

# Evaluation Report for the Hub project -

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Alyson Halcrow,

Community Mediation Team – CAB – Shetland

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## Introduction and Overview

The report concentrates on covering the reflective views of interviewees. It represents a snapshot in time with each person answering questions aimed at assessing how well the Hub project is progressing towards the three stated Outcomes –

### Outcome 1

More young care leaver will have secured permanent accommodation of their choice and developed the skills to manage a tenancy

### Outcome 2

More young care leavers will have developed the skills and experience to access employment, training and education.

### Outcome 3

More young care leavers are able to build positive relationships with others and their community. Care leavers report an improved sense of self worth in their relationship with others and have expanded their links with their communities.

Once the interviews were completed, it became clear that there were themes developing regarding the Hub project. It seemed useful to separate the report using broad themes to help structure this evaluation report.

The themes are as follows;

- I Planning stage of the Hub
- II Staff and Management thoughts, experiences and any improvements that could be made to the running of the Hub
- III Young Peoples (resident and outreach) thoughts, experiences and any improvements that could be made to the running of the Hub

## Method

This report is based on interviews held with

- The four members of the Hub core management team
- The three Hub staff
- Seven Young people using the services of the Hub, three residents and four outreach.

The tenants and outreach clients were asked 11 questions relating to their involvement with the Hub.

The management and staff were asked an additional 5 questions, 16 in all. The questions were linked to the three outcomes stated above and included in the application to the Big Lottery funding bid. (See Appendix 1)

A single case study was carried out with one of the current Hub residents – this has been shown in its entirety.

A lot of information was gained from the 14 individual interviews and within that information there a few statements that have been quoted to highlight the spirit of what has been learned and achieved.

# I Planning Stage of the Hub

There is no doubt that the time spent planning and discussing the ideas behind the Hub within the Management group helped lay the foundations for a solid yet diverse overseeing Management Team, with a commitment to see the Hub succeed. This was a new project, and a new idea and facility for Shetland.

The Management group is made up of representative members from Hjaltland Housing Association (who spearheaded the funding bid); the local authority Housing department (housing outreach); Children's residential services in the Social Work Department (SWD) and the Through care and Aftercare team within Residential services of the SWD.

Each member of the Management team brought to the project their different and complimentary backgrounds, experiences and involvement with young people. Some had more direct experience of young people who moved out of the Local Authority Care system and into independent living having worked within the residential services; others based in Housing, have had to deal with the aftermath of young Care leavers in first tenancies not coping and facing many difficulties as they try to live independently with little and general support.

As such each Management member's involvement brought a unique angle on the needs and difficulties young people may face when transitioning from Care to independent living. The team was clear in describing how the initial planning time helped them to learn from each other and get to know better each other's thoughts and concerns and how they might tackle any potential problems. Each has described how the experience of being part of the Management team has enriched their base-work experience and changed – sometimes subtly, their approach to their day to day working life. One member of the management team mentioned that very occasionally she experienced a tension between her need to support the Hub and demands of her own job.

Clear themes were repeated when the Management team were interviewed.

The initial time spent preparing the project; listening to each other and cooperating with ideas; respecting different opinions and approaches and capitalizing on the skills mix was vitally important to the success of the project. It also helped to realize a vision of what the end product would be like. It seems this mixture of the time spent on the building blocks of the Hub and the complementary skills the Management group have has shown how a committed multi disciplinary approach can work extremely successfully. They each have listened, cooperated and respected each other's point of view having concern for young people as their priority.

The commitment and dedication of the Management team is reflected in the commitment and dedication of the Staff team to the Hub project. Both teams have been a model for the young people to see how different people with different skills in at times a pressurized environment, can get on together and support each other.

## II Staff and Managements thoughts and experiences.

At the time of this evaluation the Hub has been running for 11 months and one question asked of Staff and Management was “Is the Hub what you expected it to be?”

The Staff found the work more challenging than they had expected and used the support of the Management team throughout the initial stages particularly the Residential care worker – who helped a great deal with uncertainties regarding what they can/can’t do, young Care leavers emotional development etc.

None of the staff had residential or lone working experience before working at the Hub; all came to the Hub from a variety of backgrounds. They joined the project wanting to improve the chances for young care leavers in transition – and to provide a safe and secure environment to help them do this. They all sited the support between the staff and also from the Management team as very strong. Also that the Management team is really good at dealing with issues, making decisions and helping to change things if that is needed.

Several months into the project, the Management team is much more aware of the pressures and traps for those who have moved from Care to their own tenancy. Indeed, there has been some poignancy at acknowledging the number of young Care leavers in the past who were set up in their own homes without the planned support systems, and activity learning program of the Hub, to often fail whilst trying to live independently.

The Hub has, even at this early stage of its existence, shown the importance of a supported transitional period to help Care leavers begin to grow in confidence and self esteem and to work out what is important for them to survive the hazards of independent living.

The joint aim and strategic decision making of the Management Team was to help the Staff team carry out at an operational level, the day to day work within the Hub. As mentioned elsewhere, the tight working relationship and the pride in the project, as one MT member said “has highlighted a ‘rounder’ way of working – mutual understanding, a supportive holistic way of working”.

Every member of staff and Management spoke about the importance of reflective practice. This is a constant part of the day to day living and decision making within the Hub and has been found to be a really important evaluative tool.

The smallness of the project helps with the ability to make rapid decisions often by staff ‘on the ground’ and know they will be supported by Management. The project is constantly improving

as a result of using reflective practice, particularly in these situations where decisions are having to be made quickly.

The Staff and Management team were asked if they felt there were any unmet needs with clients involved with the Hub or those who have not been able to use the service?

There have been young people who are not involved with the Local Authority – are not in Care - but might have really benefitted from a spell of supported accommodation in the Hub.

Although it is a controversial point of view, it was raised that perhaps sometimes the Social Work Departments emphasis on the importance of a child staying within the family home, may not help young people who would benefit from the Hubs help, as they would not fit into the referral criteria of being looked After. Indeed others also mentioned that there is a gap for non looked after children; if they are not assessed they will not be flagged up as perhaps benefiting from transitional supportive accommodation such as provided by the Hub.

### What has been learnt?

Many things have been learnt during the first year of the Hub, the following are just a few highlighted by the staff and management teams.

- A visit to the Mainland of Scotland to see other projects with similar aims and ethos perhaps should have happened earlier in the young people's tenancy, it would have helped them to put Shetlands experience in context, i.e. a much better set up than what is on offer to others on the mainland.
- Starting new tenancies with rules in place that are agreed and signed up to – particularly about drugs, alcohol and parties was something Management, Staff and young people mentioned. It has been recognized that depending on lifestyle choices, some young people can cope with these rules and with pressures placed upon them, better than others; this has an impact on the running of the project.
- Before starting work with clients it would be good to spend more time with the Management and Staff team together developing systems needed to deliver the service.
- It has been realized that Attachment Theory training is fundamental training for working with young Care leavers, it should help to understand some of the difficult and challenging behaviours that staff have had to deal with. As a result of this, training is going to be available locally. This has been accessed through joint training with the Social Work Department.



### III Young Peoples thoughts and experiences of the Hub

Most residential and outreach clients mentioned their experiences of receiving advice and support from Hub staff had been really good.

Some had accessed activities and the activity specifically mentioned by most was the cooking/budgeting activity which was deemed very useful.

#### *Outreach*

Four outreach young people were interviewed and it became apparent that they variously feel part of the Hub.

Two are still living with foster parents and access the Hub only occasionally for support and for activities both of which they find very helpful. One felt the Hub staff was helpful at supporting and giving structure and purpose to their lives. The other, who had accessed support for themselves and was very positive about this, felt strongly that the Hub had worked really well for one of the residents and had “destroyed another residents life”. This person found themselves in a difficult position when asked to think if the Hub was successful – seeing it as very successful for one of the residents and the opposite for another. On the whole both these clients felt benevolent as far as their own involvement with the Hub is concerned.

Even though the project is in its infancy, one young outreach client has already been helped to secure permanent accommodation and also to develop skills to manage his tenancy; he has secured a job and feels confident about coping on his own – fulfilling all 3 outcomes as submitted to the Lottery bid.

Indeed most of the Young People linked to the Hub have a job and this seemed to help with a ‘normal’ focus in their lives. Those who have not got a job seem to be drifting and whilst one does use the Hub for support and as a focus for his days, the other struggles without the structure of a job.

At least one of the residents and one of the outreach clients mentioned that they thought there would be more and stricter rules when they first became involved with the Hub, particularly regarding alcohol and drug use and partying. Whilst another felt he had been supported by staff and “kept in line” by staff when he was partying initially, he also felt this had helped him to grow. He realised that if he had been living independently without the support of the Hub, he would have faced problems with the Police and neighbours and this could have been very serious for him.

Another person felt the Hubs location and attempting to live more independently had made access to drink and drugs much easier. If they had lived elsewhere, it would not have been so much of a problem. This person stated that she did not feel well supported and also felt improvements to the Hub would be

- to help people to stay in it longer
- try to help them to realise the goals they had set for living in the Hub.
- this person felt that more meetings between staff and residents would be helpful particularly to talk about what is going on.

An outreach client mentioned a couple of occasions when they were aware of young people (under 16) who had been on the premises and had been very unwell – through drink or drugs – and they didn't think the staff had been aware of this, or had not been seen to do anything to assist the young visitor.

Another resident suggested it is difficult [for young people] to improve without structure and felt there could be more. Overall, the residents and outreach clients have suggested that as this is a new project, everyone including themselves are learning as they go along; a couple of residents did label themselves as guinea pigs in this new process, but did not blame staff or Management for this.

Two residents have clearly shown the worth of the Hub and have achieved all Outcomes apart from not yet having moved to permanent accommodation. Their involvement with the Hub, during their own initial tenancy ups and downs has demonstrated that a supportive environment for new Care leavers has worked and continues to work for them. Both have developed positive relationships with other people and agencies, one stating; “I have become more confident, the stability of the Hub has helped me stay out of trouble and helped me to learn how to stop making mistakes.”

The other young person understood that he had “grown as a person” and the Hub had “helped me a lot – helped me to realise the world won't give me everything I need – you have to go out and help yourself. I realised this faster whilst in the Hub than if I was in my own tenancy.”

An important emphasis within the Hub (Outcome 3) is to help the residents and outreach clients build positive relationships with others and also their community.

Some of the young people have become proactively involved with other agencies in order to move some of their own concerns forward. For example – two of the residents are involved in a joint working group with the Police with a mutual concern about Synthetic Highs. All the

residents are involved with a multi disciplinary team looking at creating an information leaflet about the Hub which would be available to prospective residents and other agencies.

As well as personally acknowledging their growth in confidence and self esteem through support gained at the Hub, these changes have been clearly noted by others who know these residents as well.

After speaking with the young people involved with the Hub, the majority feel the support available to them is really good, the facilities are fine and the activities particularly cooking and budgeting were really helpful.

The relationship between staff and clients has been very important to all.

Some residents mentioned concern about the lack of structure and are looking for more meetings and rules to help them feel more secure. The young people also mentioned that they knew, as a new project, much is learnt by everyone as the project and they go along.

## IV Case Study

### **A journey through your time at the Hub;**

This short case study looks at the experience of one young person throughout their personal journey as a Hub resident. It helps to demonstrate his successful progression within 8 months, toward all three stated Outcomes.

Several questions were asked in order to plot the journey through the Hub.

#### *How did you decide to apply for the Hub?*

I was on a Supervision requirement with the Social Work Department and when it finished my Social worker spoke about a new project starting – The Hub and asked if I was interested in knowing more about the new venture. I said Yes.

#### *Pre – Hub; what were your hopes and fears?*

I was really optimistic (which is my nature) and thought it was a good thing. I had no base fears, but I wanted to live on my own since I was 15. I then began to learn how to live more independently.

#### *How ready were you to live independently when you first moved in?*

50:50 – I have done well while at the Hub – the support I have received has helped me move to be 100% ready to live independently.

#### *How were the first few weeks?*

Adventurous – when I moved in I had lots of parties to celebrate my freedom, this led to various complaints from the staff. Apart from that I have a good relationship with them. Eventually I got my act together and realised it's not worth having parties all the time.

#### *Any significant things/turning points?*

I was constantly without money what little I had after the basics went on alcohol and drugs. There was one night I was having a party in my house with friends. There were 4 of us sitting around complaining and drinking about no money, no jobs etc., - I suggested that we were not trying hard enough – two weeks later I had a job.

*Now – hopes and fears?*

I have been at the Hub for 8 months now and am hopeful that in the next year I will have a permanent job (not a contractual one) I will also move soon – possibly to the outreach flat. To do that would be less of a change it would keep me in a system I understand.

I suppose I fear not having the support as much, but I would probably learn to cope with that. The staff tells me they think I will be fine on my own – I have done everything asked of me – but not having them there is a bit of a wobble.

*Best about the Hub?*

Knowing there is someone who will help me. Knowing there is advice around the corner when I need it. The Hub is 'homely'. It used to feel strict - but I was having parties and I probably needed that.

*Worst about the Hub*

Initially the security – I wasn't very good at gate keeping, the staff helped me with that and I have learnt to be better at this myself.

*How ready are you now to live independently, what has changed?*

I am ready now. The last months have given me all I need to do when on my own – a secure job, how to budget, paying my bills – I now know what I need to be doing. I have worked with the Hub in order to make things work for me.

*What next?*

I hope to be moved to a less central location – more peaceful.

## V Conclusions

The Young People involved in the Hub project have spoken about their own changes whilst being involved – becoming more self confident, becoming involved with other agencies and speaking up in meetings.

The staff of the Hub have spoken about the importance of a strong, supportive team which is well supported and guided by the Management.

The Managers of the Hub have spoken about time spent together planning and working on the funding bid as important in developing a strong project. Also everyone clearly believing that the Hub would plug a gap in service provision – indeed there has been some poignancy that such a facility has not been available before and many young Care leavers have not had the chance to benefit from the Hubs ethos and supported help.

The use of reflective practice throughout the Hub helps it to develop organically, within the limits of the Lottery funding. Ways of working and decisions are questioned and methods are honed to ensure the best opportunities and experiences for all the young people involved.

The vision of what the Hub would be and how it would work, is now a reality. It is, for most Hub users also achieving the outcomes it set out to do.

## VI Interesting Quotes from

Management – M,

Staff – S

Young people - YP

“Being involved in the Hub from the beginning – trying to support vulnerable young people, it fulfils why I am in Housing” M

“Everything at the Hub empowers them, listening ear, eyes that recognise struggles, reflecting on what empowers” M

“ I’ve changed and had to adapt quite a lot. Difficulties are part of life.” M

“Decision making skills are much better – have to make instant decisions.” S

“Equal opportunities is intrinsic in everything we do, everyone is treated exactly the same and get the same level of service no matter what is going on with them.” S

“I like that we push young people to negotiate and phone new people.” S

“The ever changing nature of teenagers is difficult” S

“... I have learnt more about this client group, the effects of a chaotic upbringing on maturity and behaviour.” S

“Young people are sometimes saying they would like more involvement of the Management team” S

“Recognising the complexity of team working and the necessity to do good handovers – helps staff and Young People.” S

“Emotional learning; can’t set a time scale on personal development – this can’t be pushed.” S

“More useful staff/weekly meeting with staff and residents to talk about what is going on” YP

“We’re the guinea pigs so its not their fault” YP

“The Hub is helping young people much more than happened before.” YP

“Make it bigger, would be good to have more people staying.” YP

“For a couple of YP, they now know how to cope with living on their own.”

“ I would have been scared if in a flat on my own.” YP

# Appendix 1

## Questions asked of Young People and additional questions for Staff and Management.

### **Independent evaluation for YP**

- 1 What has been difficult in the last year, for you and how have you dealt with difficulties?
- 2 What in your opinion have been successful about the Hub? What have you learnt?
- 3 Have you made any changes – adjustments to your life since living/working at the Hub?
- 4 Do you think the Hub has made any changes or adjustments for you since you started living/working there?
- 5 Is the Hub what you expected it to be? Why?.....
- 6 What has the project done to support equal opportunities?
- 7 What are you doing to have a +ve impact on the environment within the project?
- 8 What are the benefits of being part of the Hub?
- 9 What do you think of the facilities, the activities and the support you get?
- 10 Do you think you can make decisions about what you do? Do you feel you can influence the project?
- 11 What improvements would you make?

### **Additional questions for Staff and Management**

- 12 What have you been able to do to empower those accessing the Hub to improve their lives? What else could we/you do?
- 13 In what ways are you evaluating the project as it progresses? Are the results of your evaluation used in a feedback loop to improve or do things differently in the future?
- 14 Have you identified any unmet needs either with clients worked with or even those who have not been able to use the service?
- 15 How do you feel about the processes you have to follow? The facilities available, the support structures, the decision making processes?
- 16 Any additional training or staff development activities you would like of reel you need to have?