

Edinburgh Young Persons' Service



LINKLIVING

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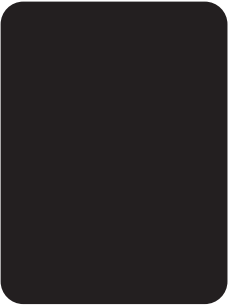
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Manager's introduction

LinkLiving's Edinburgh Young Persons' Service (EYPS) has been providing practical, social and emotional support to vulnerable young people since 1981.

The support we offer is focused on helping our service users establish and maintain a tenancy, develop social networks, reduce drug and alcohol dependencies and access education, training and employment.

We work with around 400 young people each year. Whatever their background and experiences, each person we support is vulnerable for reasons that may include:

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- Homelessness
 - Isolation
 - Physical or learning disabilities
 - Involvement with crime
 - Drug, alcohol or gambling addictions
 - Mental health or self esteem issues
 - Self harming
 - Having recently left care
 - Having become a young parent
 - Having come to Scotland as a refugee

Many of these young people are often difficult to engage with initially because of their distrust of services. But with the help of the support we provide, a high number make remarkable transformations in their lives – in their living situation, their health and well being and their engagement with society.

This report highlights the impact of our important work.

Bruce Harkin

Edinburgh Young Persons' Service Manager

Holly's story

My name is Holly. I'm 17 years old and I live in Craigmillar.

I first went into care when I was 13 because of family breakdown caused by me – my involvement with crime, drink and drugs and not attending school.

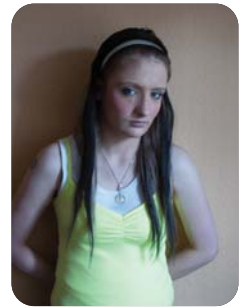
I was in three different Young Persons' Centres including one where I stayed for 11 months. During my time there my destructive behaviour continued as before, however this time because I was getting into dangerous and risky situations, I was placed in secure accommodation. This was for everyone's protection – both the public's and mine.

I was in a secure accommodation centre for about a year and a half but was only in the secure part for eight months. After I got out of secure, my behaviour went back to what it was like before. But this time it got even worse – I ended up being addicted to heroin for a year and would stop at nothing to get my daily fix. Even though the staff attempted to watch me 24 hours a day, they didn't succeed. I moved into an open unit after this and started to get away from the drugs myself by going cold turkey.

Then I started working with LinkLiving who helped me towards independence and to get my own flat. My worker, who I still work with now, has supported me for a year and four months. She has helped me a lot with my confidence and has been someone for me to confide in. She has been supportive from the very start, through my time living in a supported flat with Link and now in my council tenancy. I will be sad when my support finishes in May 2009.

As for me now – today I can say I am tee-total and I feel great for it! I feel I've come through so many hurdles and I'm now finally settled and am happy. I have my own two-bedroom council house that has been decorated really nicely. I have my dog and now I am doing a mechanics course with a possibility of an apprentice position after it (and yes, girls can be mechanics too before you say anything!).

Everything has improved in my life after being a child who was in care for five years, with a drug addiction and always in trouble. It's a great achievement! I would just like to thank everyone who has helped me – especially my support worker for always being there to support me, even though I can be very stressful sometimes!



The impact of Edinburgh Young Persons' Service

The profile of the young people supported between April 2007 and March 2008.

We supported just under 400 people last year, 212 female and 175 were males.

Age (at first contact)	Male	Female	Total
16–17	43	74	117
18–21	66	73	139
21–25	63	63	126
25+	3	2	5
Total	175	212	387

Outcomes for the young people we supported – monthly average

Source: Edinburgh Common Client Outcomes (ECCO) database Aug 2007–Mar 2008.

Outcome	Number of young people with this outcome every month (from those for whom this outcome is relevant to their circumstances)
Accessing more settled accommodation on leaving temporary accommodation	$\frac{10}{11}$ (91%)
Accessing furniture package	$\frac{10}{10}$ (100%)
Accessing employment, education or training	$\frac{13}{25}$ (52%)
Homeless accessing GP	$\frac{10}{11}$ (91%)
Reduced alcohol or drug use	$\frac{9}{17}$ (53%)
Accessed Mental Health assessment	$\frac{9}{14}$ (67%)

Service User Involvement – the Peer Education Edinburgh Project (PEEP)

At the beginning of 2007, a number of service users expressed interest in establishing an additional project that would complement the formal support that EYPS offers by providing further opportunities for developing their personal confidence and skills.

The young people wanted to develop a project which involved using what they had learned from their own experiences to devise a series of workshops to provide advice to other young people who were about to go through the transition to independent living.

Eleven young people participated as volunteers in the PEEP pilot, which ran over the course of almost nine months. The volunteers undertook a wide range of activities and training sessions to help them develop the right skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to plan and deliver their workshops. Using their new skills, the volunteers developed four workshops focusing on topics they felt would be most relevant to a young person taking on their own tenancy:

- Introduction to setting up your own home
- Housing
- Health
- Relationships

PEEP culminated in March 2008 with some of the volunteers delivering an introductory workshop to LinkLiving staff.

We are now seeking to make PEEP a permanent activity at the EYPS.



A day in the life of an EYPS support worker

Tom Nimmo

As a full-time support worker I provide around 32 hours of support a week to six or seven young people. I also take part in assessing the young people who come to us for support and am involved in lots of activities to promote the service.

Although there is not really a typical day, I often begin with office work – checking and responding to e-mails and updating service users' files. I then discuss with my colleagues and team leader any concerns there may be regarding service users.

Support workers arrange their diaries to suit the needs of the service users and most support meetings will take place in the young person's home. In many cases, young people who are homeless are referred to us for support to find a permanent home and this will involve helping the young person to navigate the 'homeless system' in Edinburgh and liaise with housing officers, temporary accommodation staff and, occasionally, family members.

When supporting a young person who has their own home the emphasis is placed on practical support with the aim that the young person will eventually be able to sustain the tenancy with no, or minimal, support. This can involve helping the young person to understand mail that has been received and responding to it as required, helping to keep the home safe and secure, helping with organising benefits if required, budgeting skills, shopping, cooking and cleaning. Reviews of support usually take place on a three-monthly basis and the team leader will be involved in this.

Many young people want to go to college or find employment. This will be a major part of the support and will include helping with job applications and college enquiries. Attending Jobcentre interviews and helping service users comply with DWP rules is another important part of the support offered.



The future

The Edinburgh Young Persons' Service faces a number of challenges and opportunities over the coming year.

Implications of Housing Support funding changes

Like other services that are funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, we face some uncertainty surrounding our future in the wake of changes to Housing Support funding. It may be that next year, we will be required to deliver the same services on the same or less funding, or to enter a tendering process in order to retain our commission by the council to support some of the most vulnerable young people in the city.

In order to continue to operate successfully we will strive to promote the remarkable transformations our young service users can make in their lives, thanks to the support of EYPS.

Service user involvement

The move to self-assessment and grading by our regulators, the Care Commission, has led to a greater focus on service user involvement. EYPS' activities in this area are very well established and we will continue to involve young people who use our services in shaping the way we operate, with a particular focus on:

- Recruiting staff
- Training workers
- Encouraging service user membership of the LinkLiving Board

Developing opportunities for young people

We aim to continue to build on our core activities by seeking out and developing further opportunities for young people.

Following the success of the Peer Education Edinburgh Project (PEEP) which ran as a pilot between July 2007 and March 2008 we will continue work to develop a Peer Education Project and plan to submit a bid for Big Lottery funding before the end of 2008.

Peer Education will provide a further opportunity for young people to develop their personal skills and confidence by sharing their own valuable experiences of the transition from home and school to independent living and employment, further education or training.

Claire's story

I became homeless two years ago. My council housing officer moved me into a hostel. They also asked if I wanted support, which I'd never had before. At this time I lived a chaotic life which revolved around drugs, mainly heroin. I had no family contact and had lost care of my son sometime before. I had no confidence, and wasn't making any appointments for the Department of Work and Pensions, the housing office, hospital or Community Drug Prevention Service (CDPS). This affected my ability to cope with normal life.



I was in a vicious circle that kept going on and on with nothing changing, and I also had a criminal record from years of stealing to fund my habit. The referral to LinkLiving put me in touch with a support worker, who I didn't feel judged me. So I relaxed and was able to open up and tell my story. She then helped me make and keep my appointments and I was offered a tenancy. With her support, I also started going to the hospital and the CDPS.

Once I had a tenancy, I met my support worker two to three times a week – sometimes she would have to track me all over Edinburgh because I was still in the throws of heroin and that caused me to lose contact at times. She never gave up on me and I thank her for that.

The turning point for me was the day I had taken 25 Valium and was so incoherent my support worker took me to the CDPS. They referred me to the harm reduction unit where I had to go daily for my Methodone and also got intensive support to look at my drug use. I did reach stability after some time, and it was at this point my support worker referred me to Move On, who train and support volunteers to become peer educators. Since getting involved with Move On and using the support from my LinkLiving support worker and my drugs worker, I have reduced the amount of heroin I take, to the point of more or less stopping.

The massive positive is that through using my support, I have got back in touch with my son, my dad and I'm also building relations with my mum. I now have my son staying with me every weekend and I know he's as proud of me as I am of him. I'm a fully trained peer educator and I have recently moved into my own private rented tenancy. I've cut contact with all the people that were involved with heroin. I've also started going to Narcotics Anonymous meetings and this is going well. However, with ongoing support, I am now looking to go to a long-term rehab hospital. This is for me to come off Methodone and Valium completely, so I can wake in the morning feeling normal.

I now have the confidence through my volunteering to look to further my education and I hope to study for my SVQ in Social Care. I never thought this was possible because I have a criminal record but with the support of LinkLiving and Move On, I have realised that this is in the past and I will never resort to getting in trouble again. I have always used my support to talk things through, and my support worker has helped me realise that I am human and what happened in my past was the result of issues in my childhood. I don't feel I would be where I am today without the support of LinkLiving. I'm grateful to them and I'm also so proud of myself!



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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