

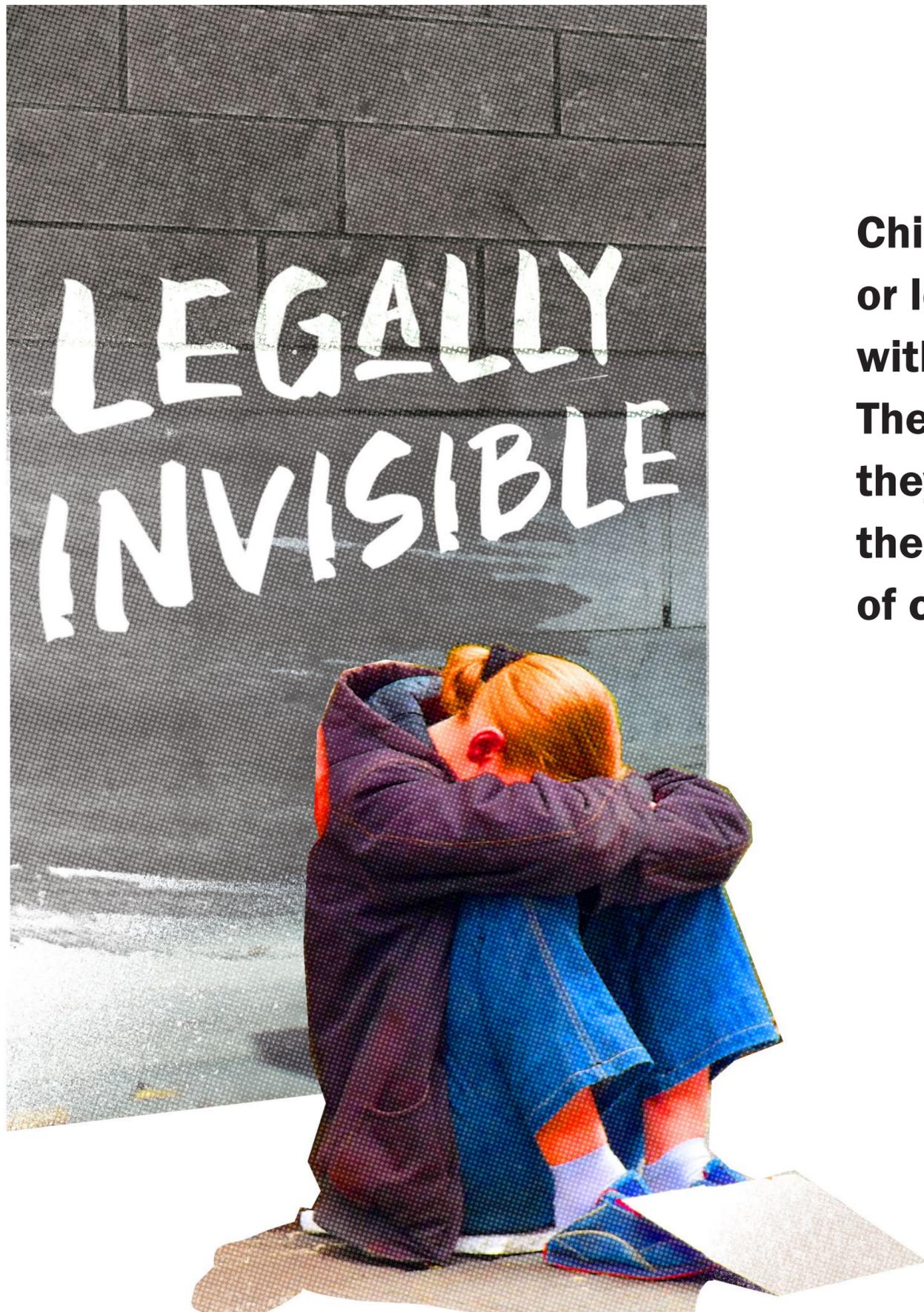


**Improving health  
and minimising risks faced by**

# HOMELESS YOUTH



Erasmus+



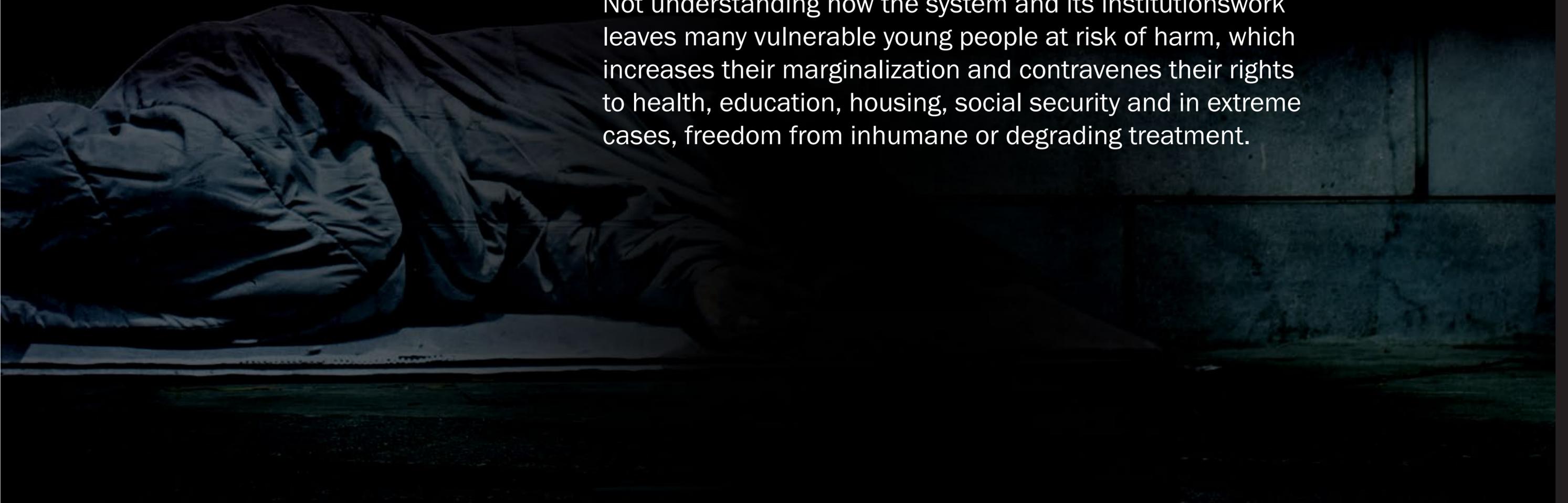
**Children and teenagers who are homeless or leave foster care to live on the streets are living with a great sense of urgency and immediacy. They are often legally invisible that means that they do not hold their legal papers and IDs, making them hard to access any medical or other types of care or social services.**

It is also unknown who is authorized to make important decision as their legal guardian. In critical life-threatening situations some decisions can be made by doctors, but accessing drug treatment or receiving harm reduction services is hardly ever supported as essential to the health and welfare of these vulnerable young people.

In many European countries (incl. beyond EU borders)  
teenagers leaving the care of the state ( prisons, foster care etc.)

**ARE LEFT ON THEIR OWN, AFTER SPENDING YEARS  
ISOLATED FROM MANY PARTS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.**

Problems with reintegration include matters such  
as obtaining ID documents, applying for social housing  
or obtaining access to appropriate health care provisions.  
Not understanding how the system and its institutions work  
leaves many vulnerable young people at risk of harm, which  
increases their marginalization and contravenes their rights  
to health, education, housing, social security and in extreme  
cases, freedom from inhumane or degrading treatment.



# RESULTS

## **of the workshops done by YODA member organizations**

Based on experiences of our youth activists we created guidelines to support work with, and to encourage a better understanding of the experiences of homeless youth:



## LEGAL PAPERS

Treating a person with respect and dignity is an important starting point for change and empowerment. Homeless youth have lost trust in most significant people in their lives, and the social system that has failed them.

Safety and freedom in making decisions can become **urgent** during **out of business hours** during the night or early morning) when they are most desperate and vulnerable. Support systems are often weak or non-existent at those times. The **availability of helpline**, or other service provisions during these times, especially in winter are vital.

Homeless and other at risk youth should have be able to access legal counseling to help them obtain their legal papers and IDs in order to access different services crucial for their wellbeing such as medical treatment, social security, access to educations and employability programs.



# TRUST

**Provisions such as drop-in center or day centers should be available with targeted programs that address their need to access employment or housing, skills and employability improvement programs, medical care, drug and sexual education programs and other informal educational programs that will significantly increase the quality of their lives. Programs for homeless or youth at risk need to be targeted to their needs and provided in age appropriate and accessible language.**

**The drop in center or day center needs to be an integrated part of the community that the community believes in, this will help with reintegration and social interaction, as well as social capital. Collaboration between the “drop-in” and the broader community can be mutually beneficial for the community and at risk youth. Making this connection and including local communities in these provisions is important.**

**By offering support at the most difficult times, the drop in center can be successful in fostering a sense of trust that is often missing, helping their transition to more stable relationships with basic health and social service institutions, whilst assisting in connecting them with government institutions.**

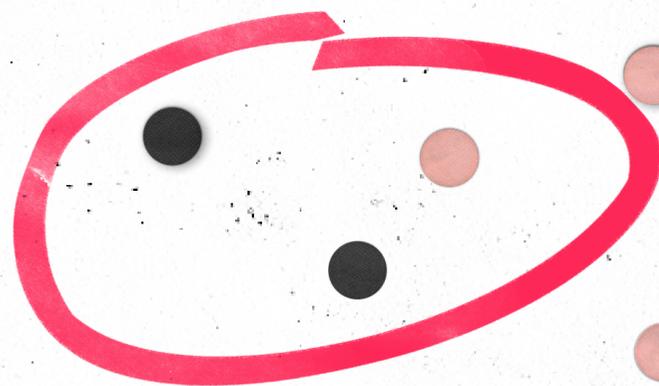


**BASIC HEALTH**

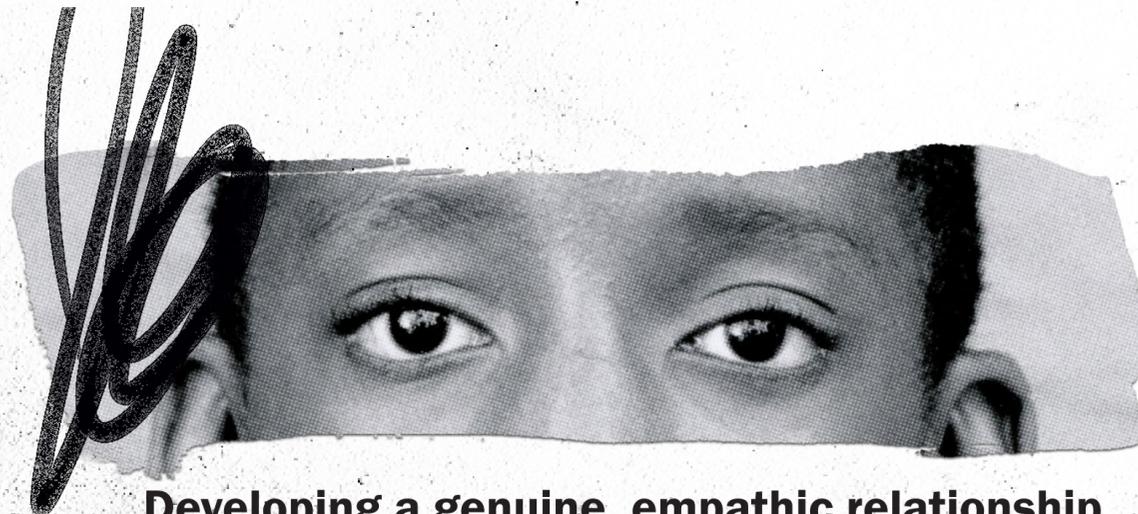
**& SOCIAL SERVICE**

Offer them basic daily hygiene needs such as laundry and hot shower possibility. Sometimes small things such as cutting nails and doing haircuts can do more for them to feel better about themselves than other things. Provide them with clothes and toothpaste and soap. They will stop for a meal, to wash their clothes and to visit.

REINTEGRATION



ACCEPTANCE



Developing a genuine, empathic relationship with acceptance and respect for homeless and other at risk youth, free from judgement

**IS A POWERFUL  
MECHANISM FOR CHANGE.**

Drop in centres should provide recreational activities, such as board games, cards or other types of leisure options (including access to the internet and other forms of media). This will support reintegration and build capacity of youth to form meaningful social relationships, which are important aspects of healthy development.