

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

HAVING AND KEEPING A HOME: STEPS TO PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE – FOLLOW-UP

SHELTER SCOTLAND COMMENTS ON SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE RECEIVED TO DATE

Shelter Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Equal Opportunity Committee's 'Having and Keeping a Home – 2014 Follow-Up' draft report. In general the report is strong and highlights the important themes that are currently relevant to youth homelessness. The report clearly backs up the research that underpins Shelter Scotland's Safe & Sound partnership approach and highlights that the breakdown of family relationships are the main cause of homelessness for young people. However, there are a few minor points that we would ask the Committee to consider.

- The document would benefit from a section on the crucial role of support in both preventing homelessness and in helping young people out of homelessness into a sustainable tenancy. Support is referred to in several sections but the report would benefit from a separate section to highlight it, expanding on s.127. This section should include the value of Support and Mediation combined – Safe and Sound would be a good Case Study. There are significant benefits to backing up and reinforcing mediation with practical and emotional support.
- It is good to see mention of tenancy sustainment and the importance of developing appropriate independent living skills. A young person is far more likely to sustain their tenancy if the bridge between them and their family is strengthened even if this means a move out of the family home.
- The document gives a lot of focus to care leavers. Although this is obviously a significant and important group, it is also important to mention the significant struggles that young homeless people from a non-care background face, many of whom also will not have a supportive family background. Care leavers will be entitled to Who Cares? and Through Care After Care support, but there remains a real shortage of provision for homeless young people who have no family or professional support available. Running away/youth homelessness is a symptom of underlying issues whatever the family background of the young person and research has shown is a pre-determinate of risk of homelessness in later life .
- In response to s.71, it is worth noting the Network Approach, where the Support Worker acts as a "life-coordinator". This approach is used when appropriate by Shelter Scotland's Safe and Sound team. The approach enables the young person to confidently deal with the myriad of complicated elements involved in setting up a new home and supports access to the more specialist agencies (e.g. money advice).
- It may be helpful for the Committee's report to explicitly make the link between the isolation young people can face on moving into their own tenancy (s. 72) and the possibility of shared tenancies as a response to this (s. 79). With a structured approach to shared tenancies (e.g. an enhanced "reality check" session that the

Safe and Sound service deliver) this could be a very innovative and effective approach; “Shared tenancies might be supportive for some young people” (s. 89).

- We are surprised that the report does not include any recommendations or call for any actions from the Scottish Government. This may be because of the status of the report. However, it would still be good to see what outcomes the Committee would like to see from this work.
- At s. 44 we would be grateful if you could exchange one of the words in the quotation of Emma Dore, to reflect the intended meaning of the statement. Please change “the application of the guidance” to “the application of the housing options approach”.

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