



# Peer Education Programme

The Housing Needs Team at Wellingborough Council offer housing advice and assistance to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. One of the major priorities of the Council is Improving Life Chances of Young People – with this in mind they have developed a Peer Education programme to educate young people about the realities of homelessness and living independently.

The programme consists of:

- A brainstorm of what the word 'homeless' means to the young people.
- Details of celebrities who have been homeless.
- Shocking homelessness statistics.
- A Money game looking at the cost of living independently vs welfare benefits.
- Discussion about why young people become homeless with real life examples.
- Peer Mentors – young people who have experienced homelessness tell their story and answer questions.
- Discussion about how to deal with parents and problems at home.
- Brainstorm about who can provide help and advice to young people.



# Peer Education



## The Local Need

We saw 142 homeless 16 and 17 year olds between January 2008 and October 2009. Of these, 16 were not able to be prevented so we accepted a duty to accommodate them. This showed a need to encourage young people to ask for help sooner to allow time to prevent them becoming homeless in the first place.

We met with the local secondary schools as well as parents, all of whom expressed a need for students to be more aware of the consequences of bad behaviour and the realities of homelessness.

We also carried out surveys with 169 14 year olds in Wellingborough to discover their views on the reasons for homelessness, the best age to leave home and where they can go for help and advice. The results illustrated a need to inform young people of the realities of becoming homeless, ways in which to prevent homelessness and agencies that can help.

## The Vision

- Young people approaching us before crisis point to allow for early intervention and more planned Move On's into independent accommodation.
- Professionally accredited mediators working with the young people and their families to reduce conflict and where possible prevent homelessness.
- Because of the early intervention and prevention methods we'll see a reduced number of young people we accept a duty to accommodate.

## The Challenge

- Developing and delivering the programme within current resources.
- Finding the appropriate forum in which to capture the young people.
- Presenting the information in an interesting and informal way.
- Identifying and training appropriate peer mentors to help deliver the programme.

## The Results

Initially the schools had allowed us a 30 minute assembly time with the whole year group to deliver the programme. However, when presented with the planned content, all 3 secondary schools wanted us to spend 2 hours with each class, one school even altered their timetable to allow us to begin with their students sooner!

It's too early to see an impact on our statistics however we've received incredibly positive feedback from all the teachers and students we've worked with. All three schools continued work around homelessness after our visits and would like us to roll the programme out to the younger students. Hatton School has already booked us to take part in their Every Child Matters day in July 2010 with Year 9 students.

We have already seen a change in the peer mentors who recount their experience of homelessness with each class – their confidence has grown immeasurably in the past 3 months while helping us.

Additionally our partnership working with the local education services has gone from strength to strength since beginning the programme.

## Where Next?

The programme will be continuing in the 3 secondary schools to complete delivery to all Year 11 students, after which it will be rolled out to Year 10 students in the summer term.

We also plan to extend delivery of the programme to Wollaston Secondary School, excluded students and Friars Special Education School after Social Services disclosed that they see many of these young people presenting as homeless.

We will continue meeting with parents, tackling their concerns and misconceptions about homelessness.