

## SUBMISSION FROM QUARRIERS

Quarriers is one of Scotland's most established social care charities, with more than 150 services supporting 17,000 vulnerable people throughout the UK to transform their lives.

We work with vulnerable young people throughout Scotland, supporting around 270 young homeless people at any one time through 8 services. These services comprise residential crisis units, supported accommodation and intensive support and are regarded as successful models of good practice in engaging hard-to-reach young people.

Homeless young people are among the most marginalised and deprived members of Scottish society. The young people we support experience a multitude of issues, but the one thing they have in common is the distance and barriers to employment which they face.

Quarriers believes that the young people we support deserve the same opportunities and choices as everyone else. We strive to boost their self-esteem and aspirations, and help them to break the cycle of homelessness and vulnerability in which they are trapped. We recognise that one of the main routes out of homelessness and vulnerability is employment.

### **Way 2 Work**

The Way 2 Work scheme supports vulnerable young people to develop their employability skills and ultimately bring them closer to the labour market.

Launched in 2011, it is a trans-European partnership, brokered by the Scottish Government, between Quarriers and Werkcenter, a Dutch company that specialises in providing vocational training and improving employability for disadvantaged people throughout Europe. Together, we have designed the Way 2 Work project, adapting Werkcenter's internationally acclaimed holistic approach to meet the specific vocational and personal development needs of homeless young people in Scotland.

By helping to address the full range of emotional, social, cultural, educational and economic issues they face, the project aims to improve employability, broaden horizons and build essential life skills for young homeless people far from work.

In 2011, Quarriers and Werkcenter were successful in receiving funding from the EU ECORYS Leonardo da Vinci fund to support four groups of Scottish young people to go to the Netherlands, and two groups of Dutch young people to come to Scotland.

### **The experience**

Way 2 Work provides the young people, aged 18-25, with a fully supported work placement in the Netherlands, during which they gain a range of valuable vocational and life skills. The nine week placement is tailor-made to their individual needs, talents and goals, and provided in a sector relevant to their job interests and prospects at home. Werkcenter provides coaching throughout to support learning,

recognising that the young people have fragile self-confidence and are unused to the dynamics of the workplace. The placements offer real work, but in a way that minimises stress and maximises potential for holistic personal, social and vocational development.

Quarriers' Children and Young Person's Inclusion Team are responsible for the recruitment and training of young people undertaking the programme. The process is as close to a real life recruitment experience as possible, requiring the young people to submit applications before a set closing date, attend an interview in front of a panel, and go through the normal selection process. Those recruited are required to undertake an intensive six week preparation programme, including training sessions and language classes.

In the Netherlands, the young people are supported by Quarriers staff in and outwith the workplace to ensure their overall wellbeing, reinforce positive experiences, and manage any issues that might arise. Staff also support the young people to share accommodation, using the group living experience to develop essential interpersonal, coping and practical skills. During leisure time, they are encouraged to take part in healthy and stimulating pursuits.

By taking the young people away from the myriad negative influences and worries they have at home, the project allows them to focus on positive development within a like-minded group. It also broadens their life experience and horizons, opening their eyes to different experiences and cultures, and encouraging greater maturity and tolerance. The very act of going abroad presents a formidable challenge, and its achievement leaves a lasting impression on the young people's confidence and sense of ability.

The placement provides the young people with the opportunity to gain qualifications that are recognised throughout the EU. It also gives them a new sense of determination, personal ability and opportunity, increasing their opportunities to access work and training on their return home.

*"Quarriers and Werkcenter gave me the fire to move on, get some behind me and earn money to enable me to live comfortably and do the things that I had wanted to do in my life. Thanks to the programme, I am at that stage in my life, and am ready to move on."*

Way 2 Work participant

## **Outcomes**

Quarriers supported two groups of six young people to go to the Netherlands between October 2011 and April 2012. Of the 12 young people to travel out to Holland, 10 successfully completed the nine week programme. Two young people returned home early due to homesickness.

The achievement of the young people completing this very challenging programme has been immense. All of the 12 young people achieved the Millennium Volunteer Award in Excellence for over 200 hours in volunteering. 10 young people achieved certificates for Health & Safety, Food Hygiene, Europass Language and CV Certificates, all of which are recognised throughout the EU.

The majority of the young people have returned with a real drive to get into employment and training, and will continue to be supported by Quarriers to achieve this goal. Of the ten young people who completed the programme:

- Two have applied for sessional posts with Quarriers and will be attending interviews for this on the 11th July 2012
- One is planning on returning to the Netherlands having been offered full time employment there
- One is working for Barnardos
- One is hoping to start their own business in interior design
- One is working in youth work in the local community
- One has been recruited as a Volunteer with Quarriers Youth Inclusion Project, and will be undertaking an SVQ3 in Social Care in July 2012
- One is actively seeking employment in catering
- Eight are still closely involved with Quarriers' Youth Inclusion Project, and provide peer mentoring to other young people we support.

Feedback from the young people has been extremely positive, with all agreeing it has had a profound impact on their self confidence.

*"I don't just want to work now, I need to work."*

Way 2 Work participant

### **Next steps**

Way 2 Work is part of a longer engagement strategy Quarriers has with young people to help them build the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to transform their lives. Through tailored, sustained support from our Learning and Development Initiative (LDI) and our Young People's Inclusion Team, we can ensure Way 2 Work placements provide a foundation for continued development of the young people's skills, and a springboard to employment or further training.

We have now applied for a second tranche of funding under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which will help give more homeless young people the chance to take part in this uniquely rewarding experience.

One downside of the project, however, is the lack of opportunities for real work when the young people are back in Scotland. In order to maintain the momentum and enthusiasm of the participants, it is essential that they have the opportunity to take up a place in employment or training when they return home.

In Scotland, no scheme comparable to Werkcenter currently exists. Werkcenter is in discussions with the Scottish Government on how to transfer its experience, and the Way 2 Work project forms a vital part of this process of trans-European learning and exchange.

Quarriers believes that the development and promotion of a Scottish scheme similar to Werkcenter, giving vulnerable young people personalised support and coaching within a workplace that understands their distance from employment, would make a valuable contribution both to the Scottish Government's youth employment and tackling homelessness ambitions.

Quarriers hopes that the Equal Opportunities Committee recognises the positive contribution of the Way 2 Work project in supporting young people out of homelessness and into employment, and considers ways in which such opportunities could be extended to more young people in Scotland.

Kate Sanford  
Policy Manager  
Quarriers  
5 July 2012