

Case study 91

Hillcrest Housing Association

Pre-Tenancy Project

What are case studies?

Case studies share what people and organisations have learned from delivering or developing a project or programme. They can help you to see what has worked on the ground and can give you ideas about how to tackle problems. They can also signpost you to people and organisations you may want to talk to.

Key contact: **Joy Watson**
Wider Role Co-ordinator

Tel: 08456052367
E-mail: jwatson@hillcrestha.org.uk

In a nutshell

The Financial Pre-Tenancy Service has been running since 2007 and is a partnership between Dundee City Council's Homeless Unit and Hillcrest Housing Association. It focuses on enabling people to sustain tenancies and preventing repeat homelessness by preparing individuals for the transition from temporary homeless accommodation to a permanent tenancy. It also aims to enhance the homeless person's capacity to manage their lives, including their finances.

The issues

Clients have problems sustaining a tenancy in the long term. On average 20-25% of clients seen have been homeless more than once. Clients are generally unaware of how to manage their finances or how to budget for a home. They are also unaware of the benefits and funding which is available to help support them.



Connecting you to evidence, expertise and excellence

The approach to the issues

The service works through financial education, informing homeless people of the costs involved in running a home and how to budget. It works with clients to maximise their income and assist with benefit applications and accessing bank accounts. It also makes them aware of additional funds i.e. Community Care Grants, Budgeting Loans and financial services such as the credit union. As well as giving advice on subjects like managing debt and energy efficiency and where to get new furniture for their flat. It also refers clients on for further help and support from other organisations as required.

How it got started

The service first worked with the Lily Walker Centre and Dundee City Council to contact those who were registered as homeless and are likely to be offered a tenancy in the near future. This included those currently in temporary accommodation and those who had recently received an offer of housing from Dundee City Council. Staff also conducted awareness sessions in local prisons in partnership with Criminal Justice Department for prisoners due to be released. Referrals were also received from a wide variety of partner organisations. All clients contacted were offered one to one sessions and ongoing support.

Evidence of success

This service has been running successfully since 2007.

- In a recent survey of over 700 clients of the project we found that:
 - 85% of clients report having stayed out of rent arrears
 - 100% of clients were satisfied with the service
 - 100% of clients say they would recommend this service to someone in a similar situation
 - 92% of clients state that they are financially better off as a result of the service
- During 2008/09 the service dealt with 394 clients. 100% of those who have been re-housed are sustaining their tenancy to date.
- Through accessing this service the clients have benefited from the following financial gains:
 - £187,712.75 through backdated Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments, Disability Living Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Community Care Grants, furniture referrals, charity applications and food parcels
 - £30,000 of savings to clients through access to Social Tariff.

Lessons learnt

- Don't underestimate the support needs of your clients. The service estimated that each individual client would need to be seen by the worker 1-2 times. However, in practice the support needs of the clients have been far greater.
- Be ready to adapt to changes out with your control. For example, Community Care Grant applications which would be accepted as meeting the criteria in 2008 are now rejected and almost every case is going to review or appeal.
- Be able to plan your time well. Recent changes in the benefit system have made the work more time consuming, for example, applications for Disability Living Allowance for clients who are currently on Incapacity Benefit (ICB) now triggers a review which involves another lengthy in-depth form.

One great thing

"The service helped me to get all the essential goods I needed for my flat, and helped me spread out my money – I now always have money left at the end of the week. If I hadn't had the help I would probably have an empty flat. I can't thank you enough." (Service User)

What next

- This service works. We need to spread the word and secure funding to expand not only in Dundee but in other local areas.



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Scottish Centre for Regeneration, Scottish Government, Highlander House, 58 Waterloo Street, Glasgow G2 7DA

Tel: 0141 271 3736

E-mail: contactscr@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.partnersinregeneration.com

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