

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet Member (Housing)

**DEPARTMENT:** Department of Community Services

**DATE:** 14 July 2009

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Head of Housing  
(Keith Watts, Tenancy Services and Mediation Manager)

**SUBJECT:** Youth Homelessness Schools Promotion

**WARD/S AFFECTED:** All wards

**FORWARD PLAN REF:** N/A

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 Advise the Cabinet Member (Housing) of the progress of the HowzTalk service in promoting youth homelessness in the Harrogate District, including the undertaking of secondary sessions in schools.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the extension of the post of HowzTalk Coordinator until 31 March 2010.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member (Housing) agrees to the extension of the post of HowzTalk Coordinator until 31 March 2010.

**3.0 RECOMMENDED REASON FOR DECISION**

- 3.1 The post of HowzTalk Coordinator has enabled the production of the Behind No Doors film, and the establishment of awareness sessions in secondary schools and youth centres. The extension of the post until 31 March 2010 will ensure that the full potential of these approaches in terms of homelessness awareness and prevention can be realised, particularly in secondary schools in the Harrogate District.

#### **4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION**

4.1 The contract of the HowzTalk Coordinator is not extended beyond 30 September 2009. If the contract is not extended the Council is unlikely to be able to realise the full potential of the youth homelessness awareness project, (including the award winning Behind No Doors film), to help address youth homelessness in the Harrogate District.

#### **5.0 BACKGROUND**

5.1 The HowzTalk Coordinator was appointed on a temporary contract, 30 hours a week from January 2008 until 30 September 2009.

5.2 The prime responsibilities of the post have been to:

- Establish a programme of sessions in schools and youth centres to highlight the issues related to youth homelessness
- To recruit and supervise volunteer mentors to provide a wide range of support for young people in Crashpad.

5.3 Funding for the post of HowzTalk Coordinator has come from two sources. From a Communities and Local Government (CLG) grant of £20,000 for school awareness and by way of a £20,000 Community Fund grant from North Yorkshire County Council for increasing support for young people in Crashpad. The funding from both these sources has now been fully used.

#### **6.0 HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS SESSIONS**

6.1 In establishing a programme of sessions in schools and other places where young people meet, the HowzTalk Coordinator chose an inter-agency approach and established a steering group of agencies dealing with young people including 4Youth, Extended Schools, Connexions/TRAX, North Yorkshire Education and schools. The Group agreed that an approach led by young people to promote the issues around homelessness would be the most beneficial.

6.2 The HowzTalk Coordinator pursued an arts and drama approach to involve young people in promoting the issue of youth homelessness. Ultimately the arts and media group "Inspired Youth" were chosen to make a film about youth homelessness in Harrogate. With a core group of 5 young people supported by Foundation Housing, 4Youth and the HowzTalk team, Inspired Youth produced the much acclaimed film "Behind No Doors".

6.3 Many photographic images, and forms of art were produced alongside the Behind No Doors film. One of the photographic images (now produced as a poster) won a Big Issue in the North award. The 5 young people have won a Kids Count award for Best Contribution to Youth Issues. The film has also received considerable favourable press coverage and undoubtedly the release

of the film has already considerably raised the profile of youth homelessness in the District.

6.4 Sessions, led by the young people, have been held in Rossett secondary schools (2 sessions), the Pupil Referral Unit, Jennyfield Styan Centre and TRAX. The evaluations undertaken have shown:

- 94% have a better understanding of youth homelessness
- 78% know more about the agencies that can help.

For full details of the evaluations undertaken see Appendix.

## **7.0 CRASHPAD MENTORS SCHEME**

7.1 The HowzTalk Coordinator has successfully established a volunteer mentor scheme, with the support of Barnardo's, in order to support young people who are in Crashpad accommodation. This support is additional to that provided by Barnardo's Crashpad and HowzTalk and includes a wide array of tasks including providing informal "someone to talk to support", help with resolving benefits and debts through to the practicalities of finding and then moving onto other accommodation.

7.2 13 volunteer mentors have been recruited and have received training on the role and safeguarding etc from Barnardo's. The volunteers' expenses have been met from the Council's funds.

7.3 The support given has generally been one or more the following reasons:

- Help young people to find private rented accommodation
- Provide transport
- Budgeting
- Claim benefits
- Seek employment
- Tidy accommodation
- Regularly checking that the young person is OK

The outcomes have included

- 12 young people were helped with the arrangements to move to new accommodation
- 5 people were helped by given transport of their belongings to other accommodation
- In 3 cases private rented accommodation was found with mentor help

7.4 The mentors scheme has provided invaluable additional support for young homeless people in Crashpad or being supported by HowzTalk. However it is felt that the priority for use of the monies from the County Council should be to focus upon the schools sessions

7.5 Discussions are currently underway with Barnardo's Crashpad to ascertain whether they are able to continue with the Crashpad Mentors Scheme without council financial support.

## **8.0 EXTENSION OF HOWZTALK COORDINATOR POST**

- 8.1 It is felt that it is desirable to extend the post of HowzTalk Coordinator for a further six months up to 31 March 2010. In doing this the main priority of the post would be to maximise the number of secondary schools participating in the awareness sessions regarding youth homelessness.
- 8.2 During July 2009 all secondary schools in the Harrogate District will be sent a copy of the Behind No Doors film, a resource pack and some posters made by the Inspired Youth and the young people involved in making the film. The DVD also now includes suggested session plans produced with the help of Inspired Youth and North Yorkshire Education (Social Inclusion).
- 8.3 The sending of this material to schools will give the opportunity to encourage them to undertake sessions in the coming academic year. Draft sessions will also be given to schools which may enable them to lead their own sessions using the resources available.
- 8.4 The primary aim of the sessions has been to make young people aware of the realities of being homeless and living without family support. The resource pack to be given to schools gives an overview of housing in the District, a summary of the Council's responsibilities to homeless people and contact details for agencies who can help.
- 8.5 North Yorkshire County Council's Children and Young People's Service has offered to make £12,500 available for 2009/10 which could be used to continue with the school sessions.
- 8.6 The Tenancy Services and Mediation Manager is currently exploring possible ways of funding the sessions beyond April 2010. It is hoped that to some extent the schools, themselves, will lead on undertaking future sessions concerning youth homelessness.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The cost of extending the HowzTalk Coordinator post until 31 March 2010 will be fully covered by a grant of £12,500 made by North Yorkshire County Council. This grant will be paid into the ARCH Mediation budget, which is a General Fund service.

## **10.0 CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The youth homelessness awareness project has already proved beneficial in raising public awareness in the Harrogate District of youth homelessness. However an extension of the post of HowzTalk Coordinator is required to maximise the effect of the project to all members of the schools community.

**OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Keith Watts if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at Kennion Road Housing Office by telephone on 01423 551623 or by Email – keith.watts@harrogate.gov.uk**

**SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT / POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy	✓		
B	Environment	✓		
C	Social Equity			
i)	General	✓		
ii)	Customer Care / People with Disabilities	✓		
iii)	Health Implications	✓		
D	Crime and Disorder Implications	✓		

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.