

Housing

The missing piece of the jigsaw?



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Reducing the impact?

- 20+ years of youth homelessness
- No sign of it disappearing
- ‘revolving door’, poorest housing
- The current climate
 - Cuts in expenditure
 - High employment
- Worse rather than better?
- ‘compassion fatigue’ – a sense of hopelessness?



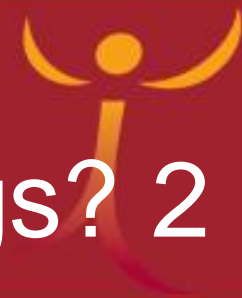
What is Needed?

- Maintain existing services, by:
 - Working in partnership with local authorities to make savings where we have to.
 - Finding smarter and more cost-effective ways to provide high quality services.
 - Being pro-active about service re-design
 - Raising the profile of youth homelessness



What can we do to improve things?

- Quite a lot – according to the young people involved in Quarriers VIP Group, in terms of:
 - Housing supply & allocation
 - Housing maintenance
 - Small changes to the benefit rules
(see their workshop, following this session)



What can we do to improve things? 2

- Above all, young people can be empowered and supported to speak and do things for themselves.
 - As a means of support in its own right
 - Because they may well be the most powerful and effective advocates for change

Young People's Inclusion at Quarriers



- 2006 - decision to extend inclusion processes to include young people.
- 2007 - 'Q in the Park' young peoples conference and establishment of the 'VIP' Group.
- 2008 – Development of the Group and its members with support of BLF funded inclusion workers.
- 2009 'Q2' Conference and launch of 'Condemned' campaign
- 2010 – 'Our Charter'



Impacts

- On others:
 - Wide range of events and audiences
 - Some young people have become relatively experienced and confident campaigners
 - The impact, whilst hard to measure is inescapably greater than that of hearing professionals speaking about the same subjects
 - It's possible that young people may be more successful in bringing about change



Impacts(2)

- On young people themselves. Whilst developing the skills of campaigning, young people have:
 - Become more confident and outgoing
 - Coped better with some daunting problems
 - Participated in new experiences and opportunities (fund-raising and overseas volunteering)
 - Shown clear signs that they will be better able to achieve their potential and become better citizens.



Impacts(3)

- On the agency. There are some pitfalls:
 - Giving young people a voice involves backing them all the way.
 - Government and funders must recognise the validity of this, even when we may seem to be ‘biting the hand that feeds us’.



Potential Barriers

- Common barriers encountered:
 - Multiple pressures and priorities.
 - Frequent appointments at numerous different agencies.
 - Stress and depression.
 - Lack of trust in the integrity of the process.

- All leading to the absolute necessity to work with young people ‘where they are’ and on their own terms.



Conclusion

- Providing young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with the tools and the support that they need to identify the issues that concern them, speak out about these issues and both learn and practice the varied skills required to campaign effectively offers the best hope of change, both structural and personal.