

SUMMARY

“SOMEWHERE WARM, SAFE AND CLEAN”

In September 2006 Connexions Leicester Shire received money from the DCLG Homelessness Grant, through the Housing Department at Leicester City Council, to run a peer research project looking at young people’s experiences of living in supported housing projects and hostels. The aim of the project was to explore what happens when young people go through the supported housing and hostel experience in order to find out what is failing for young people and what is working. We wanted to look at how young people accessed supporting housing (for example which services they used and what help they got), what it was like once they were in supported housing and also their experiences of evictions and of moving on to a tenancy.

The peer research project recruited its young people through referrals from Connexions personal advisors and existing links with city hostels/supported housing projects. A diverse group of young people was brought together, each with their own experiences of living in supported housing projects and/or hostels (details of ethnicity and individual circumstances can be found in Appendix 1).

During the training, the peer researchers learned the basics of research (methods, ethics, etc.) and had a chance to develop their interview skills. A large part of the training concentrated on the peer researchers examining their own histories, and by using their own experiences, they were then able to create a questionnaire that they felt would be appropriate for other young people. The peer researchers then went in small groups to hostels and supported housing schemes and conducted the research. The researchers worked with the residents to help them answer the questions, so the actual research carried out was a cross between a questionnaire and an informal interview.

The researchers worked with staff to analyse the responses and made a series of recommendations. These included:

- The delivery of a programme of life skills to the residents of all hostels, so that they are more prepared when they move on
- A project to train young people to then train workers about what it is like to be young and homeless
- Connexions to recruit a specialist Housing personal advisor to help young people through the housing process (and this should be a young person).

The researchers also created a young person’s version of the report.

This report brings together all the work done by the peer researchers along with the workers’ interpretations of the findings.