



## **INVESTING IN CHILDREN**

### **Membership Evaluation**

**Date** November 2005

**PROJECT NAME** Stepping Stones

**PROJECT LOCATION** 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Council Offices  
High Street  
Gosforth  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 2JL

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**ASSESSOR** Helen Mulhearn

### **SUMMARY OF EVALUATION**

**Sector** Housing  
**Ages** 16-21 years  
**Area** North  
**Ward** Fawdon

**Number of beneficiaries**



## **Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:**

### **Stepping Stones**

Stepping Stones is a housing project which provides direct access emergency accommodation for homeless young people aged 16 –21 and since 2003 has developed supported accommodation for homeless vulnerable young people aged 16-21. Stepping Stones is funded by a stream of government funding, 'Supporting People'.

Stepping Stones supported accommodation is a core and cluster provision in a block of flats in North Kenton. The block provides office space for the staff team and sixteen one-bedroom flats for young people. It also benefits from communal areas where the young people can meet together with workers and other young people, if they want to. The flats also include laundry facilities for washing and drying.

The team at North Kenton consists of Tony – the Supported Accommodation Manager, Shaz a Project Worker and Lysa, Project Worker and Participation Worker. The team work closely with the staff at the direct access hostel and Stepping Stones has 21years experience of supporting young people towards independence. They also work closely with the local housing office to secure tenancies for young people in the local communities when they are ready to move on.

Young people are given a tenancy with Stepping Stones at North Kenton after they are referred to the service, and it is decided that this is the best place for them. Young people are able to stay with Stepping Stones in their Supported Accommodation for up to two years.

On accepting the tenancy the young people are allocated a keyworker and together they develop a support plan.

Support Plans take into consideration:

- The needs of young people:
  - specialist services may be required. For example drugs and alcohol counseling and other health related issues. The workers would then signpost young people on and make further referrals. Supporting the young people in appointments and meetings if that is what they want.
- The prospects of the young people:
  - the young residents might decide they want to get a job or they want to go to college or develop other specific skills, the key worker would help them to achieve this and support them with any problems they might have or encounter.
- The tenancy:
  - the reality behind maintaining a secure tenancy is the main focus of the supporting role of the workers. Working through all aspects of independent living is a fundamental part of the service provided.

- supporting the young people through the transition into their own accommodation is the next and final stage of the service provided by Stepping Stones.

Obviously what goes on during a young person's stay is a lot more complex and varied to what I have just highlighted. I met with some of the young residents Darren, Sean and Lysa, the participation worker to talk about what happens in the project, how the service is delivered and how the young people feel about the service they receive. One thing that came across to me and was certainly affirmed by the young people is that they are involved in all aspects of the development of the service and they are heavily involved in the promotion of the project and the rights of young people to be viewed as positive citizens and members of their community.

Our discussions were diverse and covered many aspects of the service, some of which I will highlight below:

- Young People's meetings happen on a regular basis, young people can get involved if and when they want. There are currently only a few young people who attend on a regular basis but the challenge to the group is to encourage other tenants to have a voice. The young people are all given the opportunity to make their views known. Sometimes this is done on an individual basis through keywork sessions, as well as collectively through the young people's meetings. The meetings also give the young people the opportunity to address other issues that affect them all as well as individual ones.
- **Risk assessments** are completed as part of a young person's initial admission to Stepping Stones. The staff team encourages and facilitates young people to complete self assessment so they are addressing their own needs.
- **Water Rates** are paid to Stepping Stones direct by young people. Sometimes the staff team gets into situations of conflict in trying to ask young people to pay. This issue has been addressed by the young people's group and they have designed a system and plan to ensure payment and deal with non – payment. ***These are their rules in their home.***
- **College and training** opportunities are found for the young people by the staff team. Darren talked about being involved in the Millennium Volunteer Programme and said that he hopes to work it round something he is interested in so that his voluntary work is recognised. Other young people go to college and take advantage of other skill training courses that they can get involved in. Through his work with Fairbridge Sean has recently been sailing around the UK.
- **Independent Living Skills** are an essential part of the support work provided at Stepping Stones. The project has recently secured funding to develop the life skills area. *The young people have chosen everything to go in the room such as furniture and decorations and they are looking forward to redecorating to make the whole area into a place where they want to be.* The project is currently negotiating for more funding to develop their IT suite.

- **Representation of young people, young tenants and their views** is a new area that the group is involved in. With new government agendas addressing the needs of children and young people across the board there are many debates and discussions for young people to have with adults on a strategic level. Some of the group have agreed to go to these meetings and been part of some very large discussions, including a:
  - **Youth Matters** debate
  - **Housing and Tenancy Forums**
  - **Every Child Matters**
  - **Local Residents Associations**

The young people are in the process of organising an Open Day event for their local community. As a group they face the added pressure of how the local community see them – troubled young people dumped on their door with all the anti-social behaviour that can be imagined! The young people want their chance to say ‘hey we are members of the community too, yes we have had some bad luck but we are here and have the same concerns and fears about living here as you – we are local residents and we want to change things for the better for all’.

During our discussions this is just some of what Darren and Sean had to say:-

**Darren** *‘I don’t come a lot but I get all the bits of paper shoved under my door’.*

**Sean** *‘I’m really involved in the group, Lysa and them do listen, all ideas are looked at, discussed and feedback given’.*

Sean attended The Youth Matters debate and he said *‘glad I went to those meetings, I stood up and talked!!’*

**Sean** *‘we look at procedures and we have changed some of them because we know what its like and what we are talking about’.*

**Marc** *‘the support in the project is second to none, without Stepping Stones I possibly would have ended up sleeping on the streets. The staff involve all tenants in every decision made in the block, I am glad I live here!’*

**Daniel** *‘The staff try to involve us in everything that’s going on. Sometimes I am interested, sometimes I am not but at least the opportunity is there for us to participate if we feel like it’.*

Stepping Stones a valuable and much needed service for young people in Newcastle. The project is dependant on core funding and can only achieve what its budget allows. However with the active participation of young people in the service delivery and the project development the work has taken on a whole new dimension.

Young People have always been involved in dialogue around their tenancies and their personal development but the team have committed themselves to a deeper inclusion and dialogue with young people, Lysa’s role has been developed into a Participation Worker which clearly demonstrates this commitment.

In respect of the ongoing dialogue and involvement of young people in the service and development of the project I have no hesitation at all in recommending the Stepping Stones does receive its Investing in Children membership.

**Helen Mulhearn**  
**Membership Co-ordinator**  
**Investing in Children.**

**November 2005**

## Stepping out with Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones provides emergency and supported accommodation for homeless 16 to 21 year olds in a North Kenton block of flats. The staff at the project work closely with the young people and with the local housing office to secure tenancies in local communities when they are ready to move on.

Any young person coming into Stepping Stones is allocated a worker, with whom he or she develops a support plan. This takes into consideration the young person's needs – for example for drugs or alcohol counselling – which the young person assesses for him/herself. The worker will support the young person in meetings and appointments if he or she wants that. The support plan also looks at prospects – whether the young person wants to work, go to college or develop skills. The worker will help him or her take the right steps and overcome any problems. Finally, the worker helps the person understand how to maintain a secure tenancy and live independently.

The young people using Stepping Stones are involved in all aspects of its development. They promote both the service and young people's right to be seen as positive citizens and members of the community. In order to address the negative way in which they may be seen by their local community, the young people are organising an open day.

**“...we know what it's like and what we are talking about...”**

There are regular young people's meetings, which people can choose whether or not to attend. Everyone has the chance to make their views known either through the meetings or in one-to-ones with workers. The group has come up with its own system to ensure people pay their water rates to Stepping Stones staff on time, and to deal with non-payment. The young people have also chosen the furniture and décor for a room set aside for developing independent living skills. The group has been part of strategic discussions with adults, such as a Youth Matters debate, housing and tenancy forums, Every Child Matters and local residents' associations.

Sean says, “I'm really involved in the group. Lysa and them do listen, all ideas are looked at, discussed and feedback given. We look at procedures and we have changed some of them because we know what it's like and what we are talking about.”

Marc adds, “The support in the project is second to none. Without Stepping Stones I possibly would have ended up sleeping on the streets. The staff involve all tenants in every decision made in the block, I am glad I live here!”

The Investing in Children assessor says, “Stepping Stones is a valuable and much needed service for young people in Newcastle. With the active participation of young people the work has taken on a whole new dimension.”

[suggested pics – group meeting in progress, or anything from the open day]