

# Home alone? The implications of solo living for young people in their housing transitions into adulthood

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# Background

- Given the sharp and continuing rise in the number of one person households in recent decades, I wanted to explore the relationship between solo living and social housing within a policy context
- MA dissertation thesis Social Research Methods (Social Policy)

# Study Aims

- To investigate housing practitioners' perspectives on solo living and one person households
- It became apparent that for young people (age 16-24) making the transition to living alone, additional barriers could be in place
- To identify policy implications for young one person households

# Context

- Semi-rural area of County Durham, North East England
- Solo living in this region accounts for 1/3 of all household types
- Four organisations were involved in the study: two housing associations and two branches of a local authority county council
- A total of 15 male and female housing practitioners were interviewed, ranging from front line housing officers to directors of housing

# What barriers can young solo livers face...?



# Findings (1)

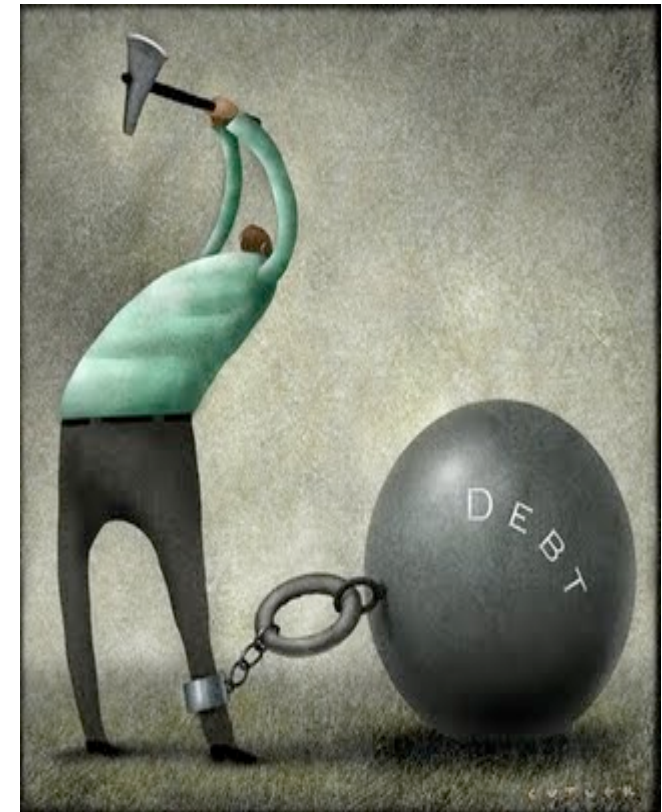
- Solo living tended not to be regarded as a significant policy concern for interviewees; rather, single parents, families with children and elderly people were seen as priority cases

**“Young people living on their own are seen as less of a priority when it comes to finding a suitable tenure for them...if you’ve got kids you get more points for that, so a single mother, say, has more chance of getting housed than a young single bloke looking for a house”**

(Housing Officer, male, housing association)

# Findings (2)

- Interviewees reported that young people are often 'forced' into solo living following dispute with family/partner/friends
- Negotiating finances and debt can be a major barrier for young people living alone
- Advice and guidance specifically for young solo livers to prepare them for sustaining a tenancy was recommended by the majority of interviewees



# Findings (3)

- Problems surrounding unemployment, drug use, alcohol misuse and health problems also prevalent amongst young solo liver
- Unemployment – Jobseeker’s Allowance also discriminatory for under 25 solo liver, at **£50.95** per week for under 25’s compared with **£64.30** for over 25 singles
- ‘Hidden homelessness’ (Palmer 2006) Young people who are aged over 18 do not automatically have a priority need for accommodation under homelessness law, it is often harder to obtain accommodation for them
- Single Room Rent: discriminatory against young solo liver under the age of 25 **not** in social housing – only **£45.50** per week to cover day to day living costs compared with **£57.45** for over 25’s living alone

# Conclusion

- Young solo livers require multi-faceted support and guidance in managing and maintaining their tenancy
- Housing policies tend to be family-centric yet the needs of young solo livers also need to be addressed
- Linear framework of housing markets and government policies are not adequate to deal with the complexity of young people's housing transitions