

Safe & Sound

Working to prevent homelessness and strengthen relationships between young people and their families across Tayside and Fife

Shelter
Scotland



RELATIONSHIPS
counselling, mediation
& family support across **SCOTLAND**

Young people aged 16-24 represent 40% of the homeless population in Tayside

Data for Angus, Dundee City, Fife and Perth and Kinross councils from the Government's Operation of the homeless persons legislation in Scotland:2009-10

Nearly half (48%) of these young people were living with their parents before becoming homeless

Data for Angus, Dundee City, Fife and Perth and Kinross councils from the Government's Operation of the homeless persons legislation in Scotland:2009-10

**Relationship breakdown,
typically with parents or
step-parents, is the most
common reason for
homelessness among this
age group**

Scottish Executive: Vulnerable Children Guidance Pack/Young Runaways 2003

**84% of young people
who are homeless
ran away from home or
care when they were
under 16**

Shelter Scotland survey (2010 to 2011) among young homeless people aged 16-25

WHO

Shelter Scotland and Relationships Scotland Family Mediation Tayside & Fife, in partnership, are working together to prevent youth homelessness and strengthen family relationships. Relationships Scotland providing family mediation and Shelter providing 1:1 project worker and housing support.

WHEN

Over 3 years of big lottery funding February 2012- January 2015.

WHERE

Across Tayside (Dundee, Angus, Perthshire & Kinross) & Fife.

HOW

Through supporting young people at risk of 'running away' from home or being asked to leave in an unplanned way due to relationship breakdown, and bridge building with young people who are already homeless. For young people who cannot stay at home or are homeless, support to set up and maintain their own tenancies.

WHAT

Family mediation and support to prevent relationship breakdown or build bridges.
1:1 Project Worker support for young people age 14 to 24 for individual or housing issues.

Workshop Challenge 1



In each group nominate 2 people willing to do the challenge.

In each group, position these 2 people back to back, so they cannot see one another. One person takes responsibility for the constructed blocks, one person takes responsibility for the deconstructed blocks.

The 'problem'- the deconstructed blocks need to be built to replicate the constructed blocks.

Only the person with the constructed blocks can communicate

CHALLENGING
FRUSTRATING
CONFUSING



The block challenge is an example of where there is one person in the relationship, parent/carer or young person, who isn't communicating. In this particular relationship there are many risks, e.g.

- Only one person's perspective is being heard
- What is said can be easily misinterpreted
- The problem is harder to understand and resolve
- Both people can feel not listened to, frustrated and confused

There are many possible personal, relationship and family issues which impact on how we communicate. Families who are in conflict often want to work through their problems but how they communicate is preventing them from doing so and moving forward.

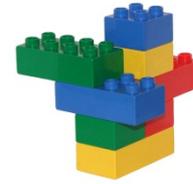
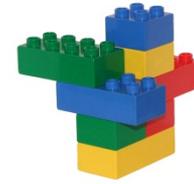
FAMILY MEDIATION

Family mediation is used as a means of opening up lines of communication between young people and their families. Through mediation everyone has the opportunity and support to speak and be heard. By opening the lines of communication we

- Identify the issues
- Explore the options
- Finds new ways of moving forward.

The mediators role is to support and empower young people and their parents/carers to find solutions to their problems together. The mediators role is to support everyone equally and to not take sides or make judgements.

Workshop Challenge 2



Repeat **Challenge 1**, however this time:

Choose a 3rd person from the group to act as a mediating neutral support to both sides. This person can literally look at both perspectives and is neutral and equally supportive to both sides.

Open up the lines of communication person- the person with the constructed blocks and the person with the deconstructed blocks are both able to communicate.

What works...

- Opening up the lines of communication can lead to more effective problem solving.
- Working together encourages both sides to take responsibility for the situation.
- Communicating and working together can reduce confusion and frustration.
- Someone neutral who can see from both perspectives can further improve communication, understanding and facilitate problem solving.

Safe & Sound Family Mediation

Family mediation is used to support young people and their families come to decisions which are right for them, enabling the young person to remain in or return to the family home, or move on with their families support. For young people who are already homeless it can be a way of rebuilding bridges with their family.

Mediation is voluntary and works when everyone wants to move forward and work together. Sometimes families want to move forward but there is too much trauma or history holding them back, if this is the case we consider therapeutic options which will help people to move forward.

SAFE & SOUND 1:1 PROJECT WORKER SUPPORT

- Holistic assessment and 1:1 support for young people tailored to their own specific needs, to help them remain in or return home.
- For young people unable to return home help in finding suitable housing to live independently.
- Support for brothers and sisters of young people who have run away or been asked to leave home, to enable them to understand and cope with the situation and improve their emotional well-being.

Project Workers

homelessness assessments ◦ college ◦ school ◦ relationships ◦ independent living skills ◦ risk taking ◦ healthy ◦ employment ◦ budgeting ◦ finances ◦ drug and alcohol misuse ◦ self-harming ◦ sleeping ◦

Young person who was not able to speak for himself during his LA homeless interview was not accepted as homeless and had his application cancelled. This young homeless person was then too anxious to approach the LA again. Project Worker supported this young person to attend a homeless assessment and advocated during his assessment. Young person was then accepted by LA as homeless and provided with accommodation.

Supporting a 16 year old female, homeless and pregnant, into a family unit where she is now settled and ready for the arrival of her baby. This stability has allowed her to start an art course at college, make new friends and rebuild her relationship with her family.

Supporting young person over lots of hurdles, ultimately loss of trust, in order to secure a college place in childcare. Her confidence has grown, she has now made new friends, and is subsequently getting on better at home.

Advocated on a young person's behalf, ensuring their rights were upheld following a homeless assessment where they were told they would have to pay £500 per week for temporary accommodation. The end result was they were appropriately re-assessed and required to pay £0 instead.

Negotiated for her young person, 15 years old, to get her phone back from her Mum after she had all privileges removed for 8 months. This was the beginning of the re-establishment of trust between mother and daughter.

Set-up and attended a Council Tax appointment with young person to deal with arrears by negotiating a simpler and more realistic payment plan. Whilst in the waiting room this young person also disclosed alcoholism and self-harm which he is now continuing to receive support for.

Advocating on a young person behalf during a Homelessness Assessment with the LA in order that the young person was aware of the choices they were making and didn't chose areas they did not know or want to live in.

Supported young person who has been sofa surfing for 18 months to get temporary accommodation in order to set up and access benefits.

Case Study

Callum (17)

Referral...

Callum contacted the Shelter helpline after an argument with his Mum and Dad led to him being handed a suitcase and told to get out. Callum's Mum and Dad discovered he had failed his college course and following years of difficulties this was the 'final straw'.

Safe & Sound Support...

Callum was put through to Safe & Sound by the Shelter helpline and within 24 hours a Project Worker had met with him to discuss his options and support him through a homeless interview at the local housing office. Callum's project worker spoke with Callum's Mum, Fiona, and negotiated for Callum to remain at home while plans were being made for him to move out.

Mediation...

During this time Callum found out more about mediation and decided he wanted to mediate with his Mum to stay at home. Due to Callum accessing support Fiona also agreed to meet with the family mediator and agreed to mediation. Through mediation it was established that Fiona did not want Callum to leave home but felt she had no other option but to ask him to leave. On further exploration what needed to happen for Callum to be allowed to remain at home was identified. Callum had to continue to engage with support and either stay at College or find employment, he also had to start pulling his weight around the house. With his project workers support Callum sorted out the problems he was having at college and arranged to re-sit his failed modules.

5 months on...

Through doing more around the house Callum's relationship with his Mum and Dad started to improve. Callum's Dad started taking Callum to work with him so he could gain work experience. Following this Callum's Dad's boss offered Callum a full time job. Callum continues to live at home and is now working full time.

Case Study

Sophie (17)

Referral

Sophie left home at 16 and was living in a hostel when she was referred to Safe & Sound. Sophie was removed from her birth parents at 9 years old and lived with foster carers before being adopted, with her young sister, at 12 years old. Sophie began to have relationship difficulties with her adoptive parents at 15, Sophie ran away from home 6 times, when she turned 16 she walked out of the family to live at her boyfriend's mum's house, when this broke down she ended up in homeless accommodation.

Safe & Sound Support

Sophie started working with a project worker to address practical issues around her housing needs and decided she wanted to mediate with her adoptive parents to try and rebuild their relationship.

Mediation

Sophie wanted to mediate to rebuild her relationship with her parents and her younger sister. Sophies parents equally wanted to find ways of rebuilding their relationship and moving forward. Sophies younger sister, Natalie, has in the past felt 'stuck in the middle' and so isn't involved in the mediation right now but may well join in the future.

In mediation Sophie and her Mum and Dad are getting to know each other again and exploring how they want their relationship to be. There are many past incidents and events they want to explore but they have agreed this will only happen when they are all ready to talk about the past.

Sophie and her parents and currently still using mediation and are continuing to get to know one another and planning ways of spending time together as a family.

Questions Thoughts Comments

How to contact us...

- **Safe and Sound Project**
- **1 Courthouse Square, Dundee, DD1 1NH**
- **www.shelter.org.uk/safeandsound**
- **safeandsound@shelter.org.uk**
- **t: 0344 515 2467**