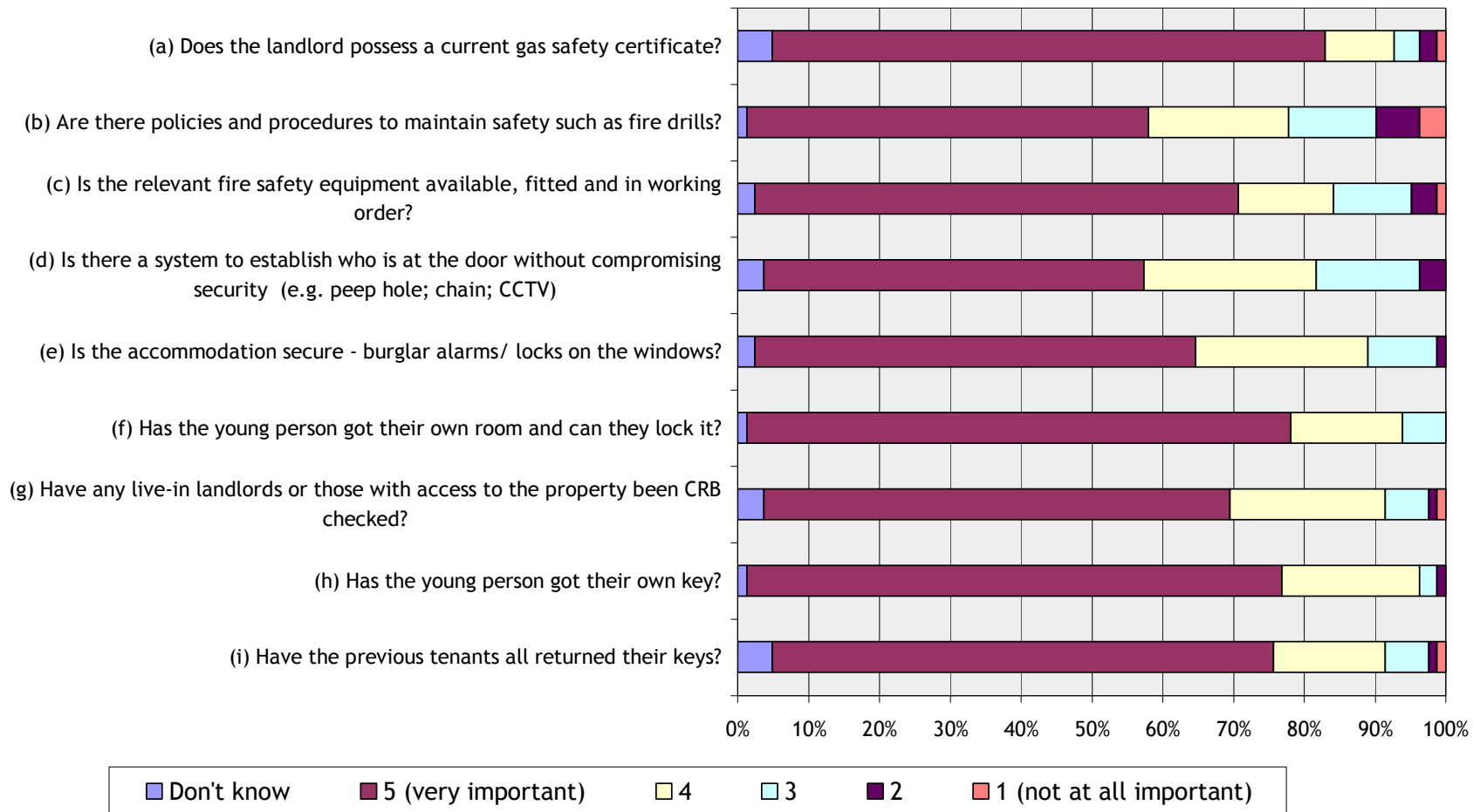
- Has the young person got their own key?
- Has the young person got their own room and can they lock it?

Is there anything else that you think is central to make sure the accommodation is safe? If so, what?

Additional suggestions included:

- Health and safety checks
- Ensuring any communal entrance doors are lockable and other tenants do not leave them on the latch
- New locks on the door to property
- Make sure all tenants have returned their keys if not pay for a change of locks. If not for a neighbour telling me the ex-tenants intended to burgle me I would have had everything in my flat stolen!
- Lighting in communal areas
- It should not be shared with others, unless partner or friends or family of the care leaver, otherwise it is not leaving care, it's just another stage of being in care!
- Smoke detectors fitted and checked regularly
- Location is a consideration
- Make sure that the mix of people who are living in the house get on and there wont be to much trouble between them
- The young people have a mobile phone which they can phone for help or contact the police if the need arises
- Have electric installations and equipment been regularly checked?
- Is there a place where personal goods can be locked away securely in case room is broken into?

Safety



Q4. Location

Ranking of issues/questions

All three issues were seen as significant. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 4 or 5 ranged from 79% to 85%.

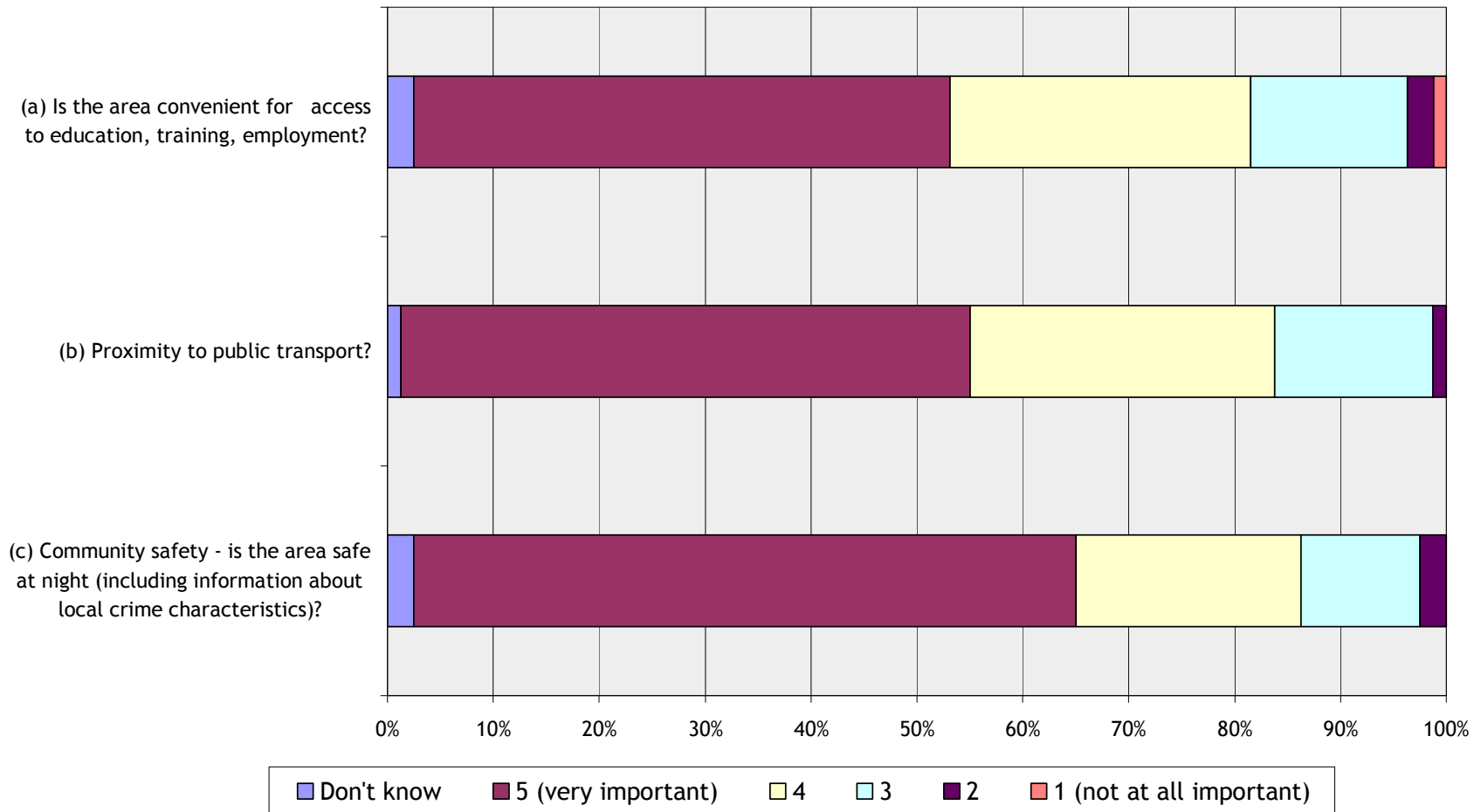
The responses to question 1 suggested that, in addition to access to transport, education, training and employment, proximity to friends and family and amenities were also important

Is there anything else that you think is central to deciding whether the location of the accommodation suitable? If so, what?

Additional suggestions included:

- Not too central to the town as this can lead to all friends trying to stay there when it is late at night and this can result in anti social behaviour complaints from neighbours
- Close to support networks, e.g. transition/outreach support
- Putting vulnerable people in situations where they may feel unsafe and can easily get involved in crime and drugs is undermining all the investment that has been put into young people during their time in care.
- Support networks and sense of identity associated with young people making informed choices and having availability in areas they wish to live. Proximity to local shopping areas and supermarket.
- Location to young person support services/community centre etc.
- Not close to other temporary/transient population accommodation.
- If the person is of a different race to the majority in the community you would need to check that the young person would be safe from harm and abuse.
- We check to see if the area is suitable for the young person this will determine whether the young person accepts the tenancy offer or not.
- Is the area close to shops, doctors, and leisure facilities etc.?
- Are the young people familiar with the area?
- Have they got someone they know living close by?
- Are they close to help (leaving care team) if needed?
- Local crime statistics.
- Employment statistics.

Location



Q5. Support

Ranking of issues/questions

Again all of the issues were ranked as important. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 'important' (4) or 'very important' (5) ranged from 69% to 92%. At 92% the following question was the highest ranked:

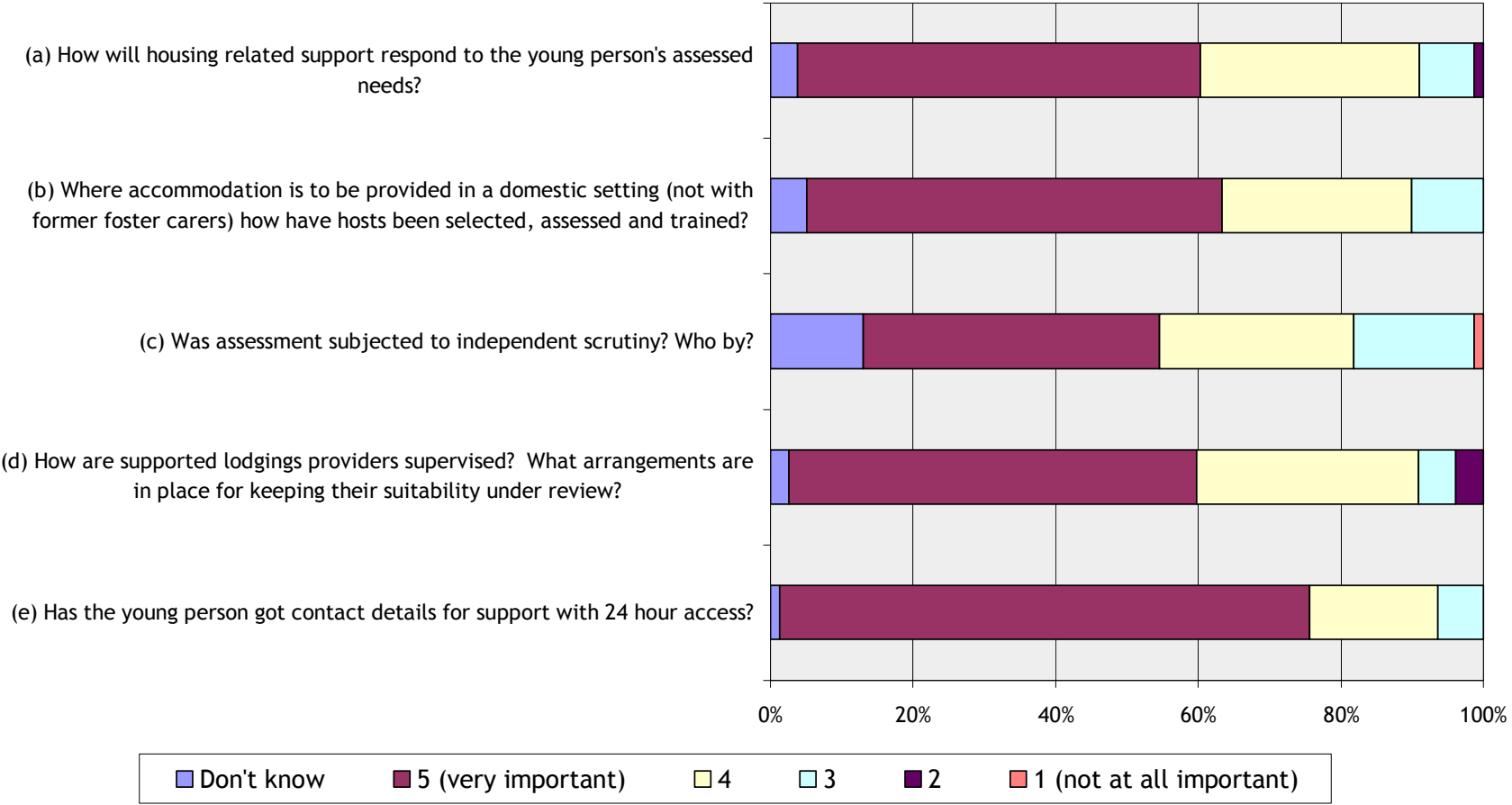
- Does the young person have contact details for support with 24 hour access?

Is there anything else that you think is central to making sure young people have the right support in their accommodation? If so, what?

Additional suggestions included:

- Young person needs to be introduced to ongoing support prior to the move to independence and to have built up a trusting relationship or they will not engage even if the service is provided.
- Floating support being provided outside normal office hours, such as weekends and evenings.
- Access to emotional support.
- Support plan.
- Bear in mind that most young people living independently still have the bolt-hole of the parental home to turn to if it becomes difficult, care leavers do not!
- Having regular visits can help to make sure that the young person is thriving and is safe in the location.
- The young person is assessed prior to moving into their flat, they can have rights to floating support.
- They should be allocated a mentor / support worker.

Support



Q6. Tenancy status

Ranking of issues/questions

All issues were assessed by respondents as important. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 'important' (4) or 'very important' (5) ranged from 84% to 92%. The two issues deemed important by over 90% of respondents were:

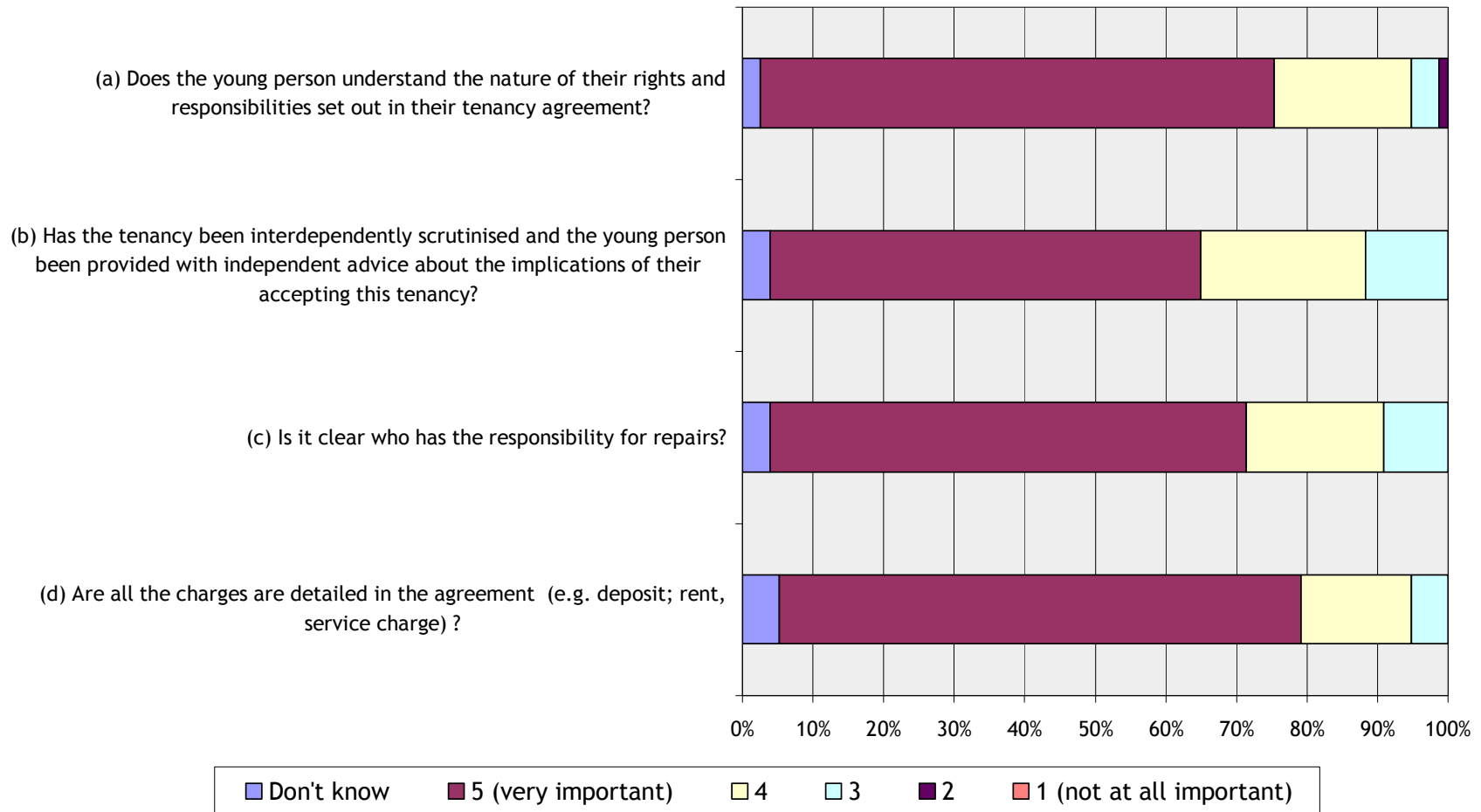
- Does the young person understand the nature of their rights and responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement?
- Are all the charges detailed in the agreement (e.g. deposit; rent, service charge)?

Is there anything else that you think is central to deciding whether the location of the accommodation suitable? If so, what?

Additional suggestions included:

- The deposit safety scheme... does the young person know about it and have they received written proof their deposit is safe?
- Providing the information to the young person prior to their move and explaining the implications of becoming intentionally homeless!
- Agreements need to be written in plain English and are understandable to the young person.
- Clear interview process with emphasis on ensuring tenancy rights are discussed and detailed.
- Who to go to for advice.
- Along with tenancy rights, also a young person's responsibilities and external agencies that may offer support: e.g. citizen's advice for legal review of tenancy agreements.
- Should not have to include costs for support, wardens, etc in the accommodation charges.
- Someone to read through the agreement with the young person to ensure that they understand all that is expected of them.
- The young people have a leaving care worker and they will give support and advice about their right on their tenancy.
- Many young people fail in accommodation and thought needs to be given to how they will be supported so they don't get into financial difficulties or face eviction. More needs to be done to prevent problems via early support and intervention. What will happen to young people if they are evicted?

Tenancy status



Q7. Young person's views

Ranking of issues/questions

All issues were given a high ranking. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 'important' (4) or 'very important' (5) ranged from 84% to 93%. The two issues deemed important by over 90% of respondents were:

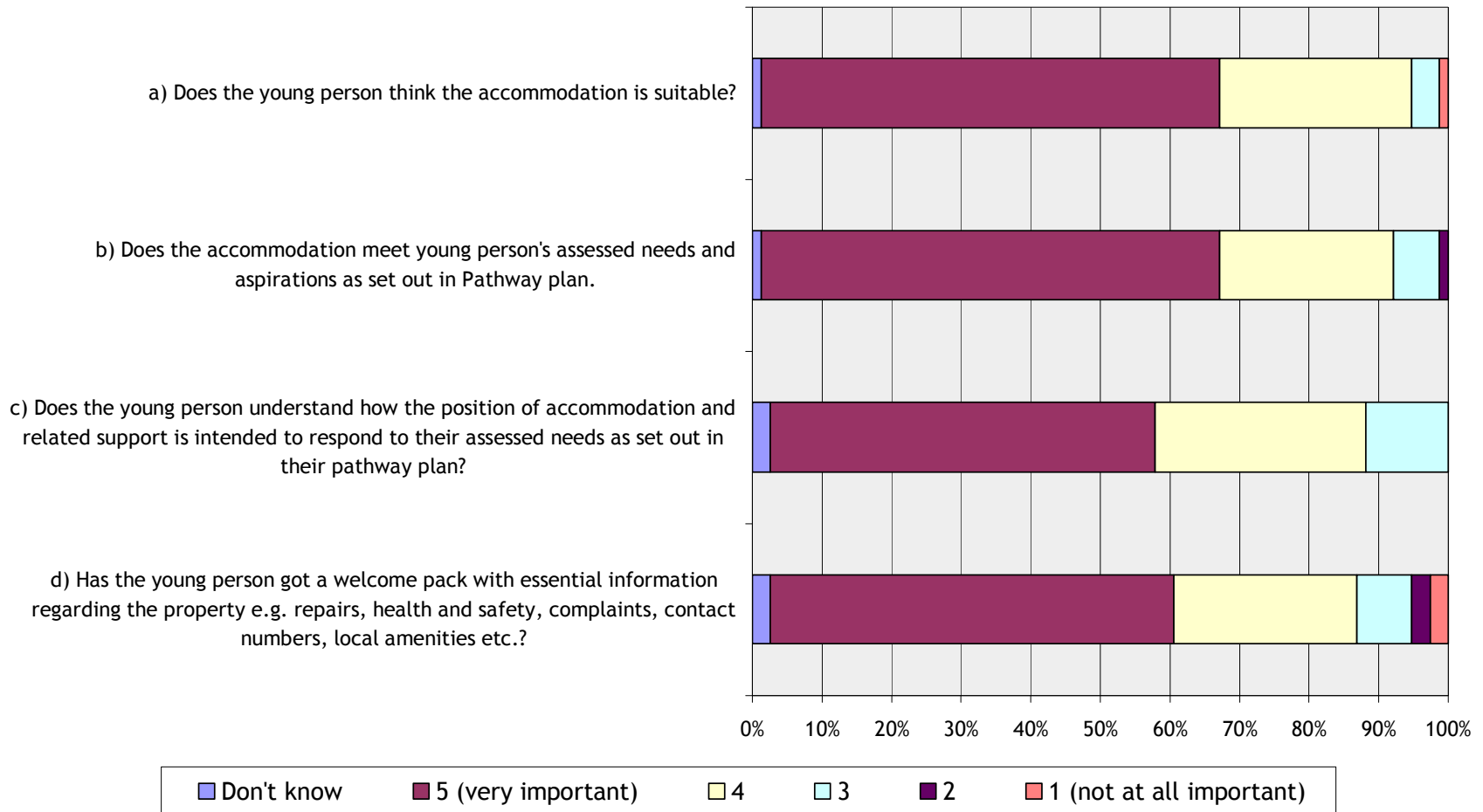
- Does the young person think the accommodation is suitable?
- Does the accommodation meet the young person's assessed needs and aspirations, as set out in Pathway plan?

Is there anything else that you think is central to making sure young people's views about their accommodation are taken into account? If so, what?

Additional suggestions included:

- I think to a certain degree we should take young person's wishes and aspirations for their accommodation but as a corporate parent (and responsible parent) also need to place them in accommodation which is suitable for their needs/abilities.
- Young person has some choice about the property being offered.
- Giving the young people a more realistic view of the accommodation provision available in the area and that they will not necessarily be given a flat/bedsit but may have to go through supported housing/foyers etc to prove they are capable of holding a tenancy.
- I think it's unclear when a young person reaches 18 where they are going to go.
- External assessment (if the young person would like it) so that young people aren't pressured into taking on accommodation that is not within their means or unsuitable.
- Contracts should also have a range of 'second chance' options.
- The young people bid for their property and they have the right to refuse the offer on a property if they feel it's not right for them. They have up to 3 refusals.
- How are young people's views ascertained? Are they provided with sufficient support and advice to make informed decisions?

Young person's views



Q8. Affordability

Ranking of issues/questions

In this additional category issues were again seen as significant. The proportion of respondents who rated each question either 'important' (4) or 'very important' (5) ranged from 88% to 96%. The two issues deemed important by over 90% of respondents were:

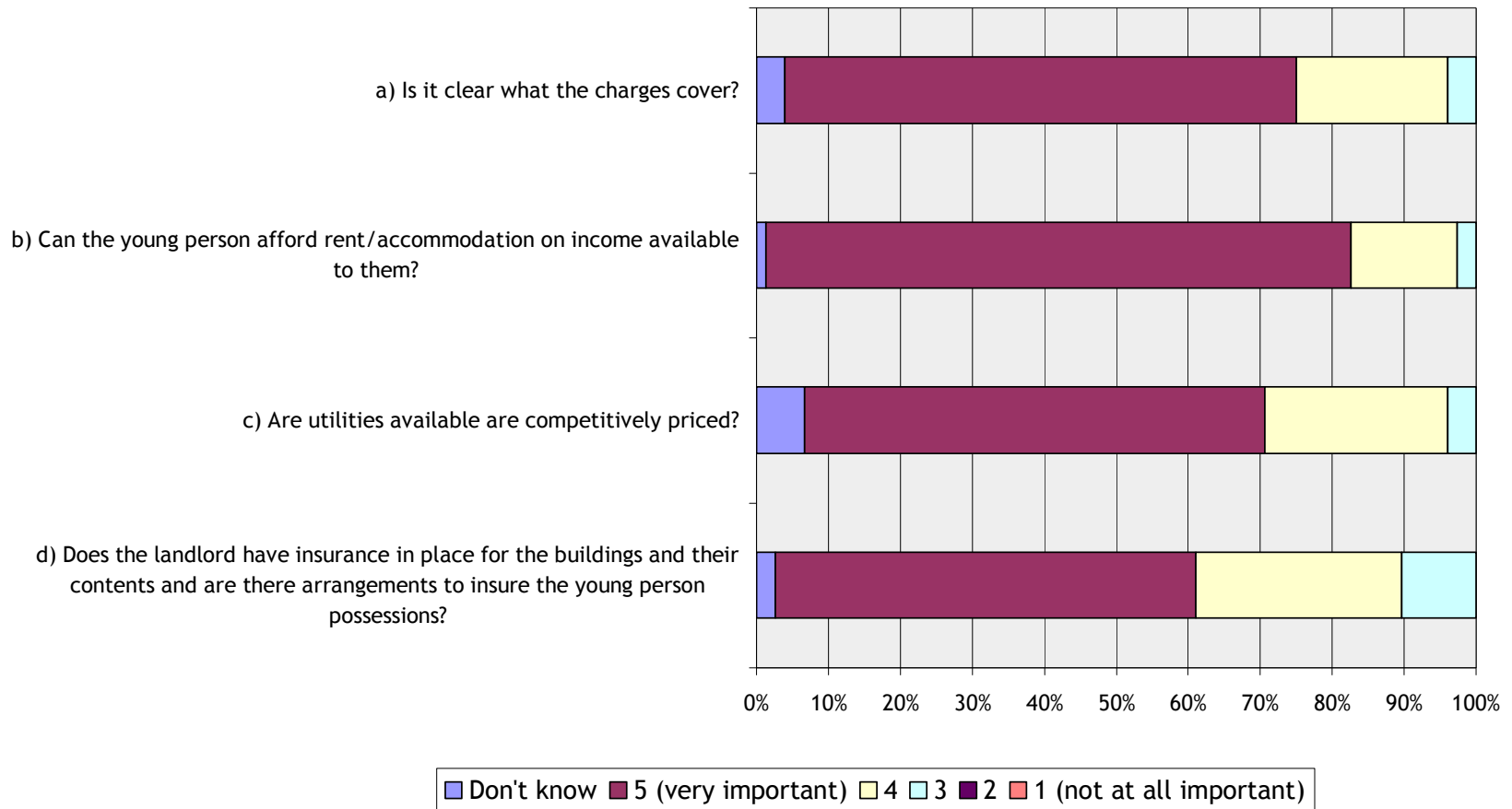
- Is it clear what the charges cover?
- The young person can afford rent/accommodation on income available to them?

Is there anything else that you think is central to making sure that accommodation is affordable? If so, what?

Additional suggestions included:

- It is important to note it's difficult to get contents insurance cover for offenders. This needs to be considered as comes up frequently with care leavers.
- Tenant normally responsible for their own contents insurance!! An added cost to which most young people do not see the relevance or importance particularly when living on a tight budget (JSA or ESA).
- Lifting the restrictions to housing benefit/ local housing allowance once a young person reaches 22yrs. What assumption do the government have in relation to young people aged 22 and over - why do they need to drop back to single room rent?
- Budgeting training, awareness training and ongoing support with enough time for each young person to get to grips with what will happen when they move out and how they can take control of the situation.
- Support in place regarding helping the young person budget so to avoid debts.
- Any support should not be included in the charge to the young person - young people at home usually pay only nominal 'board' or nothing at all whilst on low incomes, care leavers have to pay all, and haven't the choice to stay 'at home'.
- The flat which the young person chooses has to be an affordable price.

Affordability



Q9. Issues missing from survey list

Were there any important issues that you think are missing from the list [in the questionnaire] or things they [the government] should be asking instead?

20 people commented on this question - their responses can be grouped to the following themes:

Type of provision

- One young person cited their opinion that there is currently an over reliance on hostels - this was based on their own experience.

“It is my belief that under no circumstance should a young person be placed in a hostel, I have spent 2 years in hostels and know from experience there are many unchallenged issues such as substance and drug misuse, crime and prostitution in some cases. As a rule hostels should not be even considered as suitable housing for any young person let alone care leavers and vulnerable persons”.

- A need for specific guidance on B&B provision
- Some of the questions were not relevant to some provision e.g. Supported lodgings - so any list looking at suitable needs to consider all types of provision

Financial support

- Access to housing benefit should be reviewed in relation to Local Housing Allowance and fact that at age 22 care leavers are no longer exempt from shared room rent rate and so face increased rent charges and risk not being able to afford their accommodation
- A clear mechanism to prevent rent arrears building up should be in place so young person, housing provider and local authority leaving care team supporting the young person are kept informed

‘Affordability is more essential for care leavers until they are properly established than for young people who can rely on some parental support. Need to look at the interface between benefits, housing benefit, minimum/low wages etc to ensure that the young person is adequately financed to meet the costs of living independently, especially since this is not a matter of choice for them’.

Continuing support

- More information on continuing support - particularly for vulnerable young people such as those leaving residential care
- Support should be in line with what in young person’s pathway plan

Young people's views

- *'The list is very heavy on policies and procedures and there is very little about whether a young person likes the accommodation, feels safe and supported'.*
- Accommodation should be suitable for contact with relatives (in line with young people's wishes)

Q.10. Other comments

Finally, following points were made by individual respondents:

- Linkage of the list of 'suitable accommodation' to current statistics collected by local authorities on care leavers outcomes

'This should also link into to N147 suitable accommodation return as this guidance could get confused - Part of the N147 is very vague about suitable accommodation and the definition. It is down to the young person's individual worker to complete on ICS [Integrated children system] whether the young person is in suitable accommodation i.e. not in prison/bed and breakfast etc. This needs much more guidance and work in order for this stat return to mean anything'.

- Specific care leaver only accommodation

'There needs to be specific accommodation for care leavers who often still have issues that some housing providers (foyers & hostels) [do not look after young people] successfully and it often leads to them becoming homeless, ending up sofa surfing or in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Small units of no more than 4 young people with support going in for a specific amount of time such as the trainer flats idea that although local social services providers acknowledge the need they seem to ignore it when finances become involved which leaves 17/18yr old ending placements badly. Both the young person and the staff struggle with the fact there is no supportive environment after spending years trying improve the outcomes, they are let down at the time they move to independence'.

Appendix 1

The factors set out in the Schedule below will need to be taken into account in assessing whether any accommodation arranged for a relevant or a former relevant care leaver is “suitable”.

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations [2010]

SCHEDULE 6

Regulation 28

Matters to be considered before placing a child in accommodation in an unregulated setting under section 22C(6)(d) of the 1989 Act

1. General/state of repair

- (a) How many rooms are there in the property?
- (b) Are there enough facilities being provided for the number of people who will be sharing the house?
- (c) Furnished or unfurnished? If furnished - is the furniture in a good state of repair?
- (d) How is the property heated?
- (e) Access to utilities and services.
- (f) Is the house free of damp and/or mould?

2. Safety

- (a) Does the landlord possess a current gas safety certificate; fire safety for the property?
- (b) Is the accommodation secure - burglar alarms/locks on the windows?
- (c) Have the previous tenants all returned their keys?

3. Location

- (a) Is the area convenient for access to education, training, employment?
- (b) Proximity to public transport?

(c) Community safety - is the area safe at night (including information about local crime characteristics)?

4. Support

- (a) How will housing related support respond to the child's assessed needs.
- (b) Where accommodation is to be provided in a domestic setting (not with former foster carers) how have hosts been selected, assessed and trained.
- (c) Was assessment subjected to independent scrutiny? Who by?
- (d) How are supported lodgings providers supervised? What arrangements are in place for keeping their suitability under review?

5. Tenancy status

- (a) Does the young person understand the nature of their rights and responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement?
- (b) Has the tenancy been independently scrutinised and the young person been provided with independent advice about the implications of their accepting this tenancy.

6. Young person's views

Does the young person understand how the position of accommodation and related support is intended to respond to their assessed needs as set out in their pathway plan.

ABOUT US

For further information and resources please contact us or go to our website www.leavingcare.org

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At the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), as part of national charity Catch22, we draw on our significant national experience of engaging disadvantaged young people in the transition from care, and supporting those working with these young people to improve services and outcomes. We have expertise in all aspects of policy and practice for care leavers. We maintain national links to all leaving care services in England, support national and regional forums for managers and young people and undertake direct work with local authorities.