

The role of family and friends in young people's strategies for achieving residential independence: some preliminary findings

**Sue Heath & Emma Calvert
University of Southampton**

**CRFR International Conference - June 2010
Changing Families in a Changing World**

Contemporary housing transitions in the UK

- Marked by considerable risk and uncertainty in broader context of ‘delayed’ transitions
- Differentiated by the degree of planning and control exercised by a young person, the extent and nature of any constraints, and the degree of available family support (Ford et al, 2002)
- Student v non-student pathways (but NB student debt and rising graduate unemployment)
- Importance of specific policies affecting young people, e.g. single room rent

Key housing trends in last 20 years



- Fewer young householders live in owner-occupied and social rented housing and more young householders live in the private rented sector
- Private renting has become the most common tenure by far amongst 20 to 24 year olds
- Owner-occupation remains the most common tenure amongst 25-29 year olds, but its incidence has declined
- Owner occupation is still a widespread aspiration

Support from family & friends?

- Parents as rent guarantors
- Parental help with mortgage deposits
- Equity release schemes
- Parental home as fallback
- Sharing with friends to minimise housing costs (including letting rooms in owner-occupied housing)
- Joint mortgages with friends

Our research: young adults & their housing pathways



- the implications of contemporary patterns of household formation for young people's intimate relationships with friends, partners, and family members;
- the extent to which independent single living is underpinned by transfers of resources between older and younger generations and between friends;
- the interactions between housing and household pathways;
- 'imagined futures' in relation to housing and household and family formation;
- strategies adopted by young people in seeking to satisfy their housing needs and desires.

Research design and sample details

- 40 in-depth qualitative interviews with young adults aged 25-34 (14 completed to date)
- Housing history data
- Sampling criteria: aged 25-34, either living alone or in shared housing in Southampton area
- Aim to achieve a diverse sample in relation to current living arrangements, housing tenure, highest qualification, sexual orientation and geographical location (urban/rural): shortly to start targeting sample gaps

Key areas covered in interviews

- housing narratives in own terms
- leaving home/returning home
- current housing situation
- family and friendship networks
- support from family and friends
- views and experiences of different tenures
- housing aspirations and ambitions
- comparisons with siblings/friends

The parental home as fallback?

Early returns after first leaving appear unremarkable (especially for graduates), albeit linked to constrained circumstances.

- Obviously I'd no real job to go into, so I was pleased really to go...I was more worried of trying to get a job, rather than worrying about where I lived. Because I was willing to work anywhere...I was still a young single man then...I was willing to move anywhere. " (David, 31 yrs old, graduate)
- The first time I moved back was when I finished university, basically because I didn't have a job. I think every time I have moved home has always been related to the fact that I haven't had enough money or I haven't known where I want to be; that's why I've always gone back home...I think it's more to do with the fact that I don't really know what I'm doing next, so it's kind of like an in-between place to go to. (Valerie, 26 yrs old, graduate)

The parental home as fallback?

Awareness of loss of independence

- I was probably quite used to independence at that stage so moving back home sort of I lost that. But I didn't mind, it was short term, just so I could save some money, I could look for a job and move out. (Stephen, 29 yrs old, graduate)
- But I think if I'd have stayed longer, I think certainly my, well definitely, my dad said to me if I'd have stayed longer then I would have had to start paying rent. (Valerie, 26 yrs old, graduate)
- But the relief of going back and not having that financial drain that only I was responsible for...it was never you know, it was never like hugely depressing. It was always a little bit disappointing but you know I love my mum. We get on well and I like her company.

INT: What do you mean by disappointing?

I suppose in my mind it, you know the fact that it hadn't worked out. The situation that I'd been in hadn't worked out. (Gillian, 34 yrs old, non graduate)

The parental home as fallback?

Severe misgivings regarding potential future returns, yet an awareness of the parental home as a last resort:

- I mean if my parents got ill and I had to look after them, I would. Apart from that, I don't, I can't see myself. (Mary, 25 years old, non graduate)
- There's a difference between coming back to the family home after you've been made redundant and really have no other options, to coming back if only because it's easier... You know, if it was the end of the world and I really had no other place to go, then yes, obviously, but while I've still options, personally that strikes me as being the wrong thing to do (Barry, 29 yrs old, non graduate)

The parental home as fallback?

Differential access to parental resources:

- They've got a lot of space there...but I think I'm in quite a lucky position that because they've got a lot of rooms that they don't even use when me and my brothers aren't there, they're always happy to have us back. (Valerie, 26 yrs old, graduate)
- Well my parents, where they live at the moment... there wouldn't be any space for me anyway in the parental home...the disability scheme they're under, it only really caters for them. (Mark, 34 yrs old, graduate)

Parent-child financial exchanges



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- Support as students: rent and living costs
 - Private renters: variable degrees of support, plus some limited anticipation of future support with house deposit
 - Owner occupiers: buying made possible via parental support

Parent-child financial exchanges



Ambivalence: simultaneously grateful and uncomfortable

- Oh, I hate it. Because well when you're young, you don't really think about it as much and then when you do live on your own you realise how much things cost. And I think well I'm not, you know my dad still works, but I wouldn't want him to keep working so he can hand money over to me.

(Mary, 25 yrs old, non graduate)

- The first time [after redundancy] struck me as being more of a situation that was out of my control anyway. The second time struck me as being this is my fault entirely, why was I so stupid, I can't believe I'm having to accept cash for, cash to help me out.

(Barry, 29 yrs old, non graduate)

Parent-child financial exchanges



Gifts v loans

- My dad used to, when I was away on my career break, he used to put money into my account. That was always on the pretext of me wanting to pay him back when I got home, but he won't let me, so.
(Valerie, 26 years old, graduate)

- I got a better rate if I added an extra couple of grand to the deposit so they've just gone you might as well borrow it from us than from a bank. So yes, they've been very helpful with that.

Int: And how did that come about, was it a lend or a gift?

I think it's, I think they would probably be fine with it being a gift, but for me, I would like to pay that back, probably quite slowly, but definitely for me it's a lend and I want to pay that back.

(Gail, 25 yrs old, graduate)

Exchanges involving friends

Generally avoided, or small sums only; happy (in principle) to lend but not to borrow

- And I wouldn't do that, I just wouldn't. I wouldn't ask for money from friends like. I would rather, I would rather go without than to ask my friends. (David, 26 yrs old, graduate)
- You know there are friends I could ask, but I'd feel really, really bad. And I probably would demand to be able to repay some interest you know. Yeah, I just wouldn't feel, I'd rather go without. You know if it was like an emergency, I don't know, yeah, but. (Barry, 29 yrs old, non graduate)

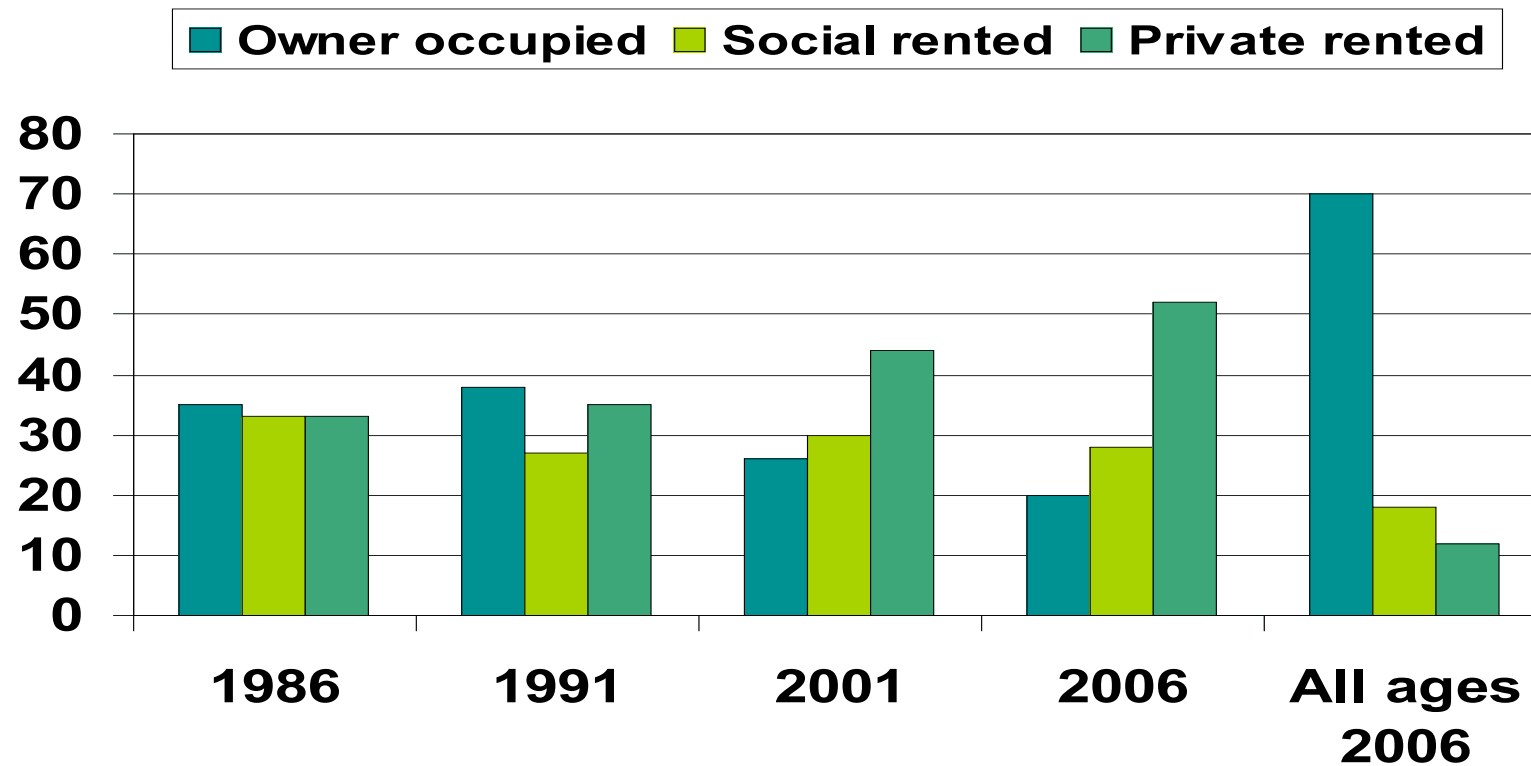
Exchanges involving friends

Disquiet regarding financial obligations between friends, with mixed views on the desirability of joint mortgages

- I wouldn't buy a house with friends. And why not, because, well first off a mortgage is for life isn't it! Also, like your friends change... So no, that's the reason I wouldn't do that, is because you're not tied to your friends. (David, 26 yrs old, graduate)
- Well you'd have to be very careful there, you'd need to get some sort of contract drawn up with regards to mortgage protection. If one of your friends became unemployed, how would they pay their share of the mortgage, if you fell out, what would happen with their share of the property...what happens if you, you know found a partner and wanted to move in together ...would you be able to sell your share to someone else or would you have to be restricted to selling it to your friends? (Mark, 34 yrs old, graduate)
- So I think it's, you know a really good idea. I think more people should think about buying with their friends, because you know it's all right for a first time buyers, if you're a couple and things like that, but that doesn't always work out. (Mary, 25 yrs old, non graduate)

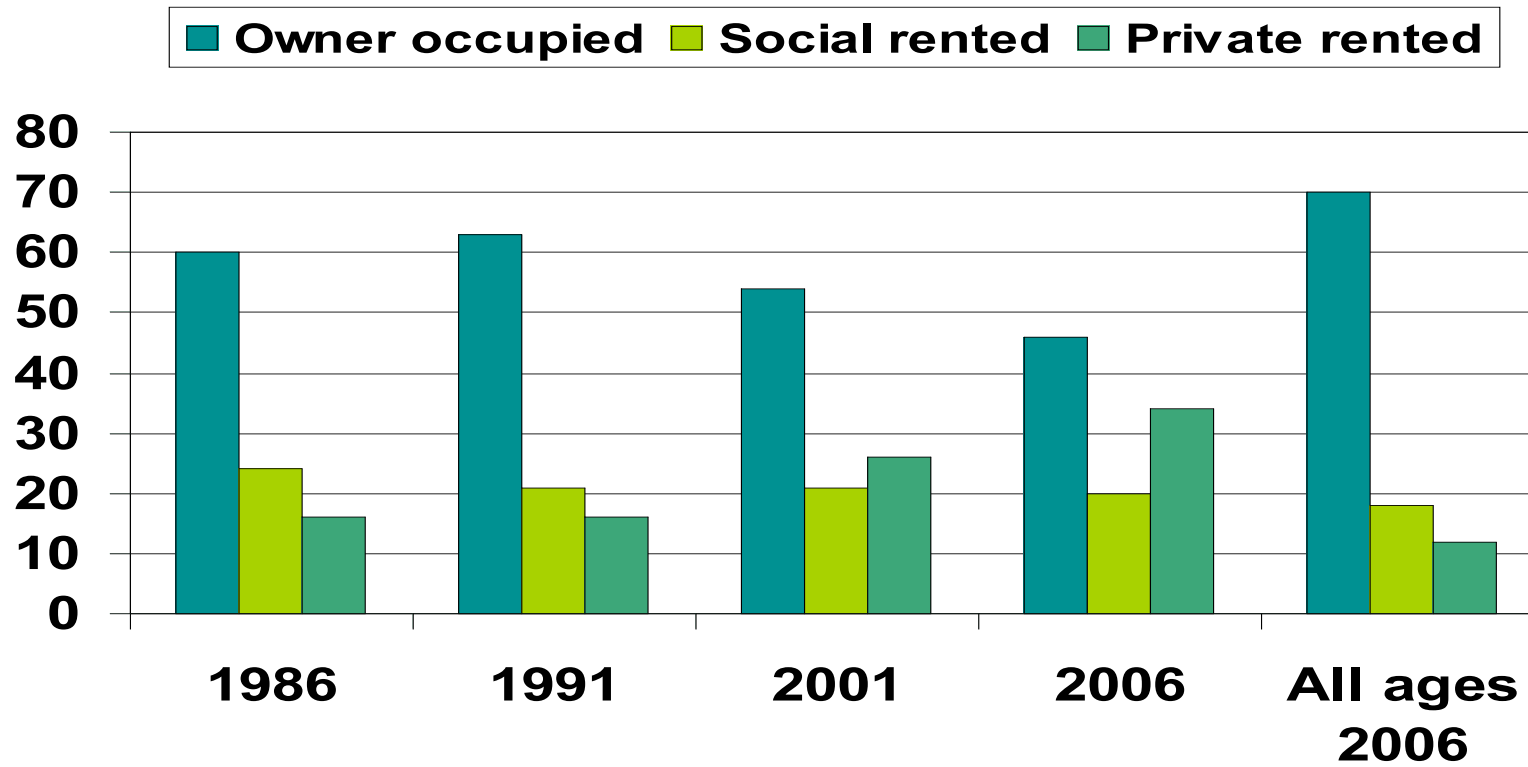
Preliminary conclusions

- Support for Ford's model – although the student pathway is not straightforwardly a privileged route
- Distinction between residential independence and financial independence
- Implications for trust, integrity and self-respect



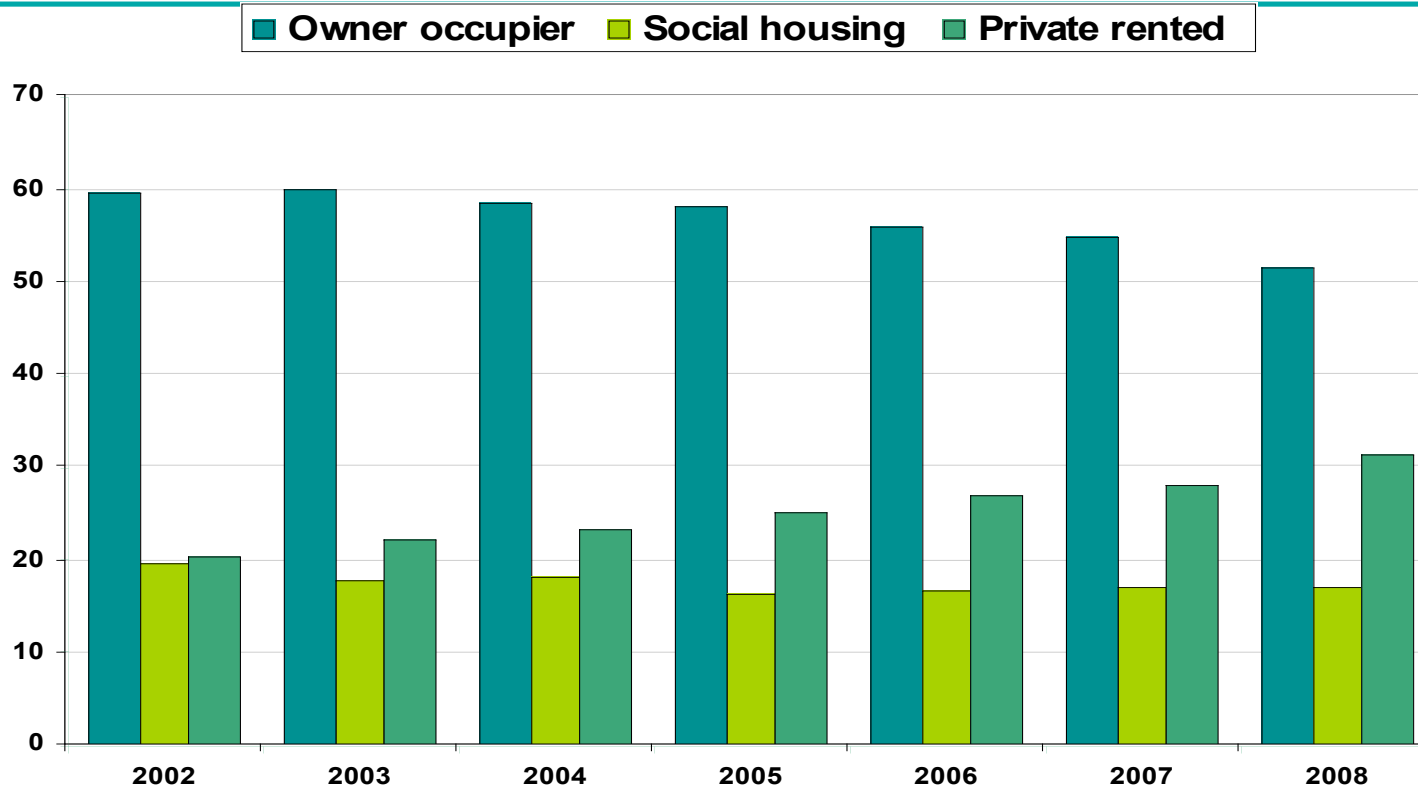
Tenure of 20-24 year old householders, England, 1986-2006

Source: Survey of English Housing, 2006, Table S118



Tenure of 25-29 year old householders, England, 1986-2006

Source: Survey of English Housing, 2006, Table S118



Tenure of 25-34 year old householders, England, 2000-8

Source: Survey of English Housing