

## SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH THROUGH-CARE AND AFTER-CARE FORUM

The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum is a national body representing the interests of young people leaving care and those who support them.

We are committed to raising awareness and promoting good throughcare and aftercare practice for young people leaving care.

By consulting with and representing the views of young people, practitioners and service providers, we are able to identify and take forward relevant issues and influence positive developments.

Our vision is to achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people leaving care.

Care leavers are over represented amongst their peers in homeless statistics and although much work has taken place within local authorities and voluntary organisations to combat this, the prevalence of young people from a looked after background accessing homeless services is still far too high.

### **What do young people tell us?**

The following is an excerpt from research undertaken by the Debate Project around the topic of leaving care, transitions and housing.

- You should have to stay in care until you are 18 unless there is strong evidence to prove otherwise.
- There should be more intensive support
- More supported flats – these should not be all in one block as young people may be targeted.
- Care leavers should move into flats with older care leavers – Peer support
- Care leavers should get to know people they are going to live with before they move in.
- There should be visiting support – everyday – workers should also stay over if need be.
- The focus of support should be more on emotional/mental stability not practical skills.
- Those who work with young people in care should make them feel believed in/cared about/listened to and understood.
- Workers should be proud of you and tell you that they are.
- Workers – need more of them and they need more training.
- Separate housing for care leavers not staying in accommodation with people who aren't care leavers.
- Young people should not go down homeless route.

The following is an excerpt from a piece of work undertaken with the support of the Forum. It brought together young people and decision makers to look at the issues care leavers faced and to make recommendations for improvement.

‘All of the young people who attended the planning sessions agreed that homeless accommodation should NOT be an option to care leavers. These young people felt that they weren’t told what other options were actually available to them. They didn’t know how to effectively manage door control, who *not* to and who *to* let in. Many young people felt they had no support when it came to budgeting for food, bills and health costs (dentists & opticians).’

They made the following recommendations regarding accommodation:

- There should be Stand by furnished flats so we don’t become homeless
- Need a space to stay before being out on my own
- We should NOT have to live with drug and alcohol users in Homeless Hostels
- Can you keep a bed open in a residential unit if we need to come back for support?
- We want to learn to live independently but with support

Further information on both the gathering of views of young people and full reports of work we have undertaken, are available from the Forum.

### **Existing Good Practice.**

#### *Supported Lodgings Schemes*

The Forum hosts a supported lodgings focus group which brings together practitioners from across Scotland to share practise and raise awareness of the positive outcomes this model of service delivery has for young people leaving care. Research indicates that many young people leaving care in Scotland have found it difficult to achieve a successful transition to independence.

Findings identify that young people leaving care have often been previously subject to disadvantages that are detrimental to their future social and emotional wellbeing.

The Forum is keen to stress to the benefits for young people leaving care to this model of service delivery. These include:

- Consistent adult support
- A period of stability in which to take advantage of educational and training opportunities
- Modelling – learning how different households work and how they deal with mistakes

- An opportunity to test and develop the day to day skills needed to survive in the world
- Variety – carers come in many shapes and sizes as do young people – backgrounds can match
- Normality – local resource which allows for anonymity – reduces stigma of being labelled as mad or bad which is so often the layperson’s understand of being in care
- Continuity (in some cases) conversion from fostering to Supported Lodgings allows for continuity of existing foster care arrangements.
- Cost - it is considerably cheaper to offer a young person a supported lodgings placement than other options.

While costs may vary, this is a guide to the costs per week of these housing options in Fife.

Bed & Breakfast	£315.00
Hostel Accommodation	£238.43
Supported lodgings	£155.00 & £205.00*
Scatter flats	£158.86

\*Enhanced Rate

Young people tell us that supported lodgings make them feel:

- Responsible
- Independent
- Able to learn how to be independent
- Normal
- Safe

This is in direct contrast to other accommodation options available for young people leaving care including hostels and SSTs which make young people feel:

- Depressed
- Lonely
- Scared
- Angry

Some young people felt that they would be better off living on the streets than living in hostels, B&B or some inappropriate tenancies within areas of deprivation.

**Supported Lodgings schemes are not a universal service in Scotland and not available to young people leaving care everywhere. Real investment in the**

**development of schemes such as these will lead to a reduction in the number of care leavers becoming homeless.**

More information regarding this model of accommodation is available from the Forum.

#### *Workforce Development*

The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum engage with the workforce in a range of different ways all of which continue to share practise and contribute to the reduction of youth homelessness.

We have extensively trained local housing officers and other 'corporate parents' over the past three years, raising awareness of the issues facing care leavers.

We host an annual conference, bringing together the workforce, showcasing best practise and enabling discussion and innovation.

We host good practise on our website and members network newsletter, keeping the workforce up to date with developments and current practise.

#### *Work with Young People*

The Debate Project is a peer education project which brings together young volunteers from across Scotland who have a looked after background. They use this shared experience to develop and deliver workshops, raise awareness and influence policy. Examples of the work they have previously been involved in is available here:

[http://www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk/docs/managefiles/Debate Project Life After Care Conference 2009 Report.pdf](http://www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk/docs/managefiles/Debate%20Project%20Life%20After%20Care%20Conference%202009%20Report.pdf)

#### *Co – Production*

We have been involved in a number of co – production projects. Bringing together young people and workers to evaluate and review current services. This model of working brings in a developmental element to services and uses the direct experiences of young people to shape service design and delivery. Our work in this area is an exciting development for the Forum and is ongoing. More information about this work is available from the Forum.

**Continued support of the work of the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum will contribute to a reduction in youth homelessness**

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