Moving, Always Moving

The normalisation of housing insecurity among children in low income households in England

In partnership with

The Children's Society

Dedication

We would like to dedicate this report to our transient participants, who live day after day, month after month, year after year, with no permanent state of home:

Thank you for your contributions to our study. You have brought important issues to light and you have helped to shape our thinking about them. We will do all we can to put them to good use in helping to make life better for children and families living with housing insecurity. We hope that you continue to build lives you can be proud of, that you have managed to find your permanent state of home, and that it is somewhere you can thrive.

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Foreword

It is an honour to launch *Moving, Always Moving* – the latest publication from The Children's Society's study Understanding Childhoods: Growing up in hard times. It is testament to the value of listening to children and placing their voices at the heart of social research.

But while it is an honour to publish this report, it is also something that should not have to be done. To read the extraordinary stories that unfold in the pages that follow is to be taken on a heart-breaking journey through the reality of housing insecurity and the poverty that drives it, in contemporary times. To witness the losses, the uncertainties, the frustrations and the struggles caused by 'moving, always moving' is to encounter nothing less than a scandal.

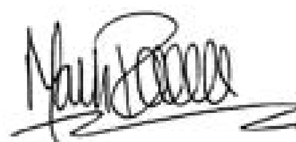
The pain of having to leave friends behind, of wondering whether you will have a home to decorate for Christmas or even to unpack your case in, of coping with the chronic stress that can permeate entire households when no-one knows where 'home' is, of moving 10 times in as many years, and on top of that the pain of concealing one's housing circumstances for fear of the judgement that inevitably follows, is pain that no child should have to endure.

That these stories take place in the second decade of the millennium, in our country, is a disgrace – a stain on our collective conscience, and a shameful reminder that despite decades of research, lobbying and activism in this area, there is still so much to be done, so far to go.

The research that underpins this report was undertaken before Coronavirus came into our lives, and was written up before the world changed beyond our imagining. While we do not yet know the effects that the pandemic will have on those already living in insecure housing, we do know that life looks set to get whole lot harder for the children and families in its grip, and for those teetering on the edge of stability – as well as for the many, many more who will find themselves beginning to struggle in the months and years to come.

So when you read the stories that follow, know this: this could be as good as things get for a while. The hardships could intensify and many more children could come to know the kind of transience infused in the pages of this report. The stories in *Moving, Always Moving* are not only heart-breaking or enraging. They are a call to action. The young people you will meet are remarkable in their resilience and in the many ways they cope with the circumstances they find themselves in – helping with house moves, constantly adjusting to new surroundings, shaping their everyday lives to accommodate housing insecurity in a myriad subtle ways. These are stories of resourcefulness, of invention, of imagination. The young people in them work tirelessly to navigate everyday life without a stable home. They have not given up, and we should not give up on them.

We must be radical, we must be bold, and charities, the public, the Government and industry alike must work together to ensure that, as we rebuild our society in the wake of the current pandemic and its economic fallout, we think of the young people in this report. We must think of them and ask ourselves: 'Are we doing enough?' 'Do we serve them well?' And 'what more can we do?'



Mark Russell
Chief Executive
The Children's Society

Foreword

England is in the grip of a housing crisis. At the end of 2019, the National Housing Federation estimated that 8.4 million people in the country were living in insecure, unsuitable or unaffordable homes.

We know how detrimental housing insecurity can be, including – and perhaps especially – for the children who experience it in their formative years. Studies exploring its links to a number of different outcomes have already shown that those who grow up with nowhere to call home are worse off psychologically, health-wise, socially, educationally and behaviourally, than those who have grown up in stable housing.

This knowledge is already available at the level of numbers – and the statistics and correlations born of them – and the overall picture looks bleak. *Moving, Always Moving* offers us a different kind of insight into the issue of housing insecurity – an understanding, at a very human level, of what lies behind the figures.

The report reveals, in compelling detail, how housing insecurity can stymie the satisfaction of human needs in childhood – the needs for shelter, belonging, stability, safety and friendship. And it highlights the fundamental importance of having a sense of security in the world, and the role that housing can play in either contributing to, or detracting from, this.

This report not only gives a compassionate and visceral account of growing up with no stable home, it points to the value of qualitative, longitudinal research in providing an in-depth understanding of the ways in which public policies (or rather lack of attention within them) can be experienced in the microcosm of everyday life. And it shows that when methodological rigour is combined with careful analysis and storytelling, social research can bring to light, and to life, issues and perspectives that are too seldom heard – especially in the policy-making process.

Policy-makers working on housing and other, related, policy areas need to become more aware of and more focused on the need for security, especially in childhood, as psychological, emotional, behavioural and relational patterns begin to be formed.

Reading this report would be a good place for them to start.

Ruth Lister
Member of the House of Lords and Emeritus Professor of Social Policy Loughborough University

Introduction

‘Rootless as some winged seed blown about on a serendipitous spring breeze.’

Murakami, A Wild Sheep Chase

A winged seed

Sometimes, in the process of analysing qualitative research data, working from an interview transcript is not enough, and researchers find themselves going back to the audio recordings of their interviews. Maybe the transcriber was unable to decipher a particularly strong accent or colloquial turn of phrase and the transcript is peppered with comments proclaiming a lack of spoken clarity. Maybe the meaning of a participant's words is not clear, even from a fully transcribed interview, and we need to hear them spoken so we can find clues in tone or inflection that might point to meaning. Maybe a research assistant, in a diligent effort to anonymise the transcript, has redacted key pieces of information – such as place names – which turn out to be vital in understanding the implications of what a participant is telling us. Sometimes there is just a need to hear someone's voice again so it can trigger the memory of an interview and all the things that went unsaid, implied nonetheless through body language, facial expression, tone of voice, hesitation – those little pieces of the jigsaw that can help us answer the question 'what is going on here?'.

Kasai's transcript had been especially tricky to work with. She was one of the participants in our research project Understanding Childhoods: Growing up in hard times, taking part in annual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews between 2015 and 2017, and the transcriber seemed not to have had an ear for her accent, or her hurried words and mumbles. So I dug out her sound file and listened for myself. Her accent was familiar to me, and with a few playbacks I could just make out most of the rushed bits and quiet parts. She had been 12 at the time of her first interview, and we had sat in a tiny, windowless room usually used as a prayer room, which her school had made available for our research. She talked about being teased by classmates for having hair like a scarecrow, about being pushed down the stairs by another child, and about feeling too scared to go to school. She spoke about missing her dad, about the young carer's project she was attending because of her mum's illnesses and the related role she played looking after her younger siblings. And she spoke about her love of lip balm and all the different flavoured tubes she had bought from the pound shop. She talked about not enjoying her last birthday because a girl from the young carer's project had cursed her to die, and because she had received no presents at all that year. She said that if she had a magic wand she would cure her mum. She spoke about running away, getting found by the police and being brought back home, and about how she had recently punched one of her brothers and got locked out of their flat afterwards by way of punishment. She said she wanted to be a paramedic when she grew up.

And Kasai spoke about moving. First from one place to a second, then to a third, then a fourth, then a fifth and a sixth, zig-zagging across the city she had been born in, living in one flat, then another, then another. She stayed in a domestic violence refuge for a while with her mum and brothers after her dad had beaten her mum and then said that if she didn't leave and take the kids with her, Kasai and her brothers would

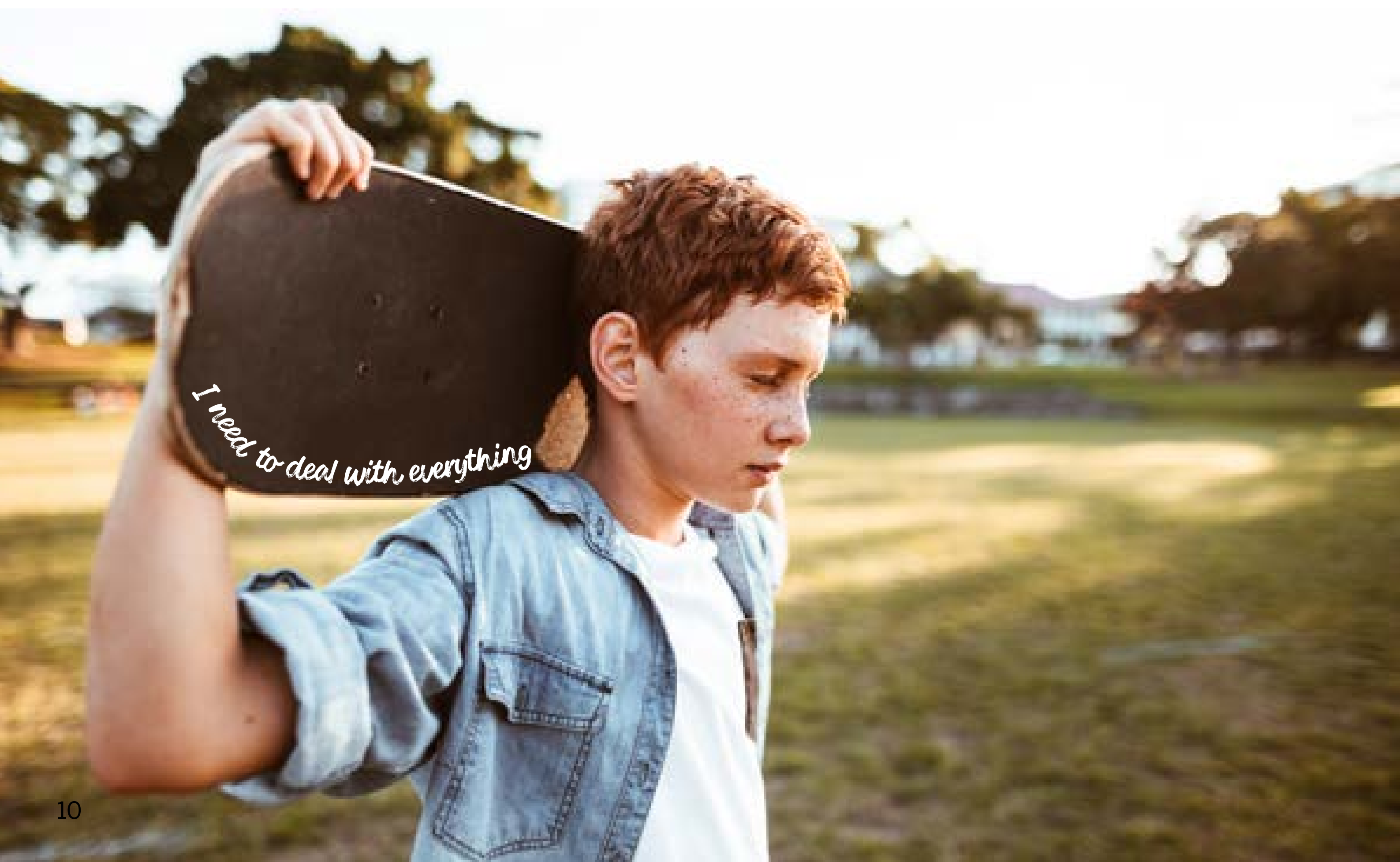
go into care. She talked about moving into a temporary flat, getting placed in short-term foster care because her mum couldn't cope with her, then moving back in with her mum and brothers in the temporary flat. And she spoke about waiting. Waiting to be moved again, hopefully, definitely she thought, possibly, she wasn't too sure. How she was looking forward to decorating her new room in the place they should be moving to soon. She also spoke about how she wanted to move to the really good school right next to where she was currently living, but how her mum didn't want her to do that because she didn't know where they would be moving to next (and anyway the school wouldn't let her move because that required a good attendance record and Kasai didn't have this because of all the bullying). None of the decisions to move home had been Kasai's, and it seemed from her narrative that they had not been her mum's either.

After listening to that first interview, I had to hear the second. The recording was more echoey this time, as we sat in a cavernous room in a disused part of the school, which had bare walls and little furniture, and Kasai's voice was a little bit deeper. She talked about her thirteenth birthday, how her cousin had come over for birthday tea and how they had eaten cupcakes together. And she spoke again about moving. Not actual moving, but imagined moving – how she and her mum and brothers were still waiting to move, hoping to, expecting to, but going nowhere for the time being. They were still living in the temporary flat a year on, no wiser to the question of where or when a permanent home might manifest for them, although wiser to the discomfort that had come to accompany chronic housing insecurity. Kasai talked about how much she was looking forward to having what she called a permanent state of home, and she grinned a big, wide grin as she spoke, again, about how much she was looking forward to having a room of her own and decorating it. She also talked about how frightened she got when they moved because new places were always unfamiliar, the night shadows dancing across the bedroom wall in the early hours.

When the time came to arrange Kasai's third and final interview, I was told she had been moved to a different school a few miles away, closer to the new home she had moved to with her family (though not the school she had spoken about wanting to attend). I called her new school and left a message for the head of her year to call me back, but didn't hear anything. I called again a few days later, and again heard nothing. I sent an email, explaining that at the end of her second interview, Kasai had expressed enthusiasm for meeting a third time, and that she had been a valuable and insightful participant in our study, but there was no reply. I began to wonder whether Kasai had changed her mind and no longer wanted to be part of the research, so I paid an impromptu visit to the new school to check, and to try and find out what was going on. I met very briefly with the teacher I had phoned and emailed, who said that Kasai – now in Year 9 – was 'struggling to settle in'. She had been put on a behaviour management programme, and told that her participation in the research interview was now conditional on good

behaviour. I explained that this was not what we had agreed with Kasai, that we had told her she could have a final interview if she wanted, and that it was important that she make the decision about taking part, not the school and not us. But it made no difference. I never got to find out what the previous year had been like for her, nor give her a final gift voucher, which I imagined she might use to top up her lip balm collection at the pound shop. Kasai never got tell me about how her mum was doing, whether she had been in touch with her dad, whether she had got to paint her new bedroom the shade of hot pink she had spoken about, or what it felt like to have moved once more. We never saw each other again

As I listened back to Kasai's story of having moved so many times in her young life, to her experiences of living in limbo waiting to move, to her accounts of all the other things she had been contending with throughout, and when I recalled the forestalling of her final interview, it was difficult to shake the image of a winged seed, rootless, blown about on a breeze, though not one that seemed very serendipitous or spring like.



The breeze: Housing insecurity in England today

Over the past few decades, several factors have come together to produce the conditions that have seen children like Kasai forced to grow up with no permanent state of home.

First, there are a range of housing-specific issues and trends which, in combination, have resulted in what has been termed a housing crisis, or emergency in England.[1] Between 2010 and 2019, average house prices in the UK rose (albeit unsteadily) by 33%.[2] This means that it became increasingly difficult – and in many cases impossible – for families to live in homes that they own. At the same time there has been a growth in both the size of the private rental sector in the country (ie the number of people living in private rented homes) and in rent levels within that sector. According to research by Shelter,[3] in 2017 there were 2.5 million families living in the private rental sector. Shelter's analysis of English Housing Survey data shows that in 2017-18, 2.2 million households renting privately in England were spending more than an affordable level of household income on rent.[4] Social housing – created to house those who cannot afford to rent or buy on the open market and offered at levels that are in line with local incomes – is currently in short supply. Research commissioned by the National Housing Federation and Crisis[5] estimated that there would need to be 90,000 new social rented homes built each year (at an annual cost to the government of £14.6Bbn) between 2021 and 2031 to meet demand, but that only 5,000 social rented homes were actually being built each year. In 2018, housing charity Shelter estimated that there were 1.15 million households across England on a waiting list for social housing. Under the Government's Affordable Rent scheme tenancies are offered at up to 80% of market rates (more expensive than social rented housing) – but these tenancies are less secure than those in social rented housing (though more secure than those in private rented housing). Consequently, the scheme has been heavily criticised for not really being affordable to those on low incomes, and for being partly responsible for the reduction in social rented housing stock in the country.[6]

In addition to these housing-specific issues, there is poverty. Between 2015 and 2017 – the years during which fieldwork for our study took place – the rate of child poverty in the UK increased from 29% to 30%; that's 4.1 million children living in households whose incomes are below 60% of the median household income in the UK.[7] The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts that this figure will rise to 5.2 million by 2022.[8] The high the cost of living,

low pay, lack of work and insufficient benefits – including housing benefits – have together been cited as creating the context in which many families are struggling to make ends meet. For families who have more than two children, are in minority ethnic groups, or are single parent families, the risk of living in poverty is greater.[9] Living on a low income can make it difficult for families to cover the cost of housing.

It was in this context – of a housing market that is out of reach for many, a rental sector that is unaffordable for large numbers, a shrinking social housing supply that falls way short of demand, and increased levels of poverty – that the Government decided to change its approach to calculating the financial support it gives for helping those who need it most with the their housing costs. In 2013 the coalition Government changed the way that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is set. LHA determines the amount of Housing Benefit that people renting in the private sector can receive, and prior to 2013 it was based on average rents and rose in line with increases in local rent levels. In 2013 the Government decided to limit LHA to increasing in line with the Consumer Price Index, and then restricted LHA increases to no more than 1% for two years (except for the fastest-rising rents). Consequently, LHA rates no longer bear a relationship to typical local rents, and for many families there is a significant gap between the amount they receive in Housing Benefit and what they need to pay in rent. DWP's own evaluation of these reforms found that many landlords were attempting to stop renting to Housing Benefit claimants.[10]

It is perhaps no surprise, given all of this, that the use of temporary accommodation has risen considerably. According to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) experimental statistics, between 2015 and 2017 – the years of fieldwork for our study – the number of households with dependent children living in temporary accommodation in England rose. In 2015 the number stood at 54,240, with a total of 106,240 children living in them; by 2016 this had gone up to 60,240 households housing a total of 118,960 children; and by 2017 the number had increased again to 61,620, with a total of 122,400 children. By the second quarter of 2019 – the latest period for which MHCLG figures are available, there were a reported 61,800 households in England with dependent children living in temporary accommodation, with a total of 127,370 children living in them.

The driving factors outlined above have created the perfect storm for housing insecurity to become an everyday reality for many families with children.

Defining housing insecurity

Over the past few years there has been growing academic, political and public attention given to the issue of housing insecurity. Within these fields of knowledge, various different terms are used and there is definitional complexity and confusion surrounding each of them.[11] In this sea of terminology and definitional confusion it can be difficult to know which terms to use and how to define them. In deciding what to use for this report, we asked ourselves which term will resonate best with the people we are hoping to reach with our research. After careful consideration, we have chosen the term housing insecurity: we judge it to be more user-friendly and enjoy more widespread traction than other terms currently in use (such as residential transience or residential mobility). It also better implies a sense of uncertainty surrounding tenure than perhaps housing instability does, which may be more likely to prompt ideas of building quality, or lack thereof.

So, we have chosen the term housing insecurity – but what do we actually mean by it? For the purpose of this report we define it in a way that most closely reflects the experiences of relevant participants, and there are three main elements to the way we conceptualise it: with reference to multiple moves, to those moves being involuntary, forced or reactive, and to those moves being related to poverty.

Multiple moves

While any quantitative element of a definition may seem arbitrary, for the purposes of this research we consider participants to have experienced housing insecurity if they have moved three or more times in their lives, and we have chosen this cut-off point for two main reasons. First, for the children in our data who had moved three or more times, moving seemed to be more of a problem or frustration than it did for those who had moved on fewer occasions. Second, and related to this, within the academic literature, it has been found that moving three or more times during childhood is associated with more negative outcomes than not moving or moving only once or twice.[12]

Involuntary/ forced/ reactive moves

The involuntariness, or reactiveness of moving can be understood to operate at two levels within this research: first, decisions around residential moves rarely, if ever, rest with the children within a household and in this sense will always be reactive on their part to some degree. Second, from our participants' narratives, decisions around moving seemed not to have been within the gift of adult household members either, but a result of decisions that appeared to have been made for them – either directly by councils or landlords, or indirectly – for example because of the inability to afford rent, because of property deterioration, or because continued residence was felt to be untenable (eg in light of overcrowding or harassment).

Moves related to poverty

This report focuses on housing insecurity that is inherently linked to poverty. Frequent, or multiple, moves are not the sole preserve of the poor: for example, better-off families might move repeatedly in pursuit of bigger houses, family connections, prestigious schools or high-status parental job opportunities. Frequent moves can also be common among military and diplomat families (Sellgren 2018) and clergy families (Burton et al 2009), where poverty may not be an issue.[13] Moreover, being poor doesn't necessarily entail housing insecurity: many families on low incomes enjoy a 'permanent state of home' which they have 'elected', to greater or lesser degrees. But neither of these groups – the highly mobile non-poor or the settled poor – reflect our sample or discussion in this report. Our sample comprises children in low income households (indicated for the purpose of this research through eligibility for Free School Meals[14]), who live in areas of high deprivation, whose narratives indicate residence in social housing, private rented accommodation, domestic and non-domestic temporary accommodation, or in friends or relatives' homes because they have nowhere else to go. And they report having to move because of an inability to pay rent, eviction, poor housing quality, family breakdown, neighbourhood and intra-familial violence, short-term tenancies and overcrowding – all of which are linked to poverty. Importantly, while we are interested in the experience of frequent moving in the context of poverty, and define housing insecurity in part with reference to this, the experience of 'unelected fixity' (Preece and Bimpson 2019) was also common among participants who moved a lot. Many had become stuck in housing – temporarily or permanently – that did not suit their needs, but they did not have the financial resources to do anything about it. While we do not incorporate this notion into our definition of housing insecurity per se, it is a key experience in the context of it.

Within the literature on housing insecurity it is recognised that frequent moving is highly correlated with poverty (see Scanlon and Devine 2001, Crowley 2003, Gasper et al 2010, Parker-Cotton 2016, Busaker and Kasehagen 2012 and Fowler et al 2015), and that poverty, or other 'stressful circumstances' related to it such as lack of parental employment and changes in family structure, play an important role in explaining some, if not all, of the negative outcomes associated with frequent moves in childhood (for example see Beck et al 2016 and Gambaro and Joshi 2016). Among other things, this suggests that it is particularly important to explore the experience of housing insecurity defined as inherently linked to poverty and these other, related 'stressful circumstances'. In this report, we do this from a uniquely child-centered, longitudinal perspective.

While we use the term housing insecurity to denote the phenomenon of multiple, reactive moves driven by poverty, we often use the word transient to describe participants experiencing housing insecurity, for the purposes of narrative flow.

What do we already know about the effects of housing insecurity on children?[15]

The inter-disciplinary, academic literature exploring the effects of housing insecurity[16] on children has been growing over the past three decades, in line with the growth of the phenomenon itself. Much of this literature emanates from the United States, with a smaller but increasing number of studies and reviews focusing on the UK context. It is not our intention here to offer an in depth critique of this growing body of knowledge, rather to provide a summary overview of the main known effects and of key studies and reviews therein, and to point to the gap which our research goes some way towards filling.

Within this literature, the most common unit of analysis is individual children, or aggregated individual level data, with a minority of studies taking the neighbourhood, school or healthcare supply as units of analysis, in these cases exploring the effects of housing insecurity on the wider neighbourhood, on schools and on healthcare access (for example Gilbert and Bull 2005, Allen et al 2010 and Kirby and Kaneda 2006 respectively). While a significant proportion of this literature explores the effects that housing insecurity can have on children's health outcomes, there is also interest in its effects on children's educational, emotional, psychological, cognitive, behavioural and social worlds. The evidence points overwhelmingly to the negative effects that housing insecurity – defined broadly – can have on children's lives.[17]

Physical and psychological health

In the mid-1990s, doctors began investigating the links between housing insecurity and childhood health, initially following up on observations among general practitioners and pediatricians of the commonality of childhood asthma among children who had moved home. Hughes and Baumer (1995) and Jones et al (1999), in their UK-based case control studies of moving and childhood asthma, found that there was an association between moving home in the early years and the development of asthma in childhood. By the following decade there was growing interest in the effects of

housing insecurity on childhood health, and scholars in the US and UK were investigating a broader spectrum of possible outcomes related to it. For example, in their study of longitudinal adolescent US health data, Haynie et al (2006) found that girls who had moved recently were 'about 60 percent more likely than nonmovers [sic] to report having attempted suicide during the following year' (the relationship did not hold for boys), and they identified higher rates of victimisation, delinquency and social isolation, and lower levels of school attachment as mechanisms through which the effect operated.

By 2008, Jelleyman and Spencer had published their frequently-cited systematic review of the literature on housing insecurity and childhood health, and in this show convincing evidence from a number of studies (mostly in the US) that housing insecurity 'interacts at neighbourhood, family and individual levels in cumulative and compounding ways with significance for the well-being of children' (p584). Since then, new studies and secondary analyses of existing national data sets have continued, both in the US and UK contexts. In their exploration of national child health data, US scholars Busacker and Kasehagen (2012) found that children who had moved more than three times in their lives had poorer overall physical and oral health than children who moved less frequently. And while this association held after controlling for 'confounding factors' such as family household structure, poverty and parental education level (which we incorporate into our definition of housing insecurity), it was even stronger before the explanatory power of these factors was accounted for. Related to the effects of housing insecurity on physical and oral health outcomes, children who had moved frequently were also found to be more likely to lack a 'sufficient medical home' (p81). Related to this, Pearce et al (2008), in their analysis of UK Millennium Cohort Study data, found that children in families that had moved more frequently were less likely to be fully immunised with primary immunisations than those who moved less. Brown et al (2012), in their national, longitudinal study conducted over a 20 year period in the West of Scotland, found that housing insecurity (along with school moves) in childhood was associated with 'elevated poor overall health, psychological distress and poor health behaviours in late adolescence and adulthood' (p947), including anxiety, suicidal ideation, poor mental health as measured by the GHQ-12, heavy drinking and smoking. Again, it was the confluence of frequent moves alongside various related, stressful circumstances that explained the relationships identified. More recently, Fowler et al (2015), in their national, longitudinal study of adolescent health in the US, found that 'increased housing instability in adolescence predicted significant elevations in rates of depression, arrest, and smoking regularly' (p370).

Behaviour and emotions

Closely related to studies exploring the psychological and health behaviour effects of housing insecurity are those examining the effects of the latter on emotions and 'delinquent' behaviour more broadly. Parker-Cotton, in her 2016 systematic review of the literature on what we label housing insecurity and its effects on adolescent social behaviours (such as victimisation, externalising

behaviours, adolescent pregnancy and substance abuse initiation) concludes that 'findings are consistent across disciplines' – housing insecurity, along with school moves, predict adolescent delinquency (with certain negative behaviours persisting when isolating the effects of moving alone). Gambaro and Joshi, in their (2016) analysis of UK Millennium Cohort Study data, found that children with experience of what we have labelled housing insecurity had lower vocabulary scores and more internalising and externalising behavioural difficulties at the age of five, than those without experience of the constellation of factors comprising housing insecurity. Other analysis of the UK's Millennium Cohort Study data by Flouri et al (2013) reinforces these findings – that what we label housing insecurity may be negatively associated with emotional and behavioural problems (with behavioural problems persisting even after family socio-economic status has been controlled for). Similarly, Beck et al (2016), in their analysis of data from the US Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study, found that the co-occurrence of residential moves with a number of poverty-related stressful circumstances (financial hardship, lack of parental employment, partnership transitions, paternal incarceration and unstable housing tenure) was associated with lower verbal skill and with internalising and externalising problems at the age of five. And in their (2017) analysis of data from the UK ALSPAC study (a population-based birth cohort study), Morris et al concluded that 'moving in childhood is associated with subsequent behavioural difficulties' (p265).

Education

Another key area of investigation within the literature on housing insecurity and childhood outcomes is education. Back in 1991, Haveman et al found that the number of times a child moved was significantly and negatively related to high school completion, even after controlling for other factors known to affect schooling (such as parental employment and poverty). Many scholars studying the effects of housing insecurity on children's educational and school lives focus on the effects of residential moves which also entail school moves – and much of the evidence produced indicates that school moves in the context of housing insecurity are detrimental for children. In the late 1990s, the UK Government (the then Department for Education and Employment) commissioned a report into Pupil Mobility in Schools, and academics at University College London reported on their research into the nature, causes and implications of high pupil mobility. Preliminary findings from the study indicated that mobile pupils (ie those who transfer schools within an academic year) were achieving less well on average than their stable peers (Dobson and Henthorne 1999). The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a number of further studies conducted in the UK and US examining the relationship between housing insecurity and educational performance: Entwisle, Alexander and Olson's 1997 study in the US and Demie's 2002 study in the UK both found the educational performance of in-year movers to be substantially lower than that of non-movers. Scanlon and Devine (2001), in their review of studies

of housing insecurity and its effects on children, found compelling evidence of associations between housing insecurity and decreased academic performance, grade repetition and increased drop out rates. In her 2003 review of the literature on housing insecurity and schooling, Crowley notes that 'movers do less well in school than nonmovers [sic]' (p24) and points to the increased likelihood that mobile students will have incomplete school records, enjoy lower levels of teacher commitment, have to repeat grades, and do less well on standardised tests than stable students (ibid).

It is clear that however it is labelled, poverty-related housing insecurity is associated with potential harm to children in terms of physical and psychological health, health behaviours, risk-taking, 'delinquent' behaviour, emotional and social well-being, and education. The vast majority of the literature that paints this overall picture is quantitative. While statistical analyses are crucial to understanding the prevalence of broad trends and the strength of their effects, they are necessarily limited in terms of the depth of understanding they can enable about the lived reality of housing insecurity experienced over time. With the exception of a small minority of studies which aim to gain in-depth understandings of certain aspects of housing insecurity from young people and families' perspectives (for example see Credland 2004 and McCoy and Hug 2016), children's voices are largely absent in this literature. In this report we look beyond the statistics (and beyond debates about exactly what is causing what, how and why) and share our in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of housing insecurity as they can unfold over time in children's lives. Drawing on qualitative, longitudinal data provided by participants through our research study Understanding Childhoods: Growing up in hard times, we report on the costs, losses and uncertainties of housing insecurity and on the coping tactics deployed. We also point to the way in which all of these processes can become normalised for transient young people.

Methodological note

> ‘Stories can create community, enable us to see through the eyes of other people, and open us to the claims of others.’
>
> Peter Forbes, photographer and storyteller

Overall study design

Our exploration of housing insecurity stems from the research project Understanding Childhoods: Growing up in Hard Times. This project began in 2014 and was conducted as a partnership between The Children's Society and Professor Tess Ridge at The University of Bath. It took the form of a qualitative, longitudinal, broad-based study of growing up in low income households in England. Fieldwork, consisting of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, was conducted with an initial sample of 63 primary and secondary school children who were eligible for Free School Meals (our proxy indicator for 'poverty'), and took place in three geographical locations in England: one semi-rural area, one small city and one large city. There were three waves of fieldwork: in 2015, 2016 and 2017. While the initial sample size was 63 at the start of data collection, a year later this had reduced to 59, as a number of participants had moved on from our gatekeeper schools and were not traceable. By the final year the study sample had reduced again, this time to 48, as again a number of children moved on – to other parts of the country, to other schools, to pupil referral units, to police custody – and were not accessible to us. The table below provides an overview of the composition of the initial sample.

Table 1: Breakdown of whole study sample at recruitment

	Primary school		Secondary school		Totals
	Year 5 girls (Ages 9 and 10)	Year 5 boys (Ages 9 and 10)	Year 7 girls (Ages 11 and 12)	Year 7 boys (Ages 11 and 12)	
Large city	5	5	5	5	**20**
Small city	7	2	7	7	**23**
Semi-rural area	5	5	6	4	**20**
Total	**17**	**12**	**18**	**16**	**63**

We accessed our participants through seven gatekeeper schools (one primary and one secondary in each of the three geographical areas, with an extra primary in one of the locations), and the process of sampling in each of these schools comprised three stages, designed to prioritise the ethical principle of informed consent:

Stage 1:

Whole Class Consultations exploring students' perceptions of their local areas and their opinions on the things that matter in their lives. These sessions were designed to give researchers a listening presence in the school, introduce potential study participants to them, and raise awareness of forthcoming Focus Group Discussions.

Stage 2:

Focus Group Discussions with volunteer children identified by schools as eligible for Free School Meals. In these group discussions participants were invited to reflect in more depth on issues that arose during the whole class consultations, and the topic of money and managing life when there is relatively little of it, was made a focal point. Discussions were designed to increase familiarity between researchers and potential study participants, to introduce the research study and explain it fully to young people, and to invite young people to volunteer as study participants by having In Depth Interviews in this and the subsequent two years.[18]

Stage 3:

In Depth Interviews with children who opted into the study (whose parents had not opted them out), exploring their experiences of friends and family relationships, home and neighbourhood, school, hobbies and leisure interests, money and material things, positive and negative emotions and hopes and dreams for the future.

At all stages of the project, and throughout the semi-structured interviews, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw, and of what we would be doing with the data they shared with us.

Exploring housing insecurity

We never set out with the objective of studying experiences of housing insecurity. Rather, as indicated earlier, at the outset of the study our broad intention was to gain an understanding of what it is like to grow up, over a period of time, in a low-income household in contemporary England. As such, we designed our interview schedules to cover a range of topics which previous studies had demonstrated were of key importance in children's lives: friends and family relationships, home and neighbourhood, school, hobbies and leisure interests, money and material things, and questions around positive and negative emotions as well as hopes and dreams for the self and others. In fact, in designing the study, such was our desire to minimise the potential for attrition, it could be said that we inadvertently tried to preclude the exploration of housing insecurity by requesting that the schools through which we accessed young people refrained from putting forward those known to be 'frequent movers' as potential participants. We made this request as such children are harder to keep track of and more likely to drop out of a study, and this has implications for maintenance of sample size, or for the resources needed to sustain this over time.

But housing insecurity proved stubborn. It emerged during the first wave of interviews, in response to our questions around home and neighbourhood, as a sizeable minority of young people embarked on long and elaborate explanations of where home was currently, where it had been at various points in the past, and where it might be in the future. It appeared as an emerging theme in our (2017b) launch report Understanding Childhoods: Growing up in hard times, and in our (2018b) research briefing *Improving the lives of disadvantaged children at secondary school*, written in response to the question of how schools can engage with the effects of child poverty through their everyday practices. From that initial phase of data collection, through our first two project publications, it was clear that housing insecurity was a significant feature of life for a number of participants and that if we were to understand and do justice to their experiences, it was an issue we would need to explore in more depth.

Our subsample of children with experience of housing insecurity

The number of participants in our sample whom we consider to have experienced housing insecurity is 24. The sampling for these participants was conducted post-hoc, and entailed scrutiny of all 170 interview transcripts in order to establish inclusion within the category of 'insecure' in terms of housing, according to our definitional criteria. The subsample of 24 children consisted of boys and girls in each of the geographical locations, in both age cohorts, as detailed in the following table:

Table 2: Breakdown of transient subsample

	Primary school		Secondary school		**Totals**
	Year 5 girls (Ages 9 and 10)	Year 5 boys (Ages 9 and 10)	Year 7 girls (Ages 11 and 12)	Year 7 boys (Ages 11 and 12)	
Large city	1	4	3	2	**10**
Small city	1	1	2	1	**5**
Semi-rural area	1	3	4	1	**9**
Total	**3**	**8**	**9**	**4**	**24**

It is important to note that this subsample of children is heterogeneous in many ways, perhaps most pertinently in terms of the number of residential moves they have experienced. Of the 24 participants with experience of housing insecurity:

- 14 had moved three or four times in their lives.
- Seven had moved between five and seven times in their lives.
- Three had moved between eight and 11 times in their lives.

Participants also had varying experiences of moving. Even though their moves may have been numerous, reactive and related to poverty, they were not always bad. Sometimes they marked the chance for a new beginning or the end of a negative experience, although even in these cases the notion of moving fatigue was evident. Participant moves encompassed a variety of distances – across and within continents, countries, cities, towns, neighbourhoods and housing estates. Moves were mostly undertaken as family household units – even if those were reconfigured in the process of moving as parental relationships reformed – although a small minority also had experience of moving on their own outside of the family household, into the care system or into kin-based care, temporarily. Lengths of time in particular dwellings seemed to vary considerably, ranging from a few months to quite a few years, although it wasn't always clear – or known to participants – how long they had spent in each of the places they had lived. For some, housing insecurity had characterised the whole of their lives, while for others it seemed to be a more recent phenomenon.

How did we analyse our data and what are the main themes arising from it?

We analysed our overall study data using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. For analysis pertaining specifically to housing insecurity, we scanned all 170 transcripts to identify the subsample, then categorised this subsample according to age cohort, gender, rural-urban location, and household structure, in order to explore potential patterns according to these various axes of social difference.

We then undertook in-depth thematic analysis, wherein identification of themes was driven by concepts and experiences we observed in the data. This in-depth thematic analysis led us to identify four key themes within the experience of housing insecurity which we felt warranted exposure – because they had resonance within our wider subsample, and because they seemed underexplored from our scoping of the literature on housing insecurity.

These overarching themes are:

- the costs of housing insecurity
- the losses associated with housing insecurity
- the uncertainties of housing insecurity
- coping with housing insecurity.

Each of these four overarching themes encompasses three sub-themes:

- The costs of housing insecurity:
  - Financial
  - Time-related
  - Relational
- The losses associated with housing insecurity:
  - Belonging
  - Safety
  - Social status
- The uncertainties of housing insecurity and its effects on:
  - Anxiety
  - The physical home environment
  - Hope and disappointment
- Coping with housing insecurity:
  - Making friends
  - Staying at school
  - Home-making activities

It is important to note that, as experienced by individual young people, these themes often overlap and occur multiple times (and this should become apparent in the substantive content of this report). We have separated them out for analytical clarity.

Theoretical tools

In analysing our data on children's experiences of housing insecurity – and in considering the significance and implications of its effects – we often refer to Maslow's categories of human needs. While our approach to analysis means that we did not set out with this as a predetermined theoretical or analytical framework, we found ourselves coming back to it time and again when asking ourselves the 'so what?' question in relation to our findings. In other words, when thinking about why it matters that housing insecurity entails costs, losses, uncertainties and coping tactics for children, our answers are centered on the fact that these processes can have detrimental effects on the satisfaction of human needs: they matter inasmuch as they detract from satisfying those needs and thereby inhibit well-being.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed his theory of human motivation in 1943. The theory contends that human beings have five main categories of need which they are motivated to fulfil – physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs. Maslow contended that these categories of need were hierarchical in nature, eg the 'basic', physiological needs have to be satisfied before the 'higher level' safety, social, psychological and self-fulfilment needs can be met, and so on. While Maslow's work in this field achieved widespread resonance and acclaim, it has also received considerable critique, including on the basis of being methodologically flawed, ethnocentric and – perhaps most vehemently – problematic in its hierarchical assumptions. Since Maslow's seminal work, other scholars have proposed alternative theories and frameworks for thinking about human needs and the relationships between them. Of particular note is Doyal and Gough's Theory of Human Need (1991), Max-Neef's Human Scale Development Theory and Needs Matrix (1992) and Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach (2011), all of which share what is implied in Maslow's schema: that in the end there are three main categories of human need – physiological, psychological and relational. For the purposes of this report, where we refer to human needs, we draw on Maslow's categories on the basis that these enjoy the most widespread application, but we do not assume a hierarchical relationship between the categories.

How have we written about the themes, and why have we chosen this approach?

While the themes and subthemes form the substantive content of this report, its structure does not mirror them as set out in this way. Instead, it is structured chronologically, and secondary to this, according to four individual case study participants whose experiences illustrate particularly well our four overarching themes of costs (Sean), losses (Tiffany), uncertainties (Ali) and coping (Madison). We have chosen to use this structure and narrative approach because it best enables us to do justice to the longitudinal nature of the data that participants shared with us and to the richness of detail in that data. This means that the report is structured as follows:

Part 1: (2015)

1. **Sean –** the costs of housing insecurity: Financial
2. **Tiffany –** the losses of housing insecurity: Belonging
3. **Ali –** the uncertainties of housing insecurity: Anxiety
4. **Madison –** coping with housing insecurity: Forming friendships

Part 2: (2016)

5. **Sean –** the costs of housing insecurity: Time-related
6. **Tiffany –** the losses of housing insecurity: Safety
7. **Ali –** the uncertainties of housing insecurity: The physical home environment
8. **Madison –** coping with housing insecurity: Staying at school

Part 3: (2017)

9. **Sean –** the costs of housing insecurity: Relational
10. **Tiffany –** the losses of housing insecurity: Social status
11. **Ali –** the uncertainties of housing insecurity: Hope and disappointment
12. **Madison –** coping with housing insecurity: Home-making activities

While we focus on four individual case studies, it is important to keep in mind that they have been selected because their experiences have wider resonance within the subsample data. But while each story includes brief reference to some of that wider data, and to some of the academic literature in relevant fields, for the purposes of narrative flow our focus rests largely with the individual participants.

In this report we have taken a story-based approach to writing up the experiences of our illustrative case study participants and the themes and subthemes in our subsample data. The use of stories in conveying social science research has arguably enjoyed something of an upsurge in recent times. While certain disciplines and approaches therein (namely anthropology and the ethnographic method central to it) have long used story – or 'thick description'[19] – to convey research findings, other fields within the social sciences have been slower to take up this mantle. It is only within the past decade or so that a growing, conscious and explicit effort to use stories in reflecting non-ethnographic research data can be detected. This is evidenced for example by the introduction of training courses on the use of storytelling in social research,[20] by the peer-reviewed articles devoted to discussing the issue,[21] and by leading academic institutions encouraging the use of stories as a means of achieving research impact.[22]

In this report we understand stories to entail what science writer Anna Clemens (2018) calls the 'six elements of plot' – character, setting, tension, action, climax and resolution – and three other 'story essentials' – main theme, chronology and purpose. And we use stories as a narrative device for two main, related purposes: First, they are intended to make the data and our arguments about them as engaging and accessible to readers as possible; and second, they are intended to provide a 'shortcut to … emotions' (ibid). We believe – and hope – that by making it easy for readers to develop an emotional connection to the subject matter, we will also be making it easier for people to feel inspired to try and change things for the better for young people growing up with housing insecurity. This said, taking a story-based approach which focuses on individual experiences over time comes with challenges of its own, most notably in terms of ethical standards around anonymity.

It is common practice when reporting qualitative social research for authors to structure their outputs according to analytical themes, and to use quotes from interview or focus group transcripts as evidence for those themes and particular arguments about them. Taking this approach, the most a reader is likely to know about a participant would be their age and gender, and possibly a broad geographical location, such as a country or region, and anonymity is thus preserved.

Sometimes we include more in-depth examples to illustrate our analytical points, giving relatively short, focused summaries of pertinent, individual-level data in support of our arguments – and sometimes we use longer case studies or examples in order to bring to

life the otherwise abstract arguments we make. In these cases, it can be relatively straightforward to preserve anonymity, by changing or removing references to names, locations, and other biographical information which could identify an individual, such as age, possibly gender, (parental) occupation, and potentially family size or structure, as long as we are not altering details that are central to the substantive issue being explored. Good practice here is to replace some of a participants' details with the those of another participant in the same study who has a similar profile in other respects, as long as doing so does not compromise data integrity.

In this report we have written detailed stories about individuals which unfold over a substantial period of time. This has required careful attention to ensuring that we have preserved participant anonymity whilst also preserving the essence of their data concerning experiences of housing insecurity. In each story we have altered names, locations, parental occupations, sometimes the number and gender of siblings (if not relevant), hobbies, and sometimes cultural references, replacing these with equivalents from within the transient subsample, or according to our knowledge of equivalents in the wider study sample. We have altered the years in which some participants' moves have taken place, although we have not altered the number of times each case study participant has moved overall. Nor have we altered our case study participants' reported experiences and perceptions of moving, or indeed staying put. Our main working principle in altering certain details in the ways that we have was for people who know our case study participants to be unlikely to recognise them (though possibly to recognise elements of their experiences) – and for participants themselves (in the unlikely event that they would ever read the stories about them) to think 'something similar happened to me' and possibly to recognise elements of their experiences and stories, but to know that while those stories have been based on their data, they have been heavily disguised. Once the stories were written up, other members of the research team with knowledge of participants and their data, read through them to ensure compliance with these principles, and further anonymisation was undertaken where preliminary efforts were insufficient.

Even where participants might recognise elements of the stories about them, it is possible – even likely – that they might not agree with the way in which we have framed, or interpreted things. As we have noted, housing circumstances and histories were one of many topics discussed during interviews, and our spotlight on them might appear, to participants, to place undue emphasis on the issue. Related to this, (and as we discuss in the Reflections section at the end of this report) there is a sense in which experiences of housing insecurity had become a run-of-the-mill part of life for many transient young people we spoke with, so again our honing in on the issue may be deemed unwarranted, or a bit strange. We write about participants' data armed with knowledge of the potential effects that housing insecurity might have

on them, and of the context in which that housing insecurity has come to exist – a context that is not inevitable but changeable. We approach their data with the capacity to try and influence things for the better, and for these reasons, while we accept that participants may not agree with our framing of their stories, our interpretations prevail in this report.

In writing the stories, we have drawn heavily on a narrative technique, developed among 19th century novelists, known as free indirect speech or discourse. Free indirect speech is the label given to the technique of 'presenting a character's voice partly mediated by the voice of the author' (Stevenson 1992, p32). As literary theorist Gerard Genette notes, in free indirect discourse 'the narrator takes on the speech of the character, or, if one prefers, the character speaks through the voice of the narrator, and the two instances then are merged' (Genette, cited in ibid, emphasis in original).

Why have we taken this narrative approach in this report? It is intended to allow the young people to shine through in the stories, at the same time as allowing our (researcher) interpretations and analyses to be present. But this too presents a challenge, which has an ethical component to it: how are readers to know whose voice they are hearing at any given point in the text, especially if narrative voices are effectively 'merged'? As a general rule of thumb, in the early sections of each story we have drawn heavily on participants' (often poetic) phraseology and narrative style, while also including our own – third person – observations and descriptors. In the latter sections of each story – where we refer to the wider study data, to the meaning and significance of participants' narratives and to wider academic literature – the narrative voice is more clearly ours alone. Overall, the stories are perhaps best understood as our stories of participants' stories.

Although the stories are about housing insecurity and particular themes within this, they include detail about other elements of participants' lives – about school, family, friends, food, hobbies, hopes and dreams, worries and fears, and aspirations for the future. It is a deliberate choice to include this 'extra' information, and it is worth mentioning briefly our rationale for doing so. First, we wanted to do justice – within the remit of this report – to the richness of our data more broadly, not only in relation to our focus on housing insecurity. Second, much public discourse and academia dealing with housing issues in childhood tends to be somewhat reductive in nature, focusing on that issue alone to the exclusion of other aspects of life. While this is understandable – housing insecurity can be a dominant feature of life and focusing on these issues is necessary for achieving change – an exclusive focus on it may come at a cost. When we focus solely on housing insecurity we are more likely to eclipse other important dimensions of self and experience.

Once we start to think of, and write about, our subsample participants in more holistic, multi-dimensional terms, a number of things happen: we are less likely to reduce them to the

vagaries of their financial and related housing circumstances alone, and when we do this we get closer to emphasising that 'poor' and 'homeless' is not who people are but things that people can experience at certain points in their lives, and we are encouraged to think beyond the deficit and lack implied in 'poverty' and 'housing insecurity'.

These are important distinctions, because they enable us to think of poverty and related housing insecurity not as qualities that reside in a person or family as the result of some personal or familial failing (which dominant discourses persistently assume), but as the failing of a system (or web of systems) that have created poverty and housing insecurity in the first place.

When we think holistically about our participants – albeit with a focus on experiences of housing insecurity – we can also more easily identify connections between experiences of that insecurity and other dimensions of life. And when we do this, we are more likely to identify some of the hidden ripple effects of housing insecurity and the ways it can shape a person and their relationship to others and the world around them. This in turn allows us to think more broadly about points of intervention and ways of supporting young people living with no permanent state of home.

Finally, when we begin to conceptualise and represent participants in more multi-dimensional and holistic terms, we are more likely to remain conscious of the humanity we all share, and to develop policies that are kind and supportive towards them.

Part One

2015
First Encounters

Introduction to Part One

In part one of this report there are four stories. Each of these is about one of our case study participants, and is the first of three stories about them, spread out through the three parts of this report. These particular participants were selected because their experiences of housing insecurity illustrate particularly well one of the four analytical themes – and 12 subthemes – we have chosen to focus on. The stories in this first part are based on the young peoples' interview transcripts from the first year of fieldwork for our study.

The first story introduces 11 year old Sean, and through him the central theme of the costs of housing insecurity. In particular, Sean's first story highlights the financial costs associated with repeated house moves, and what these can mean for young people in low income households. Through this story we learn how a person can come to accept some of the repercussions of housing insecurity as 'just life, really'.

In the second story we introduce 11 year old Tiffany and the central theme of the losses associated with housing insecurity. Tiffany's first story focuses on the loss of a sense of belonging, exploring what this means for young people who relocate frequently to new areas.

The third story in Part one introduces nine year old Ali and the key theme of the uncertainties accompanying housing insecurity. In particular, Ali's first story explores what can happen when an active and anxious imagination steps in to fill the gaps in what is known about one's housing circumstances.

In the fourth and final story of this section we introduce 12 year old Madison, and through her, the central theme of coping with the negative effects of housing insecurity. In Madison's first story we shine a light on friendship-building as a key tactic designed to withstand the loss of social connections in old neighbourhoods and settle into new ones, and we point to the social and psychological demands that this activity places on transient young people. Through this story we also learn how a person can get so used to leaving friends and making new ones that not only does it become familiar, but they feel themselves 'lucky' to know folk in so many different parts of town.

Sean and the costs of housing insecurity: Money

'Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.'

James Baldwin, Nobody Knows My Name (1961)

When we first met Sean he was 11 years old and the middle one of five children – not a bad position to be in because although he got bossed around by his older siblings, he got to boss the younger ones around too. Sean loved the outdoors. Not only did it get him out of the house and away from his sister's insufferable obsession with Ed Sheeran, but it meant he got to run around and play sports with his friends. He liked a bit of TV, but much preferred being outside and active. He had started secondary school a few months before we interviewed him, and he was happy there; there were more people to make friends with compared to primary school, and their bad jokes brought a smile to Sean's face. There was also much more sports equipment. While some teachers were pretty strict, on the whole they were nice, and he felt supported in his learning. He especially liked that he was being taught how to behave properly, as he hadn't really learned good behaviour in the whole six years he was at primary school. He loved PE the most and thought that he might want to be a professional football player when he was older, though he knew that this was every boy's dream and that this might change as he grew up. Sean's mum was trying to find a job – any job – but wasn't having any luck and was claiming Job Seeker's Allowance. His mum and dad weren't together, although his dad lived nearby, in town, and was in touch.

Sean, his siblings, his mum and sometimes his stepdad were living in a temporary flat in a deprived housing estate in a semi-rural area of England, not too far from town. They had been put in a three bedroomed flat at the very top of a tall block, where his mum was sleeping in the living room because there weren't enough bedrooms for her as well as the children. They had moved into the flat a few days before we interviewed Sean, having been evicted from their previous home nearby because Sean's mum hadn't managed to pay the rent in the run

up to December as she was saving for Christmas. She had been really stressed during that time, especially because one of Sean's little sisters kept asking her for money and that would make their mum shout, but Sean understood that that was just life, really.

For quite a long time Sean and his family hadn't known when the move was going to happen. It was coming up to Christmas and they weren't sure whether to put the decorations up, or if that would mean having to take them all down again should they move before Christmas day. They waited. They heard nothing. They waited some more. They held off with the tree and the tinsel and the paperchains, but when they still hadn't heard anything on the day before Christmas Eve they put the decorations up anyway and managed to create a semblance of festive spirit in the home that wasn't theirs. In the end they didn't move out until February.

It was a busy time. Sean helped his mum sort, clear and pack their belongings, decide what to keep and what to throw away. It took a while. He packed up the things he was keeping, loaded them onto the van his mum had got hold of, then unpacked them the other end. It was already very crowded in the small bedroom he was sharing with two of his siblings in the new flat, but in addition to the one bed, which they had to share, they somehow managed to squeeze in three chests of drawers and cram all of their remaining clothes and toys, as well as their mum's belongings, inside, on top, and underneath them.

They hadn't moved very far – further into the estate which their previous house had bordered – and this pleased Sean because lots of his friends lived nearby. He got to visit them in their homes and play on their Xboxes, although really he much preferred to play out in the park nearby, at least until the sky turned black, which meant it was time to go home. Sean didn't know how long they would be in the flat at the very top of the tall block – maybe three months, maybe four, he wasn't too sure. They were on a waiting list for a house, but this was all a bit vague to him.

Sean predicted that his life would get more difficult over the coming months, as another move was on the horizon. They moved all the time, he couldn't even say how many times, and he didn't understand why they weren't allowed to just live in one place instead of having to pack, leave, unpack, pack again, leave, unpack and on and on like that. Sometimes it seemed like all they did was move. Moving, always moving. If he could have done anything to help his family, he would have found a landlord who would just stick to one thing and stop moving them around all the time. With another relocation expected imminently, Sean was hoping they would find themselves in a bigger house, with enough bedrooms and beds for all the family and enough space for their belongings. Most important was that it should be in the same estate so he could stay close to his friends and the park, near to school, and not too far from town so that his mum could still walk to the shops and back easily.

One of the things that really got to Sean was the cost of moving. He didn't give specific figures, but he knew that the van had cost money, and that it was expensive to replace the things they'd had to leave behind because there wasn't

room in the van or the new flat to accommodate them. He also knew that it cost money to get things for the new places when they got there. This was a theme reflected more widely among some of our transient participants: One 11 year old girl spoke about how her mum was slowly working her way around their temporary house getting carpet laid, bit by bit, room by room, not all at once because it was so expensive. A 10 year old boy told us how his mum had gone to pick some possessions up from their old flat but not been allowed back in to get them, so had to replace them – as well as buying furniture for the new place. Even where young people didn't explicitly mention the costs associated with moving, their narratives pointed to them; to the vehicles that transported their belongings, and to the paint, carpet, furniture and curtains for new homes that didn't have them, where they might only be staying for a short while.

Sometimes young people indicated that their parents had been able to draw on friends or relatives to help with moves – for example in lending and driving vans and packing boxes – which may have brought costs down, but this was not always the case. For those who we might think of as highly transient, moving every year or so, these 'one-off' costs might actually be more of an ongoing feature on the financial landscape, though not one that is easy to plan for given the lack of control people experienced over their housing situations. In addition to these expenses, for those who were placed far from schools, jobs, local amenities or extended families, there were the added, ongoing costs of travel between home and these places of importance. Taken together, these financial outlays can be significant.

The notion of a poverty premium is well established among poverty scholars and campaigners in the UK,[23] this being the idea that people living in poverty pay more for essential goods and services, for example through having to use expensive prepayment meters for household fuel, relying on high cost credit, or not being able to buy in bulk and benefit from the discounts this brings. Sean and his transient peers point us in the direction of a particular form of poverty premium, one specifically related to housing insecurity that we might think of as a housing insecurity premium. It is not that Sean's mum would necessarily have paid more for the removal van than somebody better off, or that the cost of replacing belongings forcibly discarded due to a lack of available or affordable storage space was any higher. Nor is it that she would necessarily have had to pay more to make a new dwelling habitable. Rather, it is that she had to pay for these things at all, each time the family were moved. For those who are highly transient, moving frequently, these costs could represent a substantial proportion of finances already squeezed tight, arguably pushing families on low incomes further into poverty. And the effects of poverty in childhood are widely known: in the academic literature, links are well established between childhood poverty and poor physical and mental health outcomes, poor educational outcomes, poor developmental and behavioural outcomes, and with poor emotional and psychological outcomes (for example, see Griggs and Walker 2008, Child Poverty Action Group and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health 2017, Dickerson

and Popli 2018, Wickham et al 2016, Hirsch 2007, Goodman and Gregg 2010, Ridge 2011). For Sean, the effects of housing insecurity were clear: even less available money, a mum whose stress would sometimes spill out in an angry rage, and a resignation to the fact that this was just the way life was, really.

Lost in transience: Tiffany and belonging

'Some say, Moving house. I say, Leaving Home.'

Lucy Arnold-Forster, aged 13, winner of the Betjeman poetry prize (2015)

One hundred and forty miles away, on the very outer fringes of a large city, 11 year old Tiffany had – like Sean – also recently moved to a temporary home. She was the baby of her family when we first met her, the youngest of three sisters and the only one still to be living with their mum (ostensibly), who had returned to work recently working for a catering company following a period of ill health, hospitalisation, surgery and recovery. Tiffany's eldest sister was mum to Tiffany's little nieces and was based in the area where Tiffany and her mum had once lived. She also had a cousin, the only bad one, to whom she was really close – but he was in prison for something his friend had done. She had no contact with her dad or his family, and although her mum's side of the family was big, she was not in touch with most of them.

Tiffany and her mum were living in a two bedroomed flat, miles away from the area where they used to live, where her school, her eldest sister and an uncle were still based. She didn't talk about why they had moved, just how she had lived in quite a few places growing up and moved quite a few times, on occasion changing schools as well. She spoke of the journey between the new flat and school and how it took two hours one way, and how they didn't know where they would be living next or where they might end up in the future. Tiffany had taken to staying with her eldest sister on school nights so she wouldn't be late in the mornings and have her attendance record adversely effected. Her sister lived closer to Tiffany's school, and sometimes their mum would stay over too, although her job mostly required her to be back in the vicinity of their temporary flat. Tiffany wasn't sure whether her mum was renting the flat from a landlord (it was her mum's business,

not hers), but she did know that her mum was looking for a house for them both and that not all places were real options because some wouldn't take tenants on housing benefit. Tiffany and her mum were hoping to move back to the area where they had once lived, but who knew if that would happen?

For Tiffany, family was really important. Being the baby meant that there were people around to look out for her, on hand with advice about how to stick up for herself and not accept rudeness from other people (unless they were big people, in which case they were probably best left alone). Friends were also important. She had three best friends and a wider group at school, as well as a couple of children to play with in the neighbourhood where she and her mum had moved the previous year, and honesty and truthfulness were the two most important marks of friendship for her. Tiffany thought it was better to be out and about having fun with friends than stuck indoors watching TV, and because her mum had deemed the local park unsafe, she and her friends would hang out at the shopping centre near school in the late afternoons and at weekends, wandering the mall corridors, window shopping, meeting up with other friends, and buying sweets and milkshakes, which Tiffany usually had enough money for.

She didn't know a lot about her mum's money situation; it wasn't really her business so she stayed out of it. But she knew a bit – that her mum used to get help with the cost of school (for uniform and trips) when she was off sick from work, that she no longer received benefits because she now worked, that she would always make sure Tiffany had the things that other young people had – clothes, shoes, and gadgets – eventually, and that her mum could afford to give her £10 every Monday and Thursday for emergencies and to buy food, because her Free School Meal allowance only covered the cost of lunch, and that was not enough to stop her from feeling hungry throughout the day.

Tiffany was in the first year of secondary school at the time of her first interview, and not very happy with it. She found herself getting into trouble easily and the adults rarely listening. There was one teacher in particular who always played up, giving high-level punishments (after-school detentions) before properly investigating events, calling the children by rude names and cutting his eyes at them, and then acting all nice and helpful when other teachers were around. Tiffany couldn't bear it, feeling ignored, picked on and wrongly accused. She didn't understand why most of the teachers wouldn't take the time to see things from a child's point of view. She hadn't even wanted to go to that school in the first place but there had been reports of stabbings at the one she had been keen on – where her primary school friends had gone – and her mum hadn't even put it on the list because she had considered it too dangerous. And now, Tiffany couldn't even think about moving school while she didn't really know where she was living.

All the moving that Tiffany had done, and in particular this latest move far from the things that structured her everyday life, affected her. It meant that currently she had a really long journey between 'home' and school, which in turn meant that she had relocated herself outside of her nominal home (the

temporary two bedroom flat where she had been placed with her mum) for more than half the week. It also meant that she felt stuck at school, unhappy but trapped because moving schools would require knowing where home was. Tiffany also felt a certain tension around where it was she belonged – she didn't feel a strong attachment to her new area and still identified strongly with the place where she had lived before, but she knew it wasn't really hers to call home anymore. When we asked if she was hoping to move again, she responded by talking about her mum – about how her mum was going to be moved because her current place was only temporary and they could move her at any time – and she absented herself from the narrative completely, suggesting a lack of attachment to the area where she now officially lived (albeit temporarily). We went on to ask about the neighbourhood she had moved to with her mum, and she described instead the area where her eldest sister lived, where she stayed on weeknights so as not to be late for school. This was suggestive not only of the coping mechanism she deployed in a context of temporary housing, but also of the persistence of her attachment to her old neighbourhood. And when we asked whether she had friends at home (meaning in her new area) as well as at school, Tiffany spoke first about friends in her old area, then about people in her new neighbourhood, vacillating over how to interpret 'home', indicating again that she didn't quite know where it was that she belonged.

When housing insecurity characterises a young person's life it can disrupt, or confuse, their sense of place attachment and belonging. This in turn can impair an important mechanism by which self-concept is developed. Gordon Jack, in his (2010) article 'Place Matters: The significance of place attachments for children's well-being', examines the significance of place for children's identity, security and sense of belonging. Turning to the literature from human geography and environmental psychology, Jack notes that 'the sense of belonging to a particular place…is a fundamental component of the way that most people understand who they are' (p756). In the review he discusses how attachment to place takes time to develop, 'growing out of a large number of routine activities and everyday experiences, as well as more significant life events' and how 'long-term residence therefore strengthens place identity' (p757). Drawing on psychoanalytic theory he goes on to argue that 'cognitions about places are incorporated into the self, creating internalised objects that serve as sources of security at times of stress or isolation' (ibid). He also notes how, in late modernity where processes of modernisation create significant uncertainties for people, 'attachment to place, and the sense of belonging and security that it engenders can take on a particularly significant role in people's lives' (ibid). It is perhaps ironic then that the poverty and related housing insecurity that seems to have become characteristic of 'late modernity' in the UK, can be so deeply implicated in disrupting a sense of attachment to place and all that might mean in terms of identity, security and belonging.

Many of the young people in our study – the securely and insecurely housed alike – indicated a keen awareness of the significance of place in their lives. They

had opinions about their neighbourhoods, both positive and negative. Most had something to say about amenities or lack of them, about traffic, noise, litter, and the people who populated their local landscapes. They talked about the open spaces in their areas and how they used them, the busy roads that were difficult to cross, the proximity – or distance – of home to the things that were important to them, and the places they knew to avoid. Some spoke of the turf wars between themselves and their 'crews' on the one hand and rival crews on the other, and about the imperative of sticking within the geographical boundaries that demarcated perceived ownership of territory. Others indicated a heightened awareness of the stigma that shrouded their neighbourhoods – all of which were in deprived wards with higher than average levels of poverty, crime and antisocial behaviour – and some struggled to make sense of what this meant for them, in terms of belonging, identity, safety and social status.

Whatever the details of their narratives – and in whatever ways participants talked about the areas in which they lived – a sense of place formed a crucial component in their experiences, and something appeared to be lost for those who were forced to move repeatedly and continually navigate their place attachments amidst the dislocations. For Tiffany it meant a loss of belonging and a longing to be back home.

Ali and the uncertainty of housing insecurity: The curse of the imagination

'No news allow[s] the imagination space to roam.'

Ben Rawlence, City of Thorns (2016)

Not too far from Tiffany's school, in a two-bedroom flat on a busy main road, lived a nine year old boy called Ali, who wore an almost-permanent grin and a jumper with arms that dangled well below his fingertips. Ali had been born in a farming village in South Asia, where his family had lived for generations – a place where the sugarcane was plentiful, cars were absent, and the breeze was so warm you had to eat ice cream every single day. He had come to England with his mum when he was little, and now lived with her and his younger brother in the flat on that busy main road. His mum worked part time in Lidl and studied part time at university, though Ali wasn't sure what subject she was doing. He and his younger brother went to primary school – Ali in Year 5, and his brother three years below him, in Year 2.

Ali thought his family – and his mum in particular – were really very nice; would you believe that once, on a trip to the supermarket to get some food, she had surprised him with a detour to Sports Direct where she had bought him a new pair of cricket shoes! He had worn his old pair until they had squished his toes, passed them on to his younger brother who had also outgrown them, and from there they had been consigned to the bin and Ali had gone without for a while. On that same shopping trip, Ali's mum had also bought him a brand-new pair of shiny black shoes for special occasions. So you see, she really was a very kind person. One of his favourite things was when she played traditional Asian games with him and his brother, turning her hand into a giant creature and chasing them around the flat with it, tickling them both until they fell down laughing. Ali didn't know his dad – he wasn't in touch with him, didn't know if his mum was, and wasn't even

sure if he had ever met him. He had an 'Uncle' though – a friend of his mum's – who was around quite a lot and would sometimes pick Ali and his brother up from school while his mum was working. Every now and then Uncle would give the boys £5, some of which they would spend on sweets, some of which they would save. Uncle worked at a café in a cricket ground and had even taken Ali there for a visit once. He felt so lucky.

Ali also felt very fortunate to have all the many possessions he owned. He had a bike, which was a hand-me-down from a friend, and there were three television sets in his house (two of which worked) – one in the living room, one in his mum's bedroom and one in Ali and his brother's bedroom, which he felt very grateful for because he knew not many people got to have a TV in their room. His mum had found two of them discarded outside, carried them home and discovered that they actually still worked, until Ali's brother had run into the big one and broken it. Ali also had lots of clothes – enough to fill up an entire suitcase. He was into his clothes, especially good quality ones from Primark and shops like that, and he had got really cross with his mum when she made him give a load of his tops and trousers to the poor children back home in Asia. If he had to choose between being given lots of fish fingers or £1,000 he would definitely choose the money, because then he could buy 1,000 fish fingers and never go hungry.

Ali really enjoyed gaming, as well as boxing with his brother and playing tennis, which he did with his hands because he had no racket. He also liked doing gymnastics, although this had its risks; he had discovered that doing the splits was very painful, and recently, while trying to do a flip off the bed, he had landed on his back and was unable to walk for two days. Luckily this had happened on a Friday, so he hadn't had to miss out on school. Most of all Ali liked cricket. In fact, he wanted to be a professional cricket player when he was older, but – as he had recently pointed out to his mum – it would help if he actually joined a club and started playing the game properly.

When Ali and his mum had moved to England he had been too young to remember it properly and too young to know why they had left the Asian village with all that sugarcane and ice cream. But he knew from what his mum said that they had started out in a city in the East of England, then moved to the other side of it a short while later. Then they had moved to one neighbourhood in a different city miles away, where Ali had started nursery, then moved again to a different neighbourhood in that same city where he was living when we first met him. Ali often found himself wondering where he had lived at different points in life, and thinking about other big questions like that.

Ali's current flat was noisy. It was located on the main road and when they had first moved in, the boys' bedroom had been at the front of the property, overlooking the busy street. They weren't able to sleep at night because of the noise so Ali had leaned out of the window and shouted at the cars and motorbikes and police sirens to stop. But his protests had gone unheeded, so his mum had moved the boys into the living room and turned their bedroom into the lounge. The noise from the traffic no longer bothered them, although Ali and his brother

still kept each other awake sometimes with all their snoring and snorting in the night. With the way Ali wriggled about so much in the single bed they shared, his brother would end up sleeping on the floor with no covers and Ali would get into trouble.

Ali and his mum and brother were due to move again, and this was a source of worry for Ali. He didn't know why they had to move, he didn't know exactly when they would be going, and he didn't know where they would end up. Neither did his mum. It was early Spring and all he knew was that they had been given until about June or July to find another home, and his mum had started packing their things up. She had been looking for a place in the same area, close to her work and to the boys' school, especially so that Ali's final year of primary education would not be disrupted. But Ali wasn't sure if they would be able to stay local; to do that they would have to find a landlord who would accept DSS, and although Ali had no idea what this meant, he knew that it wasn't ok for lots of landlords, and this was making it really hard for his mum to find them somewhere to live. Ali's mum didn't want to move, and neither did he, but they had no choice. If they couldn't find a house they would have to go to the homeless place, and Ali had heard that those places were really, really small. He was worried about how they would all fit in if they did end up in one of those teeny tiny boxes. He was worried that if they got a new flat, they might get bad neighbours, or a bad landlord who would be mean to them. Faced with all this uncertainty, Ali had started to imagine the worst. He looked a little to the future and filled it with all the things that could go wrong: being moved too far from school, being made homeless and forced to live somewhere that would not properly accommodate him and his family, being surrounded by people who would be cruel to them, having a landlord who would not do the things they were supposed to do.

Some of our other participants with experience of housing insecurity worried about it as well – especially those who were living in limbo at the time of their interviews, for whom a move was pending but not confirmed and imbued with uncertainty. One 11 year old girl spoke of being worried about debt and being evicted, asking her interviewer – rhetorically – what would happen if one day she came back from school and all of the family's belongings were on the street outside and they had nowhere to go. Another transient participant – a nine year old girl – talked about wanting to live in a house that was bought and not rented so they wouldn't get evicted again, and how that would make her feel safer, less anxious. And a 10 year old boy, when asked if there was anything in general that he tended to worry about, spoke of worrying over what would happen if they had to move out (again) and he and his family didn't have anywhere to live. These participants, and others too, found themselves staring into a big gaping hole of housing uncertainty and filling it with their worst fears.

Uncertainty has long been linked to stress and anxiety. Scholars studying the effects of uncertainty find that not knowing is experienced as even worse than knowing for sure that something bad is going to happen. A study carried out by scientists at UCL's Institute of Neurology in 2016 found that when faced

with irreducible uncertainty, people experienced increases in the stress hormone cortisol, pupil dilation, perspiration and an increase in subjectively-measured stress (de Berker et al 2016). Other studies have found that those with a low tolerance for uncertainty are more likely to engage in 'catastrophic worrying' and to experience increased levels of sadness, depression and anxiety (for example, see Meeton et al 2012).

When uncertainty is over something as fundamental as housing – a satisfier for the human needs for shelter and safety – the results can be experienced at a deep psychological level, affecting what is known among psychologists and social theorists as ontological security. This concept was introduced by psychiatrist RD Laing in the 1960s, then reinvigorated by sociologist Anthony Giddens through the 1980s and 1990s in his analysis of modernity and its impacts on individuals and society. Giddens understands ontological security as an emotional phenomenon rooted in the unconscious, and defines it as:

'the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security.'
(Giddens, 1990)

A number of scholars have taken the notion of ontological security and explored the ways in which housing (and especially tenure status) can enable or detract from it. For example, Saunders (1990), drawing on analysis of household surveys in England, argued that home can be a significant source of ontological security, 'where people feel in control of their environment, free from surveillance, free to be themselves and at ease, in the deepest psychological sense, in a world that might at times be experienced as threatening and uncontrollable' (p361). Building on the work of Saunders, Depuis and Thorns (1998) have also argued that home can contribute to a sense of ontological security when it is a site of constancy. Although these studies are adult-focused and recognise (to greater or lesser degrees) that findings may differ for different age groups, the notion of a stable home as fundamental to a sense of ontological security is strong.

For our transient participants, especially those like Ali with vivid imaginations and a lower threshold for tolerating the unknown, home is far from being a bedrock of ontological security. Rather, because it is not a constant and because there is little control, certainty or reliability pertaining to it, home (or its lack) can become a source of considerable distress, to be contended with at a time in their lives – on the cusp of adolescence, often in the midst of other adversities – when the need for certainty is particularly strong. For Ali, thinking about home meant roaming, in his imagination, to the place where the bad things happen.

Coping: Madison creates connections (or, the importance of friendship)

**'And a youth said: Speak to us of friendship.
And he answered, saying:
Your friend is your needs answered.'**

Kahil Gibran, The Prophet (1923)

In the middle of a post-industrial town 160 miles away from the sprawling city where Ali and Tiffany went to school, 12 year old Madison had recently moved into a three bedroomed house with her mum, her older sister and her younger brothers. This was Madison's 10th home. She had lived in near enough all the areas of town growing up, while her older sister had lived in as many houses as there were years in her life.

During the week, Madison stayed at home with her mum and siblings, and at weekends she stayed alternately with her dad and her maternal grandmother. She enjoyed the weekends with her dad, who lived an hour away, and although her dad had a debilitating lung condition, he would still meet them off the bus on a Friday after school and do fun things with them. They would go to the cinema and he would treat them to takeaways, lunch at McDonald's or Chickin Lickin, and sometimes dinner at the pub. He would give them £5 pounds and they would spend it in the bargain store, which sold everything. On the weekends that Madison wasn't with her dad she stayed at her nan's, to whom she was really close. She had lived with her nan for about a year and a half before moving to her current place, because her mum had been really unwell and Madison hadn't wanted to go into care. She and her nan had so much fun during that time, riding about the neighbourhood on the mobility scooter, zooming up to the local common, circling the ponds and laughing together, always laughing. Staying at her nan's every other weekend meant that Madison didn't get to have sleepovers with her friends, but she didn't mind this because her nan had been such an

important part of her life, had really been there for her when she'd needed it. She loved her so much. So much. She worried about her though, because if she ever died that would make everything go wrong. Right now, things were just perfect but if her nan died it would be the complete end of her world. The only thing that came close to making her as happy as her nan did, was sausages. Madison loved sausages – the smell of them under the grill, the taste of them, on their own, in a sandwich. She just loved sausages.

During the week, when Madison was at home with her mum, there wasn't much money around anymore. Before, in the days when they used to hang out a lot with a friend of her mum's, it had felt like there was loads of money. That had been such a crazy time – they'd had a pizza about once a week – but it wasn't like that anymore. The friend had got a new boyfriend and it was back to just her mum's money, and there wasn't a lot of it. What little there was went on buying things for their new house like carpet for the kids' bedrooms, or it was spent on the TV licence, which her aunt had recently stopped paying for them. When Madison's mum had to spend money on these things there was a strict ban on all goodies like crisps, sweets and biscuits, and dinner would be tasty but small. Madison had sold her electronic keyboard, got £50 for it, given £25 to her brother and sister to share and kept £25 for herself, but that money hadn't lasted long. Madison knew her mum worried about money – whenever she asked for something, her mum would get this weird face and stare, like she was trying to work it all out in her head, a vacant look that went 'if I got this would I have enough for everything else?'. If she could have helped her family in any way, Madison would have given them more money. Not too much, where they would start to be snobs, fall out with their friends, think they were better than everyone and stop caring about other people, just normal money so that her mum wouldn't have to worry about replacing broken house appliances or treating herself every now and then. Enough money to have a proper house, one that was big enough for them all.

Things were a bit crowded in Madison's new place. They hadn't been able to see it properly before they moved in because the previous tenants had kept hold of the key, but they had looked through the windows and seen that it was really small. The rooms were tiny, Madison was sharing a bedroom with her big sister, and there just wasn't enough space for the two of them. They were on the list to move to a bigger house, one with four bedrooms, but Madison felt ambivalent about this: On the one hand she wanted to move away from the noisy motorbikes, the dogs that barked loudly, the neighbours who shouted and screamed, and the house with the front door that opened and closed twenty-four-seven for reasons that Madison could not fathom. Part of her longed to live in the countryside, where the people were quiet and the houses big and pretty. But on the other hand, she wanted to stay in the same area because she had friends around the corner. Although Madison was aware of the reputation of her estate as one of the worst places in the town (a judgement she disagreed with – there were far worst areas and she had lived in them), and although her cousin had been stabbed to death nearby which made her feel a bit anxious living there, having friends on the

doorstep was so important. She knew she would have to move one day – her dad would not be proud of her if she hadn't managed to leave the town by the time she was a grownup as she deserved so much more – but for now living there meant she was close to friends at least.

Like most of our other transient participants, one of the things Madison found hardest about moving was the process of making friends, having to leave them and then try to make new friends again whenever and wherever she happened to be relocated. This was the most frequently (voluntarily) mentioned issue to arise in conversations about young peoples' thoughts and feelings on having to move; every single one of our transient participants spoke, in some way or other, of the upheaval of leaving friends from old neighbourhoods and having to build new friendships in new locations. While Madison had remained in the same primary and secondary schools throughout her moves and enjoyed the continuity this afforded her friendships at school, moving still required ascertaining the social landscape in each new area and navigating all that this entailed – figuring out how to stand her ground and not let people be horrible to her, building and maintaining a good reputation, learning how to stay out of trouble, and identifying who she might get on with, who she could trust, and who might become a true friend. She had gotten used to doing this every time she found herself in a new neighbourhood, and she had learned that a good friendship could see a person through some really tough times.

There is a wealth of research into children's friendships and the crucial roles they play in their lives and well-being, as well as in the lives of the adults they become. It is well known that as children grow older, they spend more and more time with their peers (for example, see Dunn and Layard 2009), and orient increasingly towards friends. Children's friendships – defined as the 'the voluntary and reciprocal relationship between two individuals' (Waldrip et al 2008) – have been found in a large number of studies to be positively linked to various social, relational and psychological outcomes, and to provide children with, for example, opportunities to develop a sense of security, social support networks, social competence, problem solving skills, self-knowledge and esteem, and to help buffer against adolescent stressors, maladjustment and victimisation (ibid). In their school-based study of the importance of friendships for early adolescent adjustment, Waldrip et al found that adolescents who had greater numbers of friends and higher quality friendships showed better adjustment than adolescents who had no reciprocated friendships or had friendships that were lower in quality. Almquist (2011), in her research into the relationship between childhood friendships and adult health outcomes, found that for women 'there is an association between friendship quantity in childhood and adult self-rated health' (p380).

In their 18-year study of childhood friendships and psychological difficulties in young adulthood, Sakyi et al (2015) found that 'young adults who had no childhood friends had higher odds of psychological difficulties than those with at least one friend' (p1). In *A Good Childhood: Searching for Values in a Competitive Age* (2009), leading scholar on children's friendships Judy Dunn and co-author Richard Layard,

draw on the wealth of academic research in this field and summarise that 'children who make friends early do better later. They have greater moral sensibility and better understanding of social relationships. They are…less bullied and less aggressive'. Particularly pertinently for thinking about children's friendships in the context of housing insecurity, they go on to note that 'when children have a friend who moves away, they suffer, even as pre-schoolers: nightmares increase, and physiological tests show that their levels of anxiety increase…If they are adolescent, they are more likely to become depressed' (p36), thus pointing to the way in which the effects of housing insecurity on children's friendships are felt by those left behind too. In their study of the effects of housing insecurity on adolescent health behaviours, Fowler et al (2015) note that 'peer relationships are crucial to development of self-esteem and self-identity' and that moving at this stage of life can have powerful effects 'given the potential disruption of social connections outside the home' (p371). Beyond this contemporary, child-focused literature, the fundamental human need for friendship has been well-established, finding expression within Maslow's theory of human motivation, as a satisfier for the need for love and social belonging.

So, friendship plays an essential role in meeting a child's intrinsic human needs and in their moral, social, psychological, behavioural and health-related development. What does this mean for young people living with housing insecurity, whose moves can threaten the continuity of their friendships and bring a premature end to connections that are so fundamental to their well-being? Among other things, it means there is a requirement to cope, a demand placed on them both to maintain old friendships and build new ones, and this can be experienced acutely. Many of our transient participants missed the friends in the places they had left behind, and they tried to keep in touch with them as best they could – although this wasn't always easy or possible as it required money, or technology and the money to use this effectively. And they were industrious in their forging of new friendships in new areas. The mechanisms through which this process occurred appeared to be somewhat gendered: boys in our sample were more likely to meet new people and develop friendships by participating in sports activities in the parks, fields, recreation centres or streets surrounding their new homes; while girls were more likely to create new connections through existing friends, family members, acquaintances and wider networks.

Whatever the means by which individuals endeavoured to build and cement the social connections that are core to the human experience, trying to do this in the context of housing insecurity was a significant undertaking for many participants in our study. It was without a trace of irony that Madison remarked how lucky she was that she and her family had moved that many times, they now knew folk all over the place and so had friends near enough everywhere in town.

Part Two

2016 Follow Ups

Introduction to Part Two

In part two of this report we return to our four illustrative case study participants, a year on. The stories are based on the young peoples' interview transcripts from the second year of fieldwork for our study. In these stories we catch up on developments that have taken place during the previous year of our participants' lives, still with a focus on the four central themes of the costs, losses, uncertainties and coping tactics associated with housing insecurity, but this time exploring a different set of subthemes.

In the first story of part two we return to Sean, now 12 years old, who had been living in the small flat at the top of that tall block in an estate in semi-rural England with his mum and siblings when we first interviewed him. In Sean's first story we introduced the idea of financial costs associated with housing insecurity, and in his second story we explore a different kind of cost – that relating to time. In this, we highlight the different ways in which housing insecurity can be time-consuming for young people, and we gain an insight into some of the effects that this under-explored process might have on their lives.

Our second story in part two returns to Tiffany, also now 12 years old, who had been living in a temporary flat on the outskirts of a sprawling city with her mum when we first met her, but was also living with an older sister in her old neighbourhood for part of the week to make her daily commute to school viable. In Tiffany's first story we explored one type of loss associated with housing insecurity – that of a sense of belonging, and in her second story we seek to understand a further loss that can accompany frequent, reactive moving – the loss of a sense of safety. Through this second story of Tiffany's we highlight the demands placed on transient young people moving from one deprived neighbourhood to another, to continually assess and respond to new streetscapes in order to identify threats and keep themselves safe, and to always expect trouble, just in case.

The third story in this section returns to Ali, now 10, who had been living in the flat on that busy main road with his mum and brother when we first interviewed him, his imagination looking both backwards with fondness, to all the sugarcane and ice cream in his native Asia, and forwards, with uncertainty, to all the things that could possibly go wrong with his pending residential move. In Ali's second story we return to the key theme of uncertainty, this time looking at the under-explored subtheme of the ways in which it can create problems in the physical home environment. In this story we gain an appreciation of some of the possible effects that this physical limbo can have on transient young peoples' lives.

In the fourth and final story of part two we return to Madison, now 13, who had moved 10 times when we first met her – including in with her nan while her mum was unwell – and who had recently been moved with her mum and siblings into a too-small three bedroomed house while they waited for a bigger place to become available. In Madison's first story we explored how building new, neighbourhood-based friendships forms a key coping tactic deployed by transient young people in a bid to manage the social disruptions of moving. In Madison's second story we turn to a different coping tactic – that of ensuring school tenure – used by many transient young people as a means of maintaining a sense of stability in a context that is otherwise marked by instability and the stress this can bring.

Sean and the costs of housing insecurity: Time

Time-consuming \ 'tìm-kĭn-'sü-min \
Adjective:
1: Using or taking up a great deal of time
2: Wasteful of time

Merriam Webster Dictionary (2020)

When we met Sean for the second time he was still living in semi-rural England, now 12 and enjoying school even more than the previous year. There was a new head teacher who was strict and was helping the school to improve, which Sean thought was a good thing. Teachers had started taking things more slowly in lessons too, so Sean felt he could learn properly instead of rushing through everything. He remained passionate about sport, playing handball, basketball, cricket and rugby at school and was looking forward to learning tennis. And he was excelling in football; he had been scouted from the school team and had started to play for a local club. He trained after school every Tuesday and played matches on Sundays at the club grounds in town. Sean's growing passion for football was in fact turning into a desire for a career as a professional player. He knew it would be hard work, that it would involve a lot of training and a requirement to understand things like muscle function, arteries and the workings of the heart, but he was determined. His ultimate dream was to play for Brazil but he hadn't quite figured out how he might claim an identity as a Brazilian national, yet. Sean had also started earning a bit of money – £12 a week – for helping in a neighbour's garden, which was useful because his mum had such little money of her own to give him.

Sean's mum had started working in a community centre in town. But it wasn't a money job so she was still going to the Job Centre and to job fairs to try and find work that would pay and fit in with being a single mum. Not being able to drive meant that she was limited in the work she could apply for, and anyway when she did find a job, it would probably just be cleaning toilets or something. She was

struggling with money; struggling to pay for food to feed the family (everyone in the house was a big eater), to clear the debts she had accrued (which amounted to thousands of pounds) and to pay the rent, again.

By the time of this second interview Sean and his family had been moved into a four bedroomed house in a new development owned by a local housing association. They had stayed in the previous flat in the estate, at the very top of that tall block, for around seven months – longer than they had expected and longer than they had wanted to be there. Sean had liked the estate and had wanted to stay because his friends lived close by, but the flat itself had been overcrowded. His mum had slept in the living room while he had shared a small bedroom and one bed with two of his siblings, lots of furniture and everyone's belongings piled up wherever there was space. In the new house, Sean's mum had her own room and he was sharing with just one of his siblings. His sister had been allocated a room of her own, which was great a relief to Sean because this meant the door could be shut on those Ed Sheeran posters of hers. Their new house had a small garden and was close to a big park.

Sean and his family had got into a bit of trouble when they first moved into the new place. They had found the housing association rules strict, the neighbours quick to report their rowdy fun and games, and there were lots of old people who complained about the children playing out after dark. But Sean and his siblings made a real effort to behave and be nice, and after a while things began to settle down. He made some local friends and would hang out in the park with them when he got home from school. It was quiet in the new area, a marked difference from the hustle and bustle of the previous estate, and while the older residents were strict, there was less fighting and Sean preferred this: it felt more responsible somehow, safer.

But the new housing development was far away. Far from town and the shops, far from Sean's dad and stepdad, far from football and far from school. Far, in fact, from all of the things that Sean valued, beyond his mum and siblings. Local buses took forever and were few and far between. His mum didn't have a car, and taxis were expensive. What this meant was that Sean had to spend his own money getting to town by bus, or walk the hour or so it took on foot, along the arterial roads that had no proper pavements, when he wanted to hang out with his friends from the old estate. It meant his mum had to pay for taxis to do her grocery shopping. It meant he didn't see much of his dad, although his stepdad managed to get out to visit them from time to time. Sean sometimes visited his dad at the weekend, and occasionally his dad was able to pay the taxi fare back home, because his uncle had died recently and had left Sean's dad a bit of inheritance money. The move to the remote housing development also meant that Sean was reliant on his football coach for lifts to and from training and matches. This worked for the time being, while the coach was still at Sean's club. The move also meant that there was a long journey between home and school. Initially it had seemed as though Sean and his siblings would have to move schools, but – knowing how disruptive this would be for them – his mum had begged the council to let them stay where they were and pay for the taxi journeys to and from school. The council had agreed but the arrangement was temporary, and Sean's mum was soon going to have to start paying for the taxis herself. Sean felt optimistic that she would find the money somehow – an extra £70 a week. She had even started saving for it and had asked Sean's stepdad to help with the cost too. If Sean could have changed anything to help his family, he would have moved them closer to town, where the majority of their lives were lived. But he was a realist; he knew that the choice was not theirs to make.

Being far from everything was not only costly in monetary terms for Sean; it was time-consuming. At least an hour to get anywhere he needed to be, and another hour to get home again. Between 10

and 14 hours a week spent – involuntarily – in transit. Sean felt burdened by all this travelling, and missed having time to spend with his friends after school.

Other transient young people in our study had similar experiences, being moved far from schools, social networks and – for those whose parents had work – parental jobs. They spoke of one, two, two and a half hour journeys to get to the places that constituted their everyday landscapes. When one 12 year old girl, was moved (along with her mum and her siblings) to the outskirts of the big city where she had previously been more central, she took three buses and crossed the boundaries of three local authorities to get to school – and the same to get home again. It added around four hours onto the school day for her, more than an extra half a school day every day – the equivalent of an extra 10 school days every single month during term time. Her mum's journey to work took even longer, because she had a job near the flat where they had lived before the previous place, which was further away still. An 11 year old girl had to travel for a similar amount of time to get between the temporary place where she had been housed with her family and the area where her school was, crossing four local authorities and finding it just as draining as the others. A 10 year old boy had stayed in the same local authority when he moved from one temporary flat to another with his mum and siblings, but he also had a time-consuming journey from one side of the borough to the other, which took around an hour in school-run traffic. Others in our transient subsample had daily journeys that were similarly laborious.

These were not the strategic journeys of well-off young people travelling to prestigious schools far from home as part of a calculated family decision to sacrifice time in the present on a promise, or expectation, of educational reward at a defined point in the future. No: these were journeys of last resort, the lesser of two evils which entailed young people having to devote whole chunks of their lives to travelling, just to cling on at run-of-the-mill schools, for who knew how long, because the alternative – moving school – was frightening, and because anyway there was no point moving school without knowing where your permanent state of home was going to be.

This time forsaken, getting from home to the places of importance to them, took its toll on the transient children in our study. While some seemed to take it in their stride, managing to re-purpose travel time to nurture friendships, for example arranging to meet fellow pupils on the way to school or travelling together part of the way home, doing so relied on knowing others making similar journeys or on having access to technology that would enable online social networking on the move, and so was not an option for everyone. For most young people it was tiring, an additional drain on lives that were already put-upon. Sean was always tired. Since he ate enough, and since football energised him, he surmised that it must have been because he spent so much of his life on the bus, which left little energy for other things and a good deal of resentment in him. Several studies in the field of health economics have found that long commuting times have negative effects on subjective well-being and health among adults, or particular groups therein (for example see Roberts et al 2011 and Kunn-Nelen 2015). The experiences of our transient participants, including Sean, remind us that children can also be affected

by what we might otherwise think of as 'adult' issues and challenges.

All this time spent travelling by our transient participants, who had been moved far from the places they needed to be, was augmented by time lost to the family in other ways: searching for places to live, sorting through belongings so as to reduce the amount to be moved, acquiring packing boxes, packing belongings, loading up vans, unloading vans, unpacking boxes, orienting oneself in new locations, making new dwellings feel like home, even if they were only temporary, and then doing it all over again. Taken together, these portions of time could add up. Simply put, housing insecurity can be a time-consuming business. And it is time that families in poverty cannot easily spare, as parents are busy looking for work, hanging on to low-paid jobs, studying to expand their minds and their potential incomes, managing relationships, and looking after their children. And those children are busy trying to stake their own claim to the normalcies of childhood – studying, navigating friendships and family relations, carving out identities, contributing to the household economy and sometimes looking after parents and siblings who are ill or disabled.

Studies (with adults) have shown that time poverty – not having enough 'discretionary time' (Kalenkoski and Hamrick 2012) – is associated with poorer outcomes in terms of physical and mental health, health behaviours, relationships and subjective well-being (for example, see the review by Giurge and Whillans 2019). Burchardt (2008), in her study of time and income poverty, published by the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics, argues that poverty solutions which focus on increasing incomes through work (and the wages it brings) ignore adult's time poverty and the detrimental effects this can have on the well-being of children in their care. Some poverty scholars have also advocated for definitions and measurements of 'poverty' to take into account the lack of available time within households, noting in particular that approaches which fail to incorporate time factors into their analyses unfairly discriminate against income-poor households comprising single parents and children – on the basis that those who are time poor require supplemental income in order to 'buy in' services which they have no time to provide themselves (for example see Vickery 1977; Harvey and Mukhopadhyay 2007).

So, for the past few decades, there has been increasing acknowledgement – among certain poverty scholars – that time matters, and that time poverty matters. While the research in this field is adult-centered, the way in which Sean and his transient peers suffered with the lack of time available to them, suggests that time poverty is something that children can be directly and negatively affected by too – in particular as it exists as a function of housing insecurity and the forced moves this engenders, far from the settings that structure children's everyday lives. For Sean, the effects of time poverty seemed to manifest most readily on the bus; it was a daily occurrence to find himself falling asleep as it meandered along the circuitous route from town, all the way out to the deserted development that had become his home.

Lost in transience: Tiffany and safety

'If trouble comes when you least expect it then maybe the thing to do is to always expect it.'

Cormac McCarthy, The Road (2006)

By the time of her second interview Tiffany had also turned 12 and, like Sean, the previous year had seen a few changes in her life. She and her mum had been moved, this time to a flat that was just as far from school as her previous one, still on the edge of the big city, but in a different direction. Tiffany's cousin, who had been in prison last year, had been released and was now 22. He was working in a takeaway shop and staying in a hostel miles away waiting to be housed, so he stopped over with Tiffany and her mum when he visited them. Tiffany's mum was working even longer hours, still doing catering, and on top of that there was always extra paperwork that kept her busy. She would get up at 4am and come home around 7pm and sometimes Tiffany's uncle had to come round after school to cook Tiffany's dinner and wait with her until her mum got home. Her mum had experienced additional health problems in the last year, and the re-occurrence of a long-standing heart condition meant that she had to take a lot of tablets to manage it.

The Christmas just gone, Tiffany and her mum had wanted to host the family in their new home, but no-one had been prepared to travel all the way to theirs, so they had spent the day at her eldest sister's house. Because Tiffany's cousin was just out of prison, he couldn't buy presents, and Tiffany had been excused as well on account of still being a child – but she had done well in the gift department herself, acquiring some brand name clothes, shoes and a bike, which she had used on the bike track near her uncle's house when she had stayed with him for a while. This latter arrangement had come about because Tiffany's mum had fallen out with Tiffany's eldest sister, so Tiffany was no longer allowed to stay there, and anyway Tiffany's uncle also lived close to her school. But the arrangement hadn't suited Tiffany; at her uncle's place she'd had to share a room with her younger cousin, who was a boy, and she didn't feel very comfortable doing that. Instead, she preferred to make the hour and a half bus journey back to the new flat every single day.

School continued to be a source of tension for Tiffany. She didn't always understand the teachers and she worried that this would affect her grades. There had been an incident with one teacher who had hit Tiffany and thrown a board marker at her head, and mostly she found the other kids a bit too 'hoody', like hood

children, rude, scatty and disrespectful. And there had been an incident when a group of kids had thrown stones at Tiffany and threatened to attack her. But then there was Mrs Walker, the pastoral lead for the year, the only one whom Tiffany felt listened to her point of view. As long as there was Mrs Walker then Tiffany thought she might stay in spite of her misgivings, unless her mum decided to move her to a school closer to their new flat.

The new flat had three bedrooms. One was spare, for her nieces or older cousin when they came to stay so was always full, one was for Tiffany's mum, and one was for Tiffany. She had brought her things from the previous place, put posters up on her wall, and made a little homework corner inside the big cupboard with the little door which lead off her room. These things she liked, as she did the quietness of her road. But it was in an unfamiliar area and there were lots of things she didn't like about it. It was still so far from school and from the area where her eldest sister and uncle lived, where Tiffany had lived once upon a time. There were no parks and no people that she knew in the new neighbourhood, and there was nothing to do. And there was an alleyway nearby that was littered with beer cans and rubbish, and the local high street was just as bad – dirty and all too easy to walk down and catch someone's eye the wrong way. The people round there were rude. One time, Tiffany and a friend had been walking through the alleyway in the late afternoon, the sun still shining, and a car had pulled up next to them. The adults in it had tried to get Tiffany and her friend to go in the car. They ran. Another time Tiffany had been walking down her road to the Chinese take away, it was early, she was on her own and someone drove by in a car and started yelling at her. She went home and told her mum, and her mum had got so angry. Tiffany found her new area scary. Risks to her safety, and figuring out how to best manage those risks, were issues that had become daily challenges for her and her mum.

Of course, the issue of neighbourhood safety is one that affects children, young people and their families throughout the country, regardless of socio-economic status or housing circumstance. But for those living in areas of high deprivation where crime and 'antisocial behaviour' seem to manifest more readily on the street – and for those in low income households where budgets cannot easily stretch to mitigate the threats to safety, for example by cocooning young people in cars or taxis, or paying for costly child care arrangements – the issue can be a particularly pressing one. Young people in our sample, transient and non-transient alike, spoke frequently of the hazards they experienced in their local areas: muggings, fights, road traffic, dangerous driving, gangs, older teenagers whose conduct was experienced as threatening, drinking, drug dealing, litter, ferocious dogs (as well as their excrement). All of these hazards generated a sense of apprehension, fear or distress for young people. The effects of these threats to safety have been detailed in the literature on children's lives in general, and on children living in deprived neighbourhoods in particular. Threats to safety (both objective and perceived) have been linked to adolescent psychological distress (Goldman-Mellor et al 2016), worse mental health outcomes (Meltzer

et al 2007), worse physical health status and higher stress (Warr et al 2009), lower physical activity levels (Carver et al 2008), lower subjective well-being (Lee and Yoo 2017; Coulton et al 2007; McDonell 2007), and worse cognitive and academic performance (Schwartz and Gorman 2003). Conversely, studies by Dolan, Peasgood and White (2008), Helliwell (2006), Helliwell and Putnam (2004) and Li et al. (2005) have found that neighbourhood social trust is associated with higher life satisfaction and happiness, and a lower probability of suicide. The Children's Society's own 2013 report *Through Young Eyes* reflects the safety challenges faced by young people living in deprived areas and lists harassment, drug use, vandalism, risks posed by traffic and poor street lighting among the difficulties young people report. And in their 2006 study of children's safety in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Turner et al found many of the same issues that arose in our present one: concern over gangs, litter, traffic, and drug and alcohol use. They reported on the strategies that young people adopt in an effort to keep themselves safe, dividing these into preventive strategies (for example avoiding risky places and people, avoiding being out at certain times, attending clubs and organised activities, seeking the company of trusted people and keeping a low profile) and reactive ones (for example ignoring a threat or fighting back).

The need for a sense of safety is a fundamental one, the consequences of its absence can be acute, and the demands placed on individuals to keep themselves safe – especially in disadvantaged areas – can be high. The need for safety is explicitly recognised within Maslow's categorisation. For our transient participants, who bounce from one deprived neighbourhood to another, there is an additional requirement to learn over and over again how to stay safe in their new environments – a need for additional vigilance to spot signs of trouble. Each time a move takes place, there is a corresponding necessity to acquire new knowledge about the places and people that might pose a threat, which in turn compels young people to devise new strategies for dealing with those potential threats. Learning the safety risks and figuring out how to manage them has to be negotiated every single time a move to a new neighbourhood occurs. Learning the places to avoid and how to avoid them, the people to steer clear of and the ways of doing so without causing trouble, the activities and times of day that are more or less risky, the roads that need extra care to cross – all of these things have to be contended with repeatedly in the context of housing insecurity. Even where moves entail relocating to 'safer' neighbourhoods, the need remains for young people to establish the bounds of that safety.

For Tiffany, moving had meant that the street-safe knowledge she had accrued in her previous area was no longer relevant, and she was learning the hard way in her new neighbourhood which alleyways to avoid, where to run if she was followed, and whether to shout back if someone yelled at her from their car. All of this had left Tiffany's mum furious, Tiffany scared, and both of them resigned to this being the way things were, at least until they could move to a nicer area. And it meant Tiffany had come to always expect trouble, just to be prepared, just to be on the safe side.

Ali and the uncertainty of housing insecurity: The curse of the cardboard boxes

'Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small.'

Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader (1925)

When we interviewed Ali again he had turned 10 and he, his brother and their mum had moved into a new flat, a move that Ali had discovered was due to the owner of their previous flat wanting to move back in. The new place was further away from primary school and his mum's work, but it was all that had been available for people on DSS, although he still didn't know what that meant. Again, he smiled a lot during our time together. Especially when he spoke about cricket.

During the last year, Ali had finally joined a cricket club. He loved the game so much, he couldn't stop grinning when he told people he now played for the school team. He had moved up to Year 6, and this was proving to be a mixed experience for him: on the one hand the work was less fun, plus the topics were even easier than before, but on the other hand he was really enjoying art and science and PE. He sometimes got into trouble when it wasn't his fault, like the time he had charged at one of his classmates in the line after break (because she had bitten his finger earlier in the day) and got caught by the teacher and sent to the headmistress. But, on the flip side, he was learning to recognise when he got hyper – like really, really, super angry – and that what helped him to calm down was just him, on his own, in the quiet. With one of those squishy balls to squeeze. He was looking forward to the upcoming school trip to the seaside, where he

would get to go on loads of fun rides with his friends, but it had been really, really expensive, even with his Pupil Premium money, which he knew had reduced the cost from £200 to £95. And Ali was feeling awesome about secondary school, especially now that he knew which school he was going to and that it was a sports specialist school – with a cricket team. Still, he was a bit concerned about the long list of things he would need which would be a lot of money for his mum, like uniform, kit for cricket, basketball, and swimming, even a towel, as well as his own pencil case, pencils and pens.

Not many of Ali's friends were going to the same secondary school as him. Most were going together to a different school, but he was going somewhere near to where he had moved. Actually, he was glad not to be joining his primary school friends, because the children at their allocated secondary school were greedy; he had once seen a boy from there on the bus with a tub of fried chicken and chips and a carton of squash, eating with his hands, slurping his drink and spilling his food all over the place. Still, he would miss his friends, that much he knew. He had one friend, Dipak, who he was particularly close to and whose mum had become friends with his mum, so they sometimes saw each other outside of school too. One time he had gone to Dipak's house for the day with some other boys from the class, and oh my God, what a day they'd had! Dipak's mum had ordered them pizza and chicken and chips and after eating they had played Nintendo (at which point Ali had realised his console was huge compared to his friend's), and Dipak had given Ali one of his old games to take home. Dipak's mum had then taken the boys to the cinema, then to Dipak's nan's house, then on to the park to play football. And that wasn't even the very end – they had finished the day with a Chinese take away before finally going home. It was one of the best days of Ali's whole life.

Ali still got on well with his family. His brother was sometimes naughty, but they had fun together, filling up old plastic water bottles which their mum no longer used and throwing the contents all over each other. His mum was still fun, and funny, too – making him laugh with her clever jokes and quips, teasing Uncle when they watched cricket matches and his team's opponents won. Ali, his brother and their mum would sit together on weekend evenings and watch The Voice or some other TV programme, his mum doing her university homework before cooking them all a delicious dinner made of Asian food. Ali's mum was still working at Lidl and Uncle still worked at the café in the cricket ground, which meant that sometimes – when he stayed over – Ali and his family would get to eat a delicious breakfast the next morning, made of barbeque beans, mashed potatoes and peppercorn sauce. Ali still had no contact with his dad, and wasn't sure if he wanted to see him, or even whether he felt curious about him at all.

Ali felt a little bit richer these days, compared to last year, perhaps because he had recently seen his mum bringing some money out of her purse and caught sight of some bank notes, which children never usually see. Not that his mum talked to him about money much – she had told him he shouldn't be worrying about things like that; that was her job. But he did worry, about becoming poor,

about how they would get more money if they needed to, and about what they would do if they had nowhere to live.

Ali's latest move had taken place during the summer holidays. Because of this, Ali and his family hadn't gone away, but instead had spent the time getting to know their new area, visiting the local swimming pool and the McDonald's nearby. (If Ali could have gone on holiday, he would have chosen to visit Los Angeles or one of those other tropical places you see on films, with all the palm trees and ladies wearing bikinis. Although on second thoughts he didn't really like it when people didn't wear proper clothes, or when they washed in the street, especially if they were hairy. He just wished people would be a bit more polite about these kinds of things). Ali's new area was nice, except for the teenagers and gangsters who hung out there, who had taken over the local park and set fire to the equipment. In fact, Ali didn't feel very safe there at all. The streets were quiet though, unlike their last flat. Well, except for the really busy main road which was hard to cross because you had to look three different ways before you could step out, to make sure you didn't get run over. There was another park sort of nearby, a short bus ride away, where Ali liked to play with the older children. There was also a pizza place, a shop where he would go to top up the gas and electricity meters for his mum, and a couple of friends living nearby so he could visit them too or meet up with them, if his mum let him. So, although he missed his friends from the old area, there were a couple of familiar faces and all the conveniences a person might need.

Most of all, Ali really liked the flat they had moved to. There was carpet throughout this one, and the layout was good; the kitchen, dining and living rooms were downstairs and the bedrooms and bathroom upstairs, so they could do all their living on one floor and their sleeping on the other. There were two bedrooms – one for Ali's mum and one for him and his brother. There was a garden too, with a fence at the end. And they had not one, but two toilets. All of this had been a very pleasant surprise: Ali and his family had thought that because it was only another temporary place it wasn't going to be very good, but it had everything, including space for a car outside, which they had no use for, but which was nice to have anyway. Ali thought that their for-now home might even be suitable for normal people, people who didn't move around all the time. He didn't know why this wasn't their forever place – his mum knew all about it, but she hadn't told him and he hadn't asked.

So, Ali was happy in his new home. But the fact that it was temporary had a number of implications for him. First, he had made some new friends around and about, but was aware that he would be leaving them soon, so he held back a little. Second, while this temporary place was close to his allocated secondary school, he didn't know where they would be moving to next and whether he would still be near big school or not. And third – signifying one of the issues perhaps least adequately captured within understandings of housing insecurity – there was the matter of the cardboard boxes. Living somewhere on a temporary basis, and apparently in possession of considerable foresight and organisational skill, meant

that Ali's mum had started packing again, ready for the next move, which they were expecting in a few months' time. This in turn meant that Ali and his family were sharing their physical space not only with each other, but with a growing pile of cardboard boxes, some of them full, some of them half full, some of them waiting to be packed with the contents of their lives. And this was getting difficult – they were losing space in the home, giving it up to the cardboard boxes that had been accruing over a period of months, increasingly encroaching on the space available in which to play, hang out, relax, eat, move about, access the things they needed, and get from one room to another. For Ali, one of the consequences of the uncertainty inherent in housing insecurity had taken a very physical form.

For other participants, the physical challenges that housing insecurity introduced into the home looked a bit different. For Sean, at the time of his first interview, there had also been a constricting of physical space – in his case due to squeezing the contents of three bedrooms from his previous home into one bedroom in the new flat. Another transient girl, aged 12, spoke about all the boxes stuffed full of she-didn't-know-what, crammed under her bed in the tiny room she had been allocated in her new house, and how much she wished for more storage space so that she didn't keep tripping over them because they didn't quite fit under the bed. For others (though not those who prioritised making their temporary dwellings feel like home) housing insecurity meant living day in, day out, in buildings that were falling apart, with furniture and décor that was unsanitary or experienced as repulsive, because an ongoing moratorium on mending, furnishing and decorating had come to accompany temporary living. For these families, making the physical environment at home habitable, functional, comfortable, let alone restorative, was on hold until a permanent state of home had been achieved.

Dating back to the late 1970s, and in particular to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, environmental psychologists have long recognised the importance of the physical environment – both natural and built – for the people who live in it, and have sought to explore the ways in which physical environments affect, and are affected by, those inhabiting them (Spencer and Gee 2009, Bernheimer 2017). Within this extensive literature, there is recognition of the particular significance of people's homes, and more recently of the effects that home environments can have on children (for example see Lange 2018). Within child development scholarship, while the social environment has long been a focus of research, the physical environment has also, more recently, started to emerge as an area of study among a number of childhood scholars (Jaffee et al 2012).

The research in these fields yields some findings that cause concern for children growing up with housing insecurity. For example, in their longitudinal study Jaffee et al (ibid) found that children raised in 'chaotic' homes (understood multidimensionally and measured using the CHAOS scale, which combines physical as well as social elements) are less likely to be able to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Evans (2006) cites a number of studies and has

conducted a number of his own which have also found negative associations between 'chaos' in the home and children's socio-emotional functioning, academic achievement, psychological well-being and cognitive development. Schmeer and Yoon (2016), in their article exploring how the home physical environment affects stress-related immune system dysregulation in children, cite an array of other studies that have found links between various aspects of the home environment – including the presence of 'clutter' – and negative outcomes for children, including in terms of social interaction, health behaviours and task persistence. Findings from their own study show that children living in poorer quality homes (defined and measured in part by the presence of physical clutter) are more likely to have higher biomarkers of chronic stress than those who were not (ibid). While these studies explore combinations of factors within the home that affect children's development and well-being, physical clutter is seen to be an important aspect associated with negative outcomes.

What this means for Ali and his transient peers is that the cardboard boxes that pile up in the rooms and hallways at home, the extra furniture crammed into spaces that can't really accommodate it, the storage containers jammed underneath beds but spilling out waiting to be tripped on – these 'small' things – are not only sources of annoyance or difficulty in the present, functioning as everyday symbols of the uncertainty surrounding their housing situations. These objects may also contribute to negative outcomes relating to behaviour, social interaction, and physical and psychological health in the future. Ali didn't know how long he would be living like this, with the cardboard boxes piled up and all around, inching towards the ceiling. He just knew that the boxes were half packed and ready to go, but going nowhere, just yet.

Coping: Madison stays at school (or, the importance of stability)

'If I was to change school every time I changed house... My old school wouldn't know me anymore... And my new school wouldn't know me enough.'

Madison (2016)

The second time we met Madison she had turned 13 and remained in the three bedroomed house she had been living in the previous year with her mum and siblings. Although they had been there for a while now, this place was only temporary – what they really needed was a four bedroomed house so that Madison and her sister could each have a room of their own and not fight so much. But to be allowed a four bedroomed place they had to get their current one sorted, which meant decorating and making sure it wasn't in a mess. Madison and her family really wanted to stay in the same area, but they weren't even going to start looking for a bigger house around there until they'd got their current place fixed up properly.

When they had moved in just over a year ago – a move triggered by their prior place not being very stable – Madison had found many of the neighbours intimidating. But over the course of the past year she had come to see them differently, discovered they were in fact nice people who appeared threatening not because they were bad, but because there were so many of them. Plus, she had gotten used to the area and the people in it – familiarity seemed to have bred an understanding and acceptance of both. For Madison's mum however, social

life in the new neighbourhood was not going so well; when they had first moved in, the woman down the road had been friendly enough – she had even given Madison an old phone for her birthday – but now, things had turned sour. The woman had gone all moody and couldn't decide whether she was friends with Madison's mum or not, so Madison's mum had given up on her.

Madison was still close to her mum – she could talk to her about anything, no matter what it was. She was still a full-time mum, looking after Madison's younger siblings during the day, as well as Madison and her older sister after school. Madison knew her mum worried about money, giving Madison little amounts here and there when she could, but always reminding her not to ask for more because she usually didn't have very much left. She was on benefits, and while Madison didn't think it was good to be on benefits (you didn't have as much money as people with jobs), she also felt that it wasn't always a person's own fault that they were in that situation. Money felt tighter than it had done last year. They would spend the benefits on important things like clothes and shoes, and by the time they'd bought these, they had to go without other things. But Madison didn't mind. She only worried a little bit about money herself, about not having as much as her friends, and if she had a magic wand, she would have given her family more of it.

Madison's mum had had a boyfriend at some point in the past year, but that relationship had ended, which Madison thought was a good thing. The guy had been nice enough – not too old – but he would always be there, hanging around, irritating her, wanting to watch sports on telly when she was trying to watch her programmes. Plus, he had tried to be like a dad to Madison and her siblings, but they already had a dad so they hadn't appreciated that. Madison and her siblings still stayed with their dad every other weekend, as they had done last year. He also remained on benefits, unable to work because of the disabilities related to his lung problems. And Madison was still close to her nan. Nan was taking them on holiday this year, and she now had two pet budgies, Peter and Paul. Madison had stopped staying over with her on alternate weekends though, now preferring to stay over with her new best friend Macey. In fact, she slept at Macey's near enough every night and was hardly home these days. She just loved hanging out at Macey's, it was all cosy and homely at her house. All in all, Madison had a good network of people around her, people she could count on for support if she needed it.

School was different now that Madison was in Year 8. There was more homework, which she would do sitting up at her chest of drawers on her little foldy-up chair, except for the bits that required IT, which she had to do in the library because they didn't have Wi-Fi at home. School was stricter, and Madison was getting into trouble more and more. She had been given a detention for not writing her homework in one of her books, and had been made to sit on her own in assembly for giggling. She was always getting negative points for this, that and the other – for not standing up straight, for slouching in her chair, for punching the boy who wouldn't stop being horrible to her. Most of the teachers at Madison's

school were very, very horrible – spending more time telling people off than actually teaching. In fact, if someone did something wrong, they would stop the whole lesson to tell them off, which had led Madison to believe that they didn't really care about what the kids were learning at all. She certainly couldn't learn all the things she was supposed to if the only thing to listen to was the teachers' shouting. But Madison knew that 1) this was just what you had to deal with as a child, and 2) while other schools might have been better, staying at the same school was a price worth paying.

Throughout all 10 of her house moves, Madison had remained in the same two schools, moving only at the natural transition point from primary to secondary education. Wherever they had been housed in or around town, she had held on at the same school, prioritising the familiarity and continuity it afforded her over the inconvenience that the commuting had, at times, posed. Her mum had understood that staying at the same school regardless of their residential location represented something of particular significance to her daughter, so had promised that she wouldn't make her move schools, no matter where they lived. When Madison talked about how important it was to stay at the same school, she spoke not only about the friendships she valued there, but also about other aspects of school life – knowing the teachers and being known by them, knowing the school's approach to learning, knowing the building and being known more generally by the school. This dual sense of both knowing school and its numerous facets – social, academic, pedagogical – and being known by it, seemed to offer Madison a sense of stability that had not always been available to her in other spheres of her life. For her, and for other transient participants in our sample, school had become synonymous with the stability that is so important for child development and well-being.

Of course, not all young people living with housing insecurity are in a position, or want, to make the choice that Madison and others in our sample made. For some, house moves entail relocating such very long distances that moving school is necessary, while for others, the time and financial costs associated with travelling to school from a new home even just a little further away prove prohibitive in practical terms. Further, for some young people, moving school in the context of a residential move provides an opportunity to start over, to be liberated from negative reputations, experiences and relationships, and to create the social and academic identities that have hitherto eluded them. But for the majority of transient young people in our sample, staying at the same school – even when school itself was imbued with problems of its own – was a key mechanism for maintaining a sense of stability in their lives. The more they moved home, the more school seemed to represent the sense of continuity so crucial for optimal human development.

By definition, young people growing up with housing insecurity experience discontinuity and instability with regard to one of the most fundamental spheres of life: home. In addition, most of the young people in our transient subsample experienced other forms of instability, for example related to family and

household structure, friendships and wider social networks, physical and mental health, parental employment and financial circumstances. Life for young people living with housing insecurity can involve a considerable degree of instability beyond that which might be considered optimal for development. And while 'some change in children's lives is normal and anticipated…children thrive in stable…environments' (Sandstrom and Huerta 2013, p12). In their 2013 synthesis of research into the effects of instability in childhood, these authors identify five domains wherein instability has been shown to have detrimental effects on children: the economic domain, the domain of parental employment, the domain of childcare or school, the residential domain, and the domain of family. Drawing on family stress theory, ecological systems theory and the parent investment model as a framework through which to review relevant studies, Sandstrom and Huerta conclude that:

'instability across a host of areas is associated with a range of [negative] outcomes…[in] cognitive skills, academic achievement, social competence and behaviour….[T]he research shows that repeated changes – or chronic instability – lead to more negative outcomes for children.' (ibid, p40)

The need for stability in childhood is also encompassed within Maslow's categories of need – as part of what he labels the safety needs. Within this category, he discusses in some detail the need children have for a 'predictable, orderly world' (p375), and the 'very common' preference for familiarity and the known, over the unknown and unfamiliar (ibid). By prioritising school tenure, Madison – along with many of her transient peers – can be seen as actively involved in trying to avert some of the negative consequences of school mobility, and as countering the negative effects of housing insecurity in one of the few ways open to her.

For Madison, the most recent house moves had not taken her too far from school, and their effects on her journey between school and home had been minimal. Others – like Sean and Tiffany, and many more in our transient subsample – were not so lucky. The decision to remain at the same school had significant consequences for their daily commutes, which in turn had ripple effects in their lives more broadly; it was expensive and time consuming, and this meant less money and time for other things – for homework, for extra-curricular activities, for nurturing relationships within and beyond the home. Luckily, Madison had not had to think about such things in recent times. But she knew that if her mum ever had to move really far from school, she would just move in with Macey and her mum, who had become like another mum to her. Except Madison knew that if this were to happen in real life and she ended up moving out completely, her actual mum would be so sad. She really needed Madison around.

Part Three

2017
Final conversations

Introduction to Part Three

In part three, the final part of this report, we return to our four key participants for the last time. The stories in this final part are based on their interview transcripts from the third and final year of fieldwork for our study. In the stories for part three, we learn about some of the key things that have happened during the previous year of our participants' lives, and again we focus on the four central themes of the costs, losses, uncertainties and coping tactics associated with housing insecurity. Again, we explore a different set of subthemes associated with these higher-level analytical themes.

The first story in part three takes us back to Sean, who has turned 13. Previously we learned that he, his mum and his siblings had been moved to a housing development on the outskirts of town, far from the things that brought structure, happiness and meaning to his life, and we explored the time costs associated with this move. In Sean's third and final story we raise a question about a different kind of cost that can ensue in the wake of housing insecurity: the cost to intra-household relationships. We identify two processes running parallel in Sean's life in the context of housing insecurity: the withdrawal from the home and the concomitant breakdown of relationships within the home, and we point to the need to better understand the nature of the association between these two. We also learn of the way a person can become accustomed not only to transience, but to a kind of transience-within-transience, because it is the only means of maintaining everyday life.

In the second story in this section we return, for the final time, to Tiffany, also now 13. In her previous story we learned how she and her mum had been moved to a different flat in a different neighbourhood, still on the outskirts of the city. We learned of the way in which this move entailed the loss of a sense of safety, which had in turn evoked a sense of anger in her mum and fear in Tiffany, as well an acceptance in both of them to always expect trouble. In Tiffany's final story we look to a further type of loss associated with housing insecurity in childhood – the loss of social status. In this, we learn of the significance of social status as a human need, and of the lengths that transient young people can go to in an attempt to try and preserve this. We learn too of the effort that people can go to not only to appear 'normal', but also to normalise an unjust situation, in order to defend a sense of self-worth.

Our third story in part three returns to Ali, who was 11 at the time of his final interview. In his previous story we learned how the uncertainty of housing insecurity can manifest in a physical home environment which has the potential to pose risks to children's well-being in the present and in their futures. In his final story we turn to a different possible function of housing insecurity: that of hope, and the paradoxical way this can cause harm when housing hopes are not fulfilled

and disappointment abounds. We also learn how a person can come to see something that initially brought them intense disappointment as 'fabulous', pointing in turn to the way in which the undesirable can become normal, after a while.

In the closing story for this report we meet Madison, one of our most transient participants, for the last time. Now 14, we find her still living in the too-small, three bedroomed house with her mum and siblings where she was living in her previous story. She is still living close to her nan and her best friend, and still attending the same school that had given her such a sense of constancy while much else around her seemed to be in flux. Through Madison's final story, we explore the coping tactic of practices aimed at gaining a sense of rootedness, pointing to the importance of this activity for well-being and the satisfaction of human needs.

Sean and the costs of housing insecurity: Household relationships

'From neighbour, to other, to suspect and, finally, to enemy.'

Ben Rawlence, City of Thorns (2016)

Another year had passed, Sean had turned 13, and he was excelling at football. Now in a different club, he was part way through the season when we caught up with him, two matches in, scoring winning goals and getting crowned man of the match. He had had to leave his old club because his coach – who used to give him lifts to and from the grounds – had left, and Sean couldn't get there by himself. He had looked around for other clubs, found one, but had to forego membership because it was also too far from home. Then he had found a club where some of his friends were members, and this made it feasible for Sean to join because it meant he could stay over with them on Tuesday and Sunday nights, and thereby get to and from matches and training sessions, and to school the next day. Although Sean had discovered a bus that went from his house close to the new club, it only came once an hour and took forever, plus it stopped running on a Tuesday evening before football practice finished, so it was no use to him.

Sean was happy with his new club. The new pitch turned out to be better – less bumpy than the previous one – and the training sessions were much more informative, focusing on technique and structure rather than just playing endless games with little apparent purpose. He was learning more, and socialising more too; at the new club everyone stayed behind to hang out and chat after matches and training sessions. Sean remained intent on a career as a professional footballer. It was not only the lure of good money that attracted him, but the excitement of the game – not knowing who he would face on the pitch, which teams they would play, how big and how skilled the other players would be. He had even been scouted for a regional youth team, but that hadn't progressed because Sean had been told he didn't have the right attitude. What he did have was a question – how could he get to the training ground from his now not-so-new house in time for the sessions?

Over the past year at school – Year 9 for Sean – things had got even stricter. Cameras had appeared in the corridors and classrooms, and seemed to follow him everywhere he turned, and he had found himself caught in a cycle of warnings and seclusions. He was finding the learning boring, but still doing ok grade-wise; in the second-to-top set for most subjects, averaging Bs and Cs, and he was fine with this academic performance as he didn't need As to be a professional football player. Sean enjoyed PE lessons the most; he hated sitting down and keeping still, and at least in PE they were up and about, moving around.

Money was still tight for Sean and his family. By the time of his third interview, his mum still hadn't managed to find paid work, despite going to the job centre regularly and applying for positions she knew she was capable of filling. Sean no longer earned money helping with his neighbour's garden because it was getting in the way of football practice. So yes, money was ok but not great. Great would mean the family spending money but having some left over. As it stood, once they'd bought food, clothes and shampoo there was none left for anything else. The council had issued him with a free school bus pass, which helped (he didn't mention the idea he had spoken about the previous year, of his mum paying for taxis to school and back) and he was still getting a free school meal allowance, although this only went so far. Sean would spend the £2 allocation on breakfast during morning break at 10am (he didn't have the stomach for eating any earlier), and this meant there was none left for lunch so he had to wait until he got home from school, after 4.30pm, to eat again.

Over the past year Sean had found himself outgrowing the remote, residential housing development where he and his family had been placed. He was bored, stuck out on a limb in a semi-rural area that was literally dead, with little to do except watch the elderly residents walk their dogs. He didn't feel very welcome there either; he had been put on a special contract by the housing association for being too loud, and relations were strained. With all the strict rules governing when he was and wasn't allowed to play in the communal spaces, Sean preferred to be in town, away from the housing development – the Nursing Home as he now called it – where he had more freedom, where he could hang out with his friends at McDonalds and play in the local skate park when the weather permitted. He had also started to really resent the cost of getting anywhere from the Nursing Home. He had once tried using his free school bus pass on a non-school bus service to get into town but was told he wasn't allowed, and although the driver had let Sean pay whatever money he had in his pocket at the time (which was 2p) in lieu of the full fare, he found the situation so embarrassing that he never tried it again.

Sean hoped they wouldn't have to stay in the Nursing Home forever, although he didn't know whether it was another temporary arrangement or more permanent. Along with the rest of his family, he wanted to be back near town, close to social networks, where school and hobbies would be in reach, where his mum could get to the shops to buy food without having to pay for a taxi, and where he could be near his dad. He had even thought about asking if he could live

with his dad so he was closer to the places that were important to him, but he had decided against this because he knew it would break his mum's heart into pieces.

So, while Sean and his family were living in the middle of nowhere, facing prohibitive financial and time costs associated with getting anywhere, and with Sean's need to be close to the football club, school and the leisure spaces that facilitated his development, autonomy and friendships, he had started to stay over with friends not only on the two football nights each week, but on other nights as well. And while his friendships may have benefitted from this set up, his relationships at home had become strained. In particular, Sean was finding things really difficult with his mum and one of his sisters, and he spoke about how intolerable things had become with both of them.

We have seen how housing instability can impact on relationships outside the household, as young people leave behind existing friendships and try to form new ones, and as they negotiate new relationships with wider peer groups and adults in new neighbourhoods and schools. But Sean's experience encourages us to question how housing insecurity might affect relationships within the home – wherever that may happen to be at any given point in time – and to ask how this interaction might be moderated or mediated by other factors. Clearly, intra-household relationships are affected by far more than housing insecurity – especially as young people reach the cusp of adolescence and orient more towards their peers, and if they and their families are dealing with multiple other challenges at the same time. Some of our securely-housed participants experienced significant difficulties in their household relationships too, and we are certainly not claiming on the basis of our data – or at all – that housing insecurity alone causes relationship breakdown within the household. Moreover, it could be that Sean's relationships with his mum and siblings, increasingly strained though they had become, were being preserved by his absenting himself from home to the degree that he was. But the question of whether and how housing insecurity might contribute to the breakdown of intra-household relationships, and how both of these are affected by other factors, are questions worth asking if we are to fully understand the effects of housing insecurity on young people's lives.

Sean was certainly not the only participant in our transient subsample to experience tension with regards to relationships at home. For some in similar positions in this regard, the connection between moving and relationship breakdown was unclear, as it was for Sean, a question raised by their narratives rather than answered through them. One girl, aged 11, also highly transient, spoke at length in each wave about the problems she experienced in her relationships with her mum and younger siblings. Although, like Sean, she didn't make a connection between housing insecurity and household relationships, the question hangs in the air over her transcripts – two processes running in parallel, possibly connected. But for other transient participants, the link between housing insecurity and household relationship breakdown was a little clearer. One nine year old girl spoke about the fear she felt around her older brother, who had become increasingly violent in the wake of their recent eviction and temporary

stay with grandparents (just two of a large number of moves in their lives). And a 12 year old girl, also highly transient, was experiencing difficulties at home since her family's recent move hundreds of miles away to a different part of the country, as the arguments between her parents had got so much worse since they had relocated. Now there was just shouting, always shouting, and she could never seem to get rid of it.

The importance of family relationships in childhood is well documented. From the earliest work of psychologists and other scholars of human relatedness, it has long been recognised that for the vast majority of children family provides the primary experience of relating to others and through this, to developing a sense of self. Bronfenbrenner (1986) notes that although influences on child development are multiple and complex, 'the family is the principal context in which human development takes place' (p723). In The Children's Society's programme of research into children's well-being, family relationships are consistently ranked highest on a list of factors contributing to children's quality of life (for example, see The Children's Society 2017a, 2018a and 2019). In A Good Childhood (2009), Dunn and Layard also document the importance of family – and in particular good relationships within the family – for ensuring that children get a good start in life and go on to lead happy lives further into childhood and beyond. Many scholars in the broad field of childhood studies echo the notion that the quality of family relationships is key to well-being in childhood (for example see Goswami, 2012) and that – conversely – family conflict, and especially parent-child conflict, is associated with negative outcomes such as suicidal ideation (see Shagle and Barber 1993) and other internalising symptoms, such as depression and anxiety (Brock and Kochanska 2015). Relationships within the family can also function as key satisfiers for the human need for love and belonging – one of the categories of need in Maslow's schema.

Our data suggest that, for some children, housing insecurity may entail not only financial or time-related costs, but costs in terms of household relationships. Sean had been moved far from the places and people of significance in his life, and this had given rise to a kind of transience-within-transience, as he boomeranged back and forth between home and friends' houses each week, now used to stopping out for four nights out of seven because it was the only way he could cling on to the things he held dear. And all the while he did this, his mum and sister had become more and more like strangers to him.

Lost in transience: Tiffany on social status

'They Lie, We lie.'

Peter Metcalf, They Lie We Lie (2002)

By the time of her final interview, Tiffany had also turned 13 and, it seemed, grown at least a foot taller. Over the past 12 months some things had changed in her life and others had stayed the same. She and her mum were still living in the same three bedroomed flat they had been moved to the previous year. While the flat itself and surrounding area were not that bad, Tiffany continued to hate the road the flat was on, and besides, there was still nothing to do. She was still miles from school and family, the library was far away, there were no funfairs or parks, and no friends living nearby, which made it extra boring. Tiffany's mum wanted to move even further out of the city, towards the quiet of the countryside, away from the rough and all the robbings, but it had been decided – Tiffany didn't know by whom – that their current flat was to be their permanent state of home, so they were stuck there.

Tiffany's mum had a new part time job as a care assistant. The pay was good and reliable. Before this she had been forced to stop working because of a problem with her neck, and sometimes she was in so much pain she was unable to move. Her heart problems continued on and off, but she was ok for now and fit enough to work for the time being. Tiffany's cousin was back in prison and was set to stay there for another two and half years. He had been released for three months but gone back in again, this time to an adult prison that was too far away for Tiffany and her mum to visit. Tiffany missed him. They were so close; she got on with him better than she did her own sisters, which she attributed to being a bit of a tomboy. Tiffany's mum was cross about him going back inside; it was expensive for her when he kept making the same mistakes, what with sending him money for snacks and phone calls all the time. Tiffany's nieces were growing up and Tiffany and her mum continued to see quite a bit of them. Tiffany's other sister was pregnant, and Tiffany was looking forward to having a new nephew later in the year.

Tiffany was happier at school in Year 9 and, unlike before, keen to stay on – although doing so still entailed a long bus journey from the three bedroomed flat where she and her mum were living. She would leave the house before 7am and go straight home at the end of the school day, no longer so interested in hanging out with friends at the local shopping centre because homework had become

more important to her. If there were tests coming up, she would revise when she got home, or sometimes fall asleep if she was really tired. Tiffany reflected on how things had changed at school since she had started secondary two years previously. She hadn't liked the way the teachers had treated her, but she now acknowledged that she had been a bit cheeky and thereby played a part in the difficulties she had experienced. She had tried to change on occasions but for a while felt like she was stuck with a reputation that preceded her; the teachers had remembered her as badly behaved and continued to treat her as such, without looking at her actual behaviour. But with a lot of hard work she had changed, showed them that she wanted to learn. And it was paying off; these days they were helping her more. She no longer minded the school rules and was ok with the pressure that came from the teachers pushing her – she knew it was because they wanted her to get high grades and achieve well. She had decided to become a doctor.

When Tiffany thought back to her housing situation over the past couple of years, it occurred to her that when she had spoken to us about it initially, during our first meeting, she had not been entirely honest. She had told us that she and her mum had been living in a two bedroomed flat, but this was not the case after all. They had been living in a hostel. Tiffany had said it was a flat because living in a hostel sounded really bad, and she hadn't wanted to tell anyone. Something to do with the death of a relative, a set of keys and a landlord who had had enough of it all meant that Tiffany and her mum had been placed in the hostel temporarily, and ended up staying for over a year.

Why had Tiffany felt the need to hide this from everyone – including us in her first interview – to conceal the truth about her residential status, in turn leading us to deceive readers in our account of her story? And what had enabled her to reveal the truth two years later, in our final meeting? Residential status is closely connected to social status – a potential means of achieving, or maintaining it. And the acquisition of social status is a fundamental human need and the drive to secure it powerful – for Tiffany overriding even the values of honesty and truthfulness that she had championed so enthusiastically during our initial discussion. As conceptualised by Maslow, the human need for esteem entails both self-esteem and being held in esteem by others. In 2015, Anderson et al conducted a review of the empirical literature on social status in order to evaluate the hypothesis that the desire for it is a fundamental human motive. Defining status as 'the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference individuals are afforded by others' (p574), these scholars concluded that the 'relevant evidence suggests that the desire for status is indeed fundamental', irrespective of differences in cultural background, gender, age and personality type (ibid).

There are various ways in which Tiffany's housing situation would have undermined the social status she so clearly needed. First, most broadly, living in poverty or on a low income – especially in a context of wealth – is a source of considerable shame and stigma (for example, see Lister 2004, Chase and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo 2014 and Walker 2014). And while people may not readily

recognise or conceptualise themselves as 'poor', the knowledge that being poor is not socially acceptable is widespread, and people – our participants included – go to great lengths to distance themselves from it. Second, there is increasing stigma surrounding social housing in general (for example, see Power and Provan 2018), and Tiffany was aware that she and her mum fell into the category of people in receipt of housing support (even if she didn't know the correct terminology to describe this). Third, and perhaps most pertinent in this case, the stigma surrounding temporary accommodation and homelessness in particular is significant (McCoy and Hug 2016). These layers of stigma – the multiple ways in which Tiffany's social status was compromised – are what had led her to lie.

For young people experiencing housing insecurity, social status is not only compromised by hostel living, or even just by virtue of living in social or rented housing, or in a low income household more generally. Frequent residential moves can in and of themselves affect social status, as each time a relocation takes place young people must start all over again, crafting reputations through which they can be well regarded by others. A few of our participants showed a heightened awareness of this phenomenon. One 12 year old girl, who had moved each time we interviewed her, spoke about a recent relocation hundreds of miles across the country to a seaside town, and all the problems this had created for her. One of the key issues she was grappling with at the time of her last interview was trying, but thus far failing, to build a good reputation in her new area. She had made friends with another girl whom she subsequently discovered was hated by everybody, and our participant's reputation had been tarnished by association with this outcast friend. So, she had been trying desperately to find other ways to get noticed, though not always very constructively – she had recently been reprimanded for vaping in class.

So it is clear why Tiffany had lied about her housing situation; doing so was a defence against the loss of social status that accompanied it. But what had enabled her to reveal the truth, in the end? Why had she 'confessed' in our final meeting with her? During the years between her first and last interviews, two things of relevance had come to pass: first, Tiffany and her interviewer had built up a significant degree of rapport and trust, and this appeared to enable Tiffany to talk about things that she might otherwise have struggled to divulge. Second, during those two years Tiffany had learned that most of her friends were in the same situation she was in. Given the newly revealed ubiquity of hostel dwelling within her immediate social circle, she had stopped worrying about how her circumstances might stigmatise her because so many people she knew were in the same situation. With the knowledge that she did not inhabit this stigmatised space alone, Tiffany's status had been restored – everyone was on an equal footing in this regard, despite the persistence of the wider layers of stigma around homelessness, temporary accommodation, social housing and poverty more broadly. And herein lies the irony in Tiffany's story of truths and lies: it was the ubiquity of such an unjust and stigmatised set of circumstances – poverty, a welfare system unfit for purpose, a social housing supply that falls short of demand, and increase in insecure private rented accommodation and a rise in temporary, hostel, residence – that allowed Tiffany to feel less stigmatised. The thing that had caused her shame, eroding her sense of status and compelling her to conceal the truth had perversely, in its prevalence, become the very thing that had restored her social standing.

Ali and the uncertainty of housing insecurity: The curse of hope

‘Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors, A thousand windows and a thousand doors: Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.’

W H Auden, Refugee Blues (1939)

When we interviewed Ali for the last time, he had turned 11. His smile seemed to have grown even more than the rest of him, he had moved to another new home with his mum and brother, and he had started secondary school. Although he had felt quite shy at the beginning of school – the building was big and unfamiliar, there were so many doors, the learning was harder, and the teachers were stricter – he was getting used to it. He had felt sad leaving primary; he missed his friends and found it hard to keep in touch, partly because their schedules were different and partly because he didn’t live that near them anymore, plus he didn’t have unlimited credit on his phone so he couldn’t just call people whenever he felt like it. His phone was slow and people took the mickey, telling him it was small and laggy, but Ali tried not to care.

Secondary school was expensive. You had to pay for the uniform, the trips, and the planner if you lost yours. If you wanted a special badge for your blazer – which looked better than without – then you had to pay for that too, like £1 or £2, so Ali didn’t have one of those. Usually he had enough money though, because he would pay for things step by step, not for everything he needed all in one go. So, if he broke his ruler and his pen, he would buy one of them first then the other one later on so they wouldn’t be stuck together in one big price. And he had no-brand cricket boots to make it cheaper, not Puma or Adidas ones. Ali was getting £1 a

week from his mum for pocket money, sometimes more if she had it. His mum was no longer working at Lidl, because she had finished studying at university and started a job as a care worker. They still saw Uncle sometimes, about three times a month, and Ali had recently asked him whether they were rich, medium or low. Uncle had said they were in the middle of low and medium and that had felt good to Ali because he was learning all about how things were in the world, and about their place in it.

If Ali had been given a magic wand, he would have done two things for his family. First, he would have given them more money, because it seemed that life was easier with money. People with money had more fun, more opportunities and more things to do. And people weren't rude to rich people, only to poor people, just walking past them on the street not even looking at them, just walking past as if they weren't even there. So if he could, Ali would give his mum higher wages. She worked hard and it wasn't fair that she was getting less money than other people working the same number of hours. His mum's new caring job was a really big one – she had to clean people, help people with their everyday living, wash them and feed them, and that was about as important as working for the royal family, so she really did deserve to be paid more money. The second thing Ali would have given his family, if he could, was a bigger house. For the time being though, he had started enjoying the new home he had moved to with his mum and brother in the last year, although it had taken quite a while to feel like this and, once again, he wasn't 100% sure if they were going to be there permanently.

Moving had been eventful. They had waited a long time – longer than they were supposed to. The cardboard boxes had piled up in the previous place, as his mum had searched and searched and searched for somewhere to stay. She had got really stressed, and then one day, when they were walking past some flats nearby, they got talking to a man who worked in them, who told them that one of the flats was going to be available soon and that they could have it. Ali and his mum had felt so relieved – finally the search was over.

But when they had gone back to speak with the person in charge, they were told that the man they had spoken to before was only a gardener who didn't know what he was talking about, and the flat was being done up for a different set of tenants. The whole thing had been a big mistake. Ali and his mum had been devastated. Ali's mum had returned to her search, looking online, going to the estate agents and the housing office, worrying and stressing, until eventually something else had come up. While the new-new place was also close to Ali's secondary school, his younger brother had to move primary schools because the journey to his previous one had proved too long.

Ali and his mum had talked about their new flat in advance of moving in and Ali had started getting an idea in his head of how it was going to be. He knew it would have three bedrooms, and he had started looking forward to the day when he would no longer have to share a room with his brother. But as it turned out, he didn't get a room of his own because one of the bedrooms was unusable. Ali had also hoped to have his own bed in the new place and not have to share one with

his brother again, because doing that meant his brother would end up on the floor with no covers and Ali would get into trouble. In the event though, neither of them had beds for a while, but instead slept on the floor until his mum could get them bunk beds.

Before they had moved, Ali had also fostered other hopes and dreams: that they would get some new things for their new flat, like crockery and furniture; that the dining room his mum had spoken about would be one of those grand rooms with a long table, fancy chairs and paintings on the wall; that he and his brother would be able to play really good games of hide and seek because the new place would be unknown and surely big, given it had three bedrooms. But in the end these dreams had come to little: they couldn't get new things for the new flat because they couldn't afford to; the dining room was tiny, not even a proper room, just a tiny table and no chairs or paintings, and they didn't really play hide and seek because the new place was unfamiliar and a bit scary. What they had ended up with was not at all what Ali had seen in his head. He had felt disappointed, but he had kept this to himself.

By the time of this final interview, Ali had come to think that his new place was actually quite fabulous; it took him only nine minutes to walk to school, a boy in his year lived nearby and his dad was always helping Ali's family, taking his younger brother to school and lending them his vacuum cleaner after Ali had accidentally broken his mum's one hoovering up a sock. But it had taken him a while – and a lot of hopes dashed – to get to this way of thinking.

Some of our other transient participants experienced something similar to the disappointment that Ali had felt at times – looking forward to all the good things that would come their way in advance of a move, then feeling deflated when these didn't manifest. One 11 year old boy, during his first interview, told us about having moved six times so far, and how each time had entailed a sense of anticipation followed by a realisation that where they had moved to was no better than previous places – infested with rats (dead and alive), damp, mouldy and uninhabitable. The only exception to this had been when they had moved in with his Grandma, but this had only lasted for a few months because it had been too crowded and expensive for his nan (and anyway he hadn't been too keen on her collection of teddy bears from the 1990s). Another transient participant – a 13 year old girl who had moved with her family to a different part of the country between the second and third waves of our data collection – told us in her final interview of the huge disappointment she felt with the realisation that the better life that she and her family had tried to build had not materialised.

Certain research suggests that optimism can function as a protective factor in maintaining or building well-being. For example, in their overview of studies into optimism, Conversano et al (2010) find that 'there is evidence that optimistic people present a higher quality of life compared to those with low levels of optimism' (p25). They conclude that 'optimism may significantly influence mental and physical well-being by the promotion of…adaptive behaviours and cognitive responses, associated with greater flexibility, problem-solving

capacity and a more efficient elaboration of negative information' (ibid). At the same time however, other research (much of which focuses on the field of work and employment) suggests that the effects of unfulfilled hopes – or unmet expectations – may be detrimental for well-being (for example see Walker and Mann 1987, Nelson and Sutton 1991, Taris et al 2006, and Irving and Montes 2009). Of particular relevance to the topic of housing insecurity, studies of resettlement schemes have found that those with unmet expectations around relocating experience an increase in depressive symptoms (for example, see Xi and Hwang 2011). Psychological studies within the relatively nascent subfield of disappointment (an emotion that is often studied by researchers exploring decision making processes), also suggest that disappointment can have detrimental effects – reducing prosocial behaviour and increasing feelings of powerlessness, inertia and goal abandonment (Zeelenberg et al 2000 and Martinez et al 2011). While it has been claimed by some that disappointment is a healthy, positive emotion important in children's development (for example, see Taylor 2011), it has also been argued that chronic disappointment is linked to a greater risk of physical and emotional difficulties such as a higher frequency of headaches, gastrointestinal problems and stress (Ashworth 2018).

All the while these fields of research develop, yielding paradoxical results or pointing to the need for further studies using more refined variables in their data collection and analyses, Ali clung stubbornly to the hope that one day he and his family would enjoy a permanent state of home – one with enough rooms and preferably a garden, one that was nice, somewhere convenient, where they could stay as long as they liked. When he looked to the future now, Ali imagined himself a little taller, perhaps with facial hair and a deeper voice. He saw a cricketer, maybe, hopefully. Yes, he saw Ravindra Jadeja, the famous Indian cricketer who had been really poor and then done so well in cricket that he had become rich and able to support his whole family. And that was all Ali wanted really, to have the means to look after his mum, and give her the home he knew she deserved.

Coping: Madison grows a garden (or, the importance of putting down roots)

‘To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul.’

Simone Weil, The Need for Roots (1952)

Madison was 14 when we met her for the final time. Along with her mum and siblings, she was still living in the same temporary three bedroom house she had moved to just before her first interview two years ago – the one that was too small for her and her family, but which they had been told to decorate and keep nice in order to be eligible for transfer to a four bedroom place. This was the longest that Madison had ever lived in the same house. Alongside her newfound residential and household stability, other things had also remained constant for Madison over the past year: her nan was still there for her – she continued to come over every weekend and sometimes during the week too – and they remained close. She still treated Madison like her baby; Madison would always doze off next to her, her head on her nan’s shoulder as they sat on the sofa watching telly on a Saturday afternoon. She was still close to her friend Macey too, who remained a true friend; she didn’t judge Madison, just tried to understand things from her point of view.

While certain elements of Madison’s life had remained stable over the past year, other things had changed. Money had become even more of a struggle, and this had started to bother her. It wasn’t necessarily that there was less money around, but that she needed more in order to do the kinds of things that her friends were now doing – popping into town at the weekend, going to McDonald’s once in a while. Previously she had left most of the money worries to her mum, but now that she was older and more independent, people were always asking her to join them on their outings, and these usually required money. It pained Madison to stand by and watch as her friends went into town at short notice with

£10, sometimes £20 in their pockets, handed to them by their parents to spend as they pleased. But Madison wasn't a greedy child, and she knew that whatever her mum could give her was what she got. Aunty Erica, Aunty Carol and Nan gave her money whenever they could, and that helped.

School had got even stricter this year. People would get detentions just for asking to go to the toilet during lessons, or for not having pens or pencils or the right book with them. Being in Year 9 was a bit like being a middle child: you got respected by the younger ones but disrespected by the older ones. You had to make yourself known, and doing this in the right way was hard when you were in the middle. Madison had chosen art and business studies as her main options for GCSE. Her previous plans – first to become a care worker, then to become a secretary – had given way to a dream of going to the local college to train as a nail artist and do an apprenticeship at Aunty Carol's nail bar in town. She thought business studies would help her achieve this. For Madison, the source of true happiness had also changed: in her previous interviews, the thing that had made her most happy in the whole world had been sausages – the smell of them, the taste of them, in a sandwich, with bacon, on their own – but now she thought that what made her truly happy was when other people were happy because of her. And sausages, still.

Things between Madison and her mum had been difficult in the last year. They had argued a lot, like a lot, and it had been hard for a while at home. But Aunty Erica had come over and sat down with the two of them to talk, and after that things had got better – Madison and her mum were really close again and would now watch telly and drink tea together. During the past year Madison had found out that her mum had been suffering with really bad anxiety. Her mum hadn't wanted to tell anyone because she'd been scared that people would judge her, but Madison and her siblings, along with Aunty Carol, had persuaded her to go to the doctors. The day she went had been such a wonderful day; everyone was there to give support, and since that visit, Madison's mum hadn't been so stressed as she used to be, struggling to understand things or listen and pay attention. Instead she was more calm and more there; now able to take Madison and her siblings out to the park with the dog, or sometimes into town to get something to eat at KFC. Madison loved seeing her mum happy. She knew it must have been hard for her to ask for help, but she'd got it sorted and that had made a big impact on everyone's life. Madison felt so proud – her mum had come so far.

While Madison and her family remained in the same too-small house, her feelings about it had begun to change. She liked the place now that they had decorated it and made it all nice ready for moving on, this time with more than just a lick of paint in the kitchen by way of décor. And she loved her bedroom now it was all done up. It was the nicest room she'd ever had. Yes, all of this had been expensive – they'd had to buy carpet, paint, furniture, a few ornaments for the bedrooms and things like that – but it had been worth it: it had started to feel like home. And this feeling of being settled had extended far beyond the four walls of the house, stretching into the garden and then beyond, out to the neighbourhood,

before it came back again to rest in Madison's deepest sense of herself.

In all the other places they had lived, Madison and her mum had never done anything to the garden. When they'd had one, it had always just sort of been there, untended. But now they were going to plant bushes and flowers and help them to grow and decorate it with outdoor furniture and ornaments. This was the first time ever that Madison had thought about such things, and the first time ever in her life she had dared to put down roots. There is an inherent optimism in the act of planting a garden; at the very least, an optimism that seeds will grow or bushes will flower, and for Madison the new-found optimism that she might be around long enough to see the fruits of her labour, perhaps for many seasons to come. Looking back, she realised that in all the other places she had lived, she had never actually let herself get attached to anything or anyone, because she had become so accustomed to leaving, always leaving. But now – for better or worse – they didn't seem to be going anywhere, and Madison could think not only about planting a garden, but finally about letting herself know the people around her and letting them know her too. She had never allowed herself to do this before. And doing so, she had discovered, helped her. It helped her mentally, in her mind. It made her feel better in herself.

Other young people in our transient subsample told us of experiences that reflected Madison's in their emphasis on settling, or rooting activities, and the importance of these to them. Not all of them entailed gardening (although two other transient participants spoke specifically about looking forward to not only having, but 'doing' the garden in their next places) though most entailed the acquisition of material possessions and through this spoke to the 'comfort of things' (Miller 2008) and their function in constituting home. All seemed to suggest a deeply felt desire to settle, to anchor themselves physically, and through this emotionally. For some, this anchoring, or rooting, was sought through involvement in the planning and execution of decoration in communal spaces within a house, while for others the focus was squarely on their own space, their bedrooms – or portions thereof if they shared with siblings – and all the small ways in which they might constitute these; choosing paint colours for the walls, selecting duvet sets from discount homeware stores, buying and putting up posters, purchasing cheap furniture that brought comfort and convenience, and acquiring knick-knacks to put on display. These acts were small but significant; through them young people living in limbo, otherwise untethered to this house or that, to this community or that one, could begin to establish something that resembles 'home', and through this a sense of themselves and their place in those homes and wider neighbourhoods.

Blogging about his book *Home: A very short introduction*, philosopher Michael Allen Fox (2016) notes that:

'Humans have clearly evolved to be home builders, homemakers, and home-nesters...for better or worse, by presence or absence, [home] is a crucial point of reference – in memory, feeling, and imagination – for inventing the story of ourselves, our life-narrative, for understanding our place in time, [and] a vital link through which we connect with others and with the world and the universe at large.'

And it was nothing more than a sense of home that our transient participants seemed bent on achieving through their rooting activities – a home that could hold memories, plans, and the stories of themselves.

The fact is that Madison did not know if she would be moving again any time soon. Her sister had started talking about moving out to live with a boyfriend, and if this happened then they would no longer need a fourth bedroom, so it was possible that Madison, her mum and brothers would be able to stay put in their little three bedroomed house, if they were allowed. For now, she just seemed to enjoy feeling at home in her home. She made no reference to the irony that all the rooting and settling practices that she and her mum had engaged in had originally been designed to enable them to move on, to become eligible for a bigger property. And neither did she talk directly about the symbolism of their gardening plans, the way these implied a belief, or hope, that not only would the flowers and bushes take root and flourish, but that they might too. But she did talk more generally about her need to plan, to have a plan, to have things planned, as a way of keeping the anxiety at bay. Madison knew that things tended not to turn out the way people expected them to in life, but she really liked to have a plan up her sleeve just in case. It helped to calm her worries about all the things unknown to her, all the things she could not control.

By the time of her final interview, there were two things that Madison would have changed given the opportunity. First, she would have changed the way people thought of and viewed each other, stopped people being so judgey all the time. And second, she would have given her family more money. As in previous years, not a lot more because then they'd have gotten all greedy and forgotten what was important. But she'd have given them a little bit more; enough so they would always be stable and able to afford the important things in life; food, clothes, a little bit of fun and a place they could call home.

Reflections

The normalisation of unmet needs

Housing insecurity and the impairment of needs satisfaction

In this report we have told the stories of four case study participants and their experiences of housing insecurity. Through these stories we have explored some of the under-recognised challenges faced by transient young people in England today, and we have pointed briefly to the ways in which housing insecurity can prevent them from meeting their fundamental human needs. Discussion now focuses on this issue in a little more depth.

As noted earlier, in our methodological note, Maslow identified five main categories of human need, the satisfaction of which he thought necessary for optimal human functioning: physiological needs; safety needs; needs of love and belonging; esteem needs; and the need for self-actualisation. Taking each of these categories of need in turn (though not assuming the hierarchy among them that Maslow does), below we highlight some of the ways in which housing insecurity can prevent them being fulfilled.

Physiological needs

Housing insecurity can prevent young peoples' physiological needs being met, for example through the cost of frequent moving and the related lack of money available for purchasing essentials, and through the disruptions to sleep that can accompany moves into new and unfamiliar dwellings. In Sean's first story, we saw how moving costs money. Moving a lot costs even more money. When families move because of housing insecurity, they are by definition already living on low incomes, and the extra financial burden of frequent house moves can add further pressure to household budgets that are already strained beyond viability. And the more strained a household budget becomes, the less likely it is that the physiological needs of those within the household can be met. For a household budget to satisfy a family's physiological needs, it would have to adequately cover the costs of shelter, food, water, sleep and clothing for all household members, and in Sean's story, as well as in others', these needs were not always able to be met. While Sean always had a roof over his head, he knew his mum could not cover the rent for it, he was often hungry, and at times had been unable to sleep properly because of overcrowding. While housing insecurity was not solely responsible for the poverty Sean and others experienced, it compounded it, shrinking even further the amount of money available to properly satisfy all of his physiological needs. For Sean's transient peers, the money spent on frequent, forced moves was also money that would not have been available for spending on essentials. And overcrowding in temporary homes – alongside the sense of strangeness

that often accompanied arrivals in new homes – meant that for them too, sleep was sometimes elusive. In these ways, housing insecurity can prevent young peoples' physiological needs being met.

Safety needs

Housing insecurity can prevent transient young people from meeting the need for physical and psychological safety. Each time a move takes place (often from one deprived neighbourhood to another with high levels of 'antisocial' behaviour), young people are required to assess the threats to their physical safety in new areas, and what these mean for their daily practices within them. Expounding his ideas on safety needs in his theory of human motivation, Maslow refers to the importance of predictability, orderliness and routine in instilling a sense of safety in children, and to the way in which 'confronting the average child with new, unfamiliar, strange, unmanageable stimuli or situations too frequently will elicit the danger or terror reaction' (1943, p8). In Tiffany's second story we learned how she had felt scared in her new neighbourhood, and how she had been forced to contend with a number of threats to her physical safety since moving there. While this is not a phenomenon that affects only transient young people, they are particularly vulnerable because more often than not each move entails a leap into the unknown, the unfamiliar and the potentially unsafe.

In each of Ali's stories, we saw how housing insecurity can entail uncertainty for young people, which in turn can lead to experiences of anxiety, to problematic physical conditions within the home, and to chronic cycles of hope and disappointment. And each of these effects in turn can impede the satisfaction of psychological as well as physical safety needs. In Ali's first story, he had worried over what lay in store for him and his family (in the context of having to leave their flat but not having a home to move to) and the uncertainty had led him to imagine the worst. By his second story, having moved – but only to another temporary place – the physical environment at home had become cluttered with cardboard boxes, as the family had partly unpacked, was part way through packing again, and was consequently living in a state of physical limbo that was inconvenient and potentially hazardous. By his final story Ali was living in yet another place and had felt a keen disappointment that his new home had not been all he had imagined – and hoped – it would. All of this would have functioned, to some degree, to prevent Ali from feeling safe – safe from the imagined threats of the unknown, safe from trip hazards at home, and safe in the knowledge that hope and optimism pay off. Housing insecurity can detract from satisfying the human need for safety, both in its physical and psychological senses.

Love and belonging needs

When young people are made to move home frequently, they can also be prevented from achieving an optimal sense of love and belonging. Their neighbourhood friendships – as well as the 'weak ties' that bind them to places and people (Granovetter 1973) – get disrupted. In Madison's first story we

saw how housing insecurity can affect young people's friendships in this way, requiring them to engage in (costly) tactics to maintain old friendships and build new ones. While in Madison's words, moving a lot can mean having friends near enough all over town, it can also compromise a sense of belonging and connection. Only in her final interview, when she was at last beginning to feel settled, was Madison able to reflect on the way she had hitherto not allowed herself get close to anyone, get to know anyone, or allow anyone to get to know her, because she never knew how long she was going to be around.

In Sean's final story we also learned how housing insecurity can potentially come at a cost to relationships within a household. When family relationships become strained in the context of insecure or unsuitable housing, satisfying the need for belonging can require looking elsewhere, beyond the family-household unit. For Sean, in light of the location of his allocated home far from the things and people he enjoyed – and in light of the parallel deterioration of household relationships – meeting the need for belonging and connection was increasingly achieved by spending time outside the home. While increased, voluntary orientation towards peers can be a natural part of adolescent development, for Sean it seemed not so much a choice as a necessity, prompted by the way in which housing insecurity had come to play out in his life, placing the family far from town and relationships among them under a great deal of strain.

When young people relocate frequently, their sense of belonging to a particular place gets disrupted, as each time they move they are uprooted from what is familiar in their immediate vicinity, and are thereby unable to undertake the 'large number of routine activities and everyday experiences, as well as more significant life events' that Gordon Jack (2010, p757) notes are necessary for developing place attachment. Tiffany's first story – and the way she told it, vacillating over how to answer questions about 'home' – demonstrated how her experience of housing insecurity had left her without a sense of where she belonged. While Maslow's theory of needs refers to belonging in a social sense, a sense of belonging in geographical terms, is also crucial, as this contributes to a person's developing sense of self (Jack 2010). The need for belonging in a geographical sense had not been met for Tiffany by the end of our fieldwork period. Housing insecurity had seen her first uprooted from the place she felt she belonged, moved somewhere temporarily, and in the end placed somewhere that she felt no attachment to, forestalling the chance for her to satisfy the fundamental need for belonging through geographical means. Housing insecurity can prevent young people from fulfilling the fundamental need that human need for belonging, for what philosopher Simone Weil mooted, in the early 1950s, was the most 'important and least recognised need of the human soul' – the need to feel rooted.

Esteem needs

Housing insecurity also impedes the satisfaction of what are labelled the 'esteem' needs in Maslow's schema.

The need for esteem refers to both self-esteem – that is, having a high evaluation of oneself – and the esteem of others – that is, being held in high regard or respected by others, or enjoying a respected social status, and the two are mutually reinforcing. Housing insecurity can function to hamper meeting both of these. By definition, housing insecurity carries the stigma of poverty, as well as the potential stigma of social housing and, in some cases, of homelessness and residence in temporary accommodation. Living in any of these situations can be stigmatising, and living with all three of them – as many of our transient young people had – can be triply stigmatising. Housing insecurity can be experienced by a young person, like Tiffany, as such a mark of disgrace that they will go to considerable lengths to try and conceal it, even undermining their own strongly-held values in the process. While social status, or being held in esteem by others, is not only achievable through one's housing circumstances, the latter are a key means by which status can be achieved in contemporary British society. Those whose housing circumstances do not make the grade, can be left with a deep sense of shame and low self-worth, their need for esteem unfulfilled.

Self-actualisation needs

Housing insecurity can also hinder the process of self-actualisation, another of the fundamental human needs within Maslow's theory. Moving frequently is time-consuming. The process of searching for somewhere to live (especially in a wider culture that has demonised people on benefits and thereby reduced the pool of available accommodation, and especially when searches are restricted by school and parental work locations), takes time. Sometimes an unfeasible amount of time. Shedding, or downsizing, possessions takes more time. Packing takes even more time. Unpacking takes yet more time. Making new dwellings functional takes more time again. And getting to and from all the places of importance from a new home far away takes time and takes its toll on young people. With less time available in their lives, young people living with housing insecurity have less time to satisfy all of the human needs in Maslow's schema. But in particular, as we learned through Sean's story, it can prevent the human need for self-actualisation from being met. Within Maslow's theory, the need for self-actualisation can be understood as the desire to become the best that one can be. For Sean the need for self-actualisation was largely met through football – he was working hard to build a career as a professional footballer and dedicated so much of himself to the pursuit of this dream. Yet he had been forced to forego the chance to play the game at a regional level because his most recent house move meant he could not get from his allocated home to the regional club grounds in time for training. The way in which housing insecurity manifested in his life meant that in this sense, he was prevented from being the best he could be.

For Sean, for Tiffany, for Ali, for Madison and for others in our transient subsample, growing up with housing insecurity impeded the satisfaction of at least one, often more, and sometimes all of these fundamental human needs.

The normalisation of housing insecurity

One of the most striking aspects of gathering the data used for this report was not only what our transient participants told us – of how they had got used to living with various aspects of housing insecurity, had come to expect the worst, how it was just life really, or no big deal (until it was over, when they acknowledged that actually it had been) – but the way in which they often recounted their experiences of it. With a few exceptions, young people's accounts of 'moving, always moving', getting housed permanently in places they didn't want to be, or living in limbo somewhere in between, were told quite matter-of-factly, almost impartially at times, with little in the way of animation, which may have indicated a sense of injustice or indignation about their circumstances. No drama, no sense that things might be different. Their narratives of their housing histories seemed to trip off the tongue as if they were stories of games in the playground, leaving researchers wondering, at first, whether they really were hearing things right, and if they were, whether these were indeed stories of significance that spoke to a chronic denial of human needs satisfaction.

This is important, because it reinforces the way that housing insecurity can become normalised for those experiencing it, albeit still stigmatised and felt negatively. It shows how transient young people can get so used to moving, always moving, and through this can become so accustomed to circumstances that compromise the satisfaction of their human needs that it all just becomes a routine, accepted part of their lives.

From the data described in this report, we can identify three key – interrelated – senses in which this normalisation operates. First, housing insecurity becomes normal for a young person when it has been a fact of life for them growing up, or in recent times. It becomes normal in the sense that it becomes a familiar experience, known through personal and household circumstances. Things that might at first – or from the outside – seem shocking or out-of-the-ordinary, become normal for those who experience them enough. For those whose poverty-driven, involuntary house moves are spread out over a number of years, moving itself may theoretically be less likely to feel normal, but even in the absence of actual house moves, other factors comprising housing insecurity are often still present and persistent – unelected fixity, the parental struggle (and inability) to pay rent, the threat of eviction, living with short term tenancies. When these things have characterised young peoples' experiences of growing up, it is simply what life is like.

Second, housing insecurity can become normal for transient young people in the sense that it is felt to be expected, given who they (feel they) are. When young people grow up acutely aware that their family is

in receipt of benefits or earning low wages, when they know they rely on Government assistance to pay rent, when they know that they and their families are considered undesirable tenants, when they live in areas they know are deprived and abhorred, when they understand that they might get evicted and become homeless and have to live in a teeny tiny box or be put out on the street with all their belongings, they also come to understand that this positions them in certain, undesirable ways. They can feel judged by others, looked down on, ignored, somewhere between low and middle in the social hierarchy – not 'normal' compared to a broader set of people whose parents command more money, can more easily afford to pay for housing, do not rely on Government help and do not have to entertain the thought of becoming homeless. There is a sense in which housing insecurity can become normal for those who already feel as though they themselves are not.

Third, housing insecurity can become normalised in the sense that young people themselves can try to normalise it in a bid to stave off the stigma attached to it, or to its constituent elements. As transient young people grow older, perhaps becoming exposed to a wider set of experiences against which to compare their own, they can feel the full force of the stigma that housing insecurity (or aspects of it) carries. But by emphasising its commonality – as Tiffany did with hostel living in her final interview – they can try to make themselves feel, or seem, less aberrant. There is normality in numbers. Scholarship on the psychosocial and relational aspects of poverty has already begun to incorporate the notion of othering – the process by which the non-poor often view and treat the poor as different and inferior, denying them their humanity and subjectivity (Lister 2019). Our research points to a psychosocial process through which the poor, and in this case transient, can themselves approach their own predicaments; actively promoting these as normal (though knowing they are not), in an attempt to diminish the shame they feel.

In the words of nurse, novelist and memoirist Christie Watson (2019):

> 'It is amazing, and sad, what can become normal.'

It is amazing, and it is sad that children can grow up in one of the richest countries in the world, in contemporary times, with a lack of security around something as fundamental as housing, and get used to it, become accustomed to it, incorporate it as part of their normality, at the same time as becoming aware that it is not 'normal' for the majority.

What is perhaps even more amazing, and even more sad, is that this housing insecurity which seems to have become a normal part of growing up for some young people exists in a context where legislation exists to prohibit it. All the while housing insecurity has been affecting our transient participants and other young people and their families in England – putting their well-being at risk and disrupting the satisfaction

of their human needs – the right to secure housing has been enshrined in international legislation. Specifically, the United Nation's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which the UK has signed and ratified, and which has been in force since 1976, is a core treaty protecting the rights of children, as well as adults, to adequate housing. Article 11 of the treaty protects the right to housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, and it states that everyone has the right to 'adequate…housing, and to the continuous improvement of housing conditions' (CRAE). The Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has interpreted Article 11 of the ICESCR as extending beyond a basic right to shelter, to a right to 'live somewhere in security, peace and dignity', and has issued two General Comments setting out the meaning and scope of this. It makes clear that the right to housing should not be interpreted in a restrictive or narrow sense, and it clarifies what comprises adequacy in relation to housing: housing that provides legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. Unfortunately, although this international human rights legislation contains the means by which housing insecurity might be prevented, it is not directly enforceable in UK courts of law.

Housing insecurity impedes the satisfaction of fundamental human needs in young people, and goes against the right to secure housing that has been enshrined for them in international law. Whichever way one looks at it – from a rights perspective, or a needs perspective, or even from a perspective of well-being, education, health, behaviour, psychology, or sociality, housing insecurity takes its toll. It is amazing and it is sad, and so too is the way it is has come to be shrugged off as 'just life, really', 'no big deal'.

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Endnotes

[1] https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1897545/Cashing_in_-_How_a_shortage_of_social_housing_is_fuelling_a_multi-million-pound_temporary_accommodation_sector.pdf

[2] https://www.ft.com/content/afead1e2-3143-11ea-9703-eea0cae3f0de

[3] https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1343390/unsettled_and_insecure.pdf

[4] Defined by Shelter (as a rough guide) as no more than 35% of a household's net income: https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2015/08/what-is-affordable-housing/

[5] https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239700/crisis_housing_supply_requirements_across_great_britain_2018.pdf

[6] https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2014/12/does-affordable-rent-really-mean-the-end-of-social-housing/

[7] https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/child-poverty-facts-and-figures

[8] https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/ifs-expect-major-surge-child-poverty-decade

[9] https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/causes-poverty

[10] https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/broken-benefits

[11] For example, the term housing instability – more likely to be used in public discourse – has no standard definition, but has been defined with reference to 'having difficulty paying rent, spending more than 50% of household income on housing, having frequent moves, living in overcrowded conditions, or doubling up with friends and relatives' (Kushel et al 2006). The term housing insecurity – also more likely to be used in public discourse – also has no standard definition, but where used is sometimes done so with specific reference to living with short term tenancies within the private rented sector (for example see Shelter 2017), and sometimes with reference to the combination of a lack of housing affordability, eviction, forced moves and 'un-elective fixity' (Preece and Bimpson 2019). The term residential transience – more likely to be used within academic literature (in particular in the United States) – also has no agreed definition, but speaks more clearly to the process of moving rather than to housing problems in and of themselves (which may or may not result in moving). Here, some take a quantitative approach and define it according to the number of times a person has moved in their lives (for example Brown et al 2012). Others take a more qualitative approach, defining it according to the type and nature of moves; these being forced, in particular due to short-tenure occupancies (Parker-Cotton and Schwartz-Barcott 2016). The term residential mobility – also more common within academic literature and in the United States – also has no agreed definition, but again places emphasis on the issue of moving rather than on housing issues (which may or may not result in moving), with some reserving it for moves of the forced type noted above, and others using it to refer more

broadly to frequent moving, including from positions of wealth, choice and empowerment (for example, see Hango 2006).

[12] For example see Brown et al 2012, Busacker and Kasehagen 2012, Ziol-Guest and McKenna 2014, and Parker-Cotton and Schwartz-Barcott 2016.

[13] Further, as part of what Sheller and Urry (2006) label the 'new mobilities paradigm' in the social sciences, the past couple of decades have seen an outpouring of studies – among geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and population and migration scholars – into the residential movement of people the world over, with residential moves of those in the developing world often seen as part of escaping poverty, or poverty reduction (Coulter et al 2013).

[14] We recognize that using Free School Meal entitlement as a proxy indicator for poverty has limitations; it is conservative in that it does not capture those in low income households who are not eligible for the qualifying benefits. However, we have used it because it provides a practicable indicator for sampling purposes in this study.

[15] It is important to note that many of the studies we reviewed for this report are concerned with separating out the effects of moving per se from the effects of other 'stressful circumstances' that often accompany moving. Because of the way we define housing insecurity – as frequent, reactive moves inherently linked to poverty and related stressful circumstances – we are not concerned with separating out different factors associated with frequent moving and isolating their effects from those of moving itself. Rather, we are interested in the effects of moving in conjunction with these stressful, poverty-related circumstances, and the effects of just moving – if these are shown to be significant, independent of other factors. Thus, where relevant, we report on findings before regression analyses (the separating out of different effects) have been performed, as well as on the findings of independent moving effects.

[16] This includes research using alternative terms housing instability, residential mobility and residential transience, where the substantive issues reflect those experienced in our study.

[17] Where it does not, or where effects are found to be positive, this turns out to be because scholars are researching the effects of mobility (moving frequently), rather than housing insecurity in the way we have defined it, with poverty and related factors inherent in the definition.

[18] At this stage, parents of potential study participants were given the opportunity to opt their children out of further involvement in the study

[19] An approach popularised by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (building on the work of philosopher Gilbert Ryle) to denote the use of detailed explanations of human action.

[20] For example, see the Social Research Association's (2020) training module Narratives and storytelling in qualitative research.

[21] For example, see Goodson and Gill's (2011) article The Narrative turn in Social Research.

[22] For example, see the LSE's (2018) blog The Impact of Social Sciences.

[23] For example, see Davies et al (2016).

‘*Moving, Always Moving* presents the stark reality that housing insecurity has become normalised and an accepted part of the society in which we live. Using sound and rigorous methodologies, the report describes the impact of having to move from ‘home’ to ‘home’ on the lives of young people, and the coping strategies they adopt. It will be of interest to policy makers and practitioners, and of wider interest too.’

Professor Rachel Forrester-Jones
Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Policy (CASP)
University of Bath

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