

BEST PRACTICE BRIEFINGS: POBL SHARED ACCOMMODATION SCHEME



The POBL Shared Accommodation Project is a housing and support scheme which allows young people aged 18-25 at risk of or experiencing homelessness to access two-bedroom properties through a shared arrangement with another young person.

The scheme operates under the POBL Support team who manage the project and provide support for young people but works in collaboration with POBL Housing and Communities as well as the Monmouthshire Housing Association who provide the accommodation.

The project team is made up of a Project Manager; four Housing Intervention Officers who provide direct support to young people, which includes visits to their properties and help with debt, benefits and employment; and two youth workers who carry out outreach activities in the community.

Furthermore young people who are part of the service can benefit from a £750 Inspire Grant which they can spend on housing, employment or education related activities. The grant can be accessed through the youth workers which provides an incentive to engage with activities organised by the team.

As we know, Wales lacks the supply of suitable properties for single young people, such as studio and one-bedroom properties. The scheme therefore addresses this issue by utilising two bedroom properties that landlords might possibly find hard to let.

Location

The scheme covers Newport, Caerphilly, Torfaen and Monmouthshire.

What does the scheme hope to achieve?

The project aims to increase the stock of housing available to single occupants by utilising two bedroom properties and shared tenancy agreements, which hopes to address some of the structural causes of homelessness experienced by single young people.

Implementation

POBL does not lease the properties so the young people rent directly from the landlord. As each landlord wants things done slightly differently and each Housing Options Team in each county wants something different, this requires the team managing the scheme to be very flexible.

Matching process

Young people are matched based on information gathered at referral and assessment. If the project workers think they have two suitable young people, they will introduce them over lunch to see if they get along. The young people are encouraged to swap phone number and after a period of a few days, project workers will ask them their thoughts on the person they were introduced to.

Referral process

Referrals are sent directly to the service manager who distribute them to the team to complete assessment. Following an assessment being completed, the team meet to discuss the assessments and suitability for the service. As the project is a low needs service, the project workers are not on site 24/7. Instead, they project operates a floating support style service and due to this young people who are deemed high risk cannot be taken on as it could pose risk and safeguarding issues on the person they would potentially share with. The project accepts referrals from young people who are at risk of homelessness, however, due to limited number of properties, it will always prioritise those with an open homelessness application.

Secure tenancy

Initially, young people reside at the property on a license agreement. Following the service supporting the young people for a minimum of 6 months, when the project team feels the young people can manage a tenancy without support, when there are no rent arrears and no reports of ASB for a long period of time, the young people are given the option of taking on a more secure assured tenancy and remaining in the property. At that point support is withdrawn, however, the team is always available if the young people would like to contact them. Depending on the country, the young people can keep their homelessness banding to bid on their own property whilst they are with the service, however this ends if they decide to take on a more secure tenancy.

Funding and rent

As the project is funded by the Welsh Government's Innovation Fund, this means there is no support element attached to the rent that is charged to young people, who only have to pay the rent that a general needs tenant would pay. Service charges for utilities and council tax vary from county to county. In shared accommodation the landlord becomes responsible for paying the council tax so CTR is not applicable.

Results

Since the service began on October 1st 2019, 46 young people have taken part in the scheme.

- Four individuals have changed to Assured Shorthold Tenancies and live independently without support
- Four young people were offered their own one bedroom flat via POBL following the scheme. This was because they had engaged well, overcame issues and were at a point they felt they wanted to live alone
- Ten young people left the service of their own accord for a range of reasons, such as going to university, moving in with a partner, having babies or to move closer to their families
- Five licenses were ended due to anti-social behaviour
- The remaining twenty three young people remain on the scheme.

Advice for other local authorities and organisations

One of the biggest challenges when implementing the scheme has been persuading various stakeholders that shared accommodation can work and therefore getting social landlords and local authorities on board. There seems to be a resistance to shared accommodation as it is deemed as being problematic.

Another challenge is making good matches between young people. The project team can only work on the information they have been given and sometimes referrers and young people provide full details of backgrounds as they worry it may affect their placement.

Also young people often lack life experience and skills necessary to compromise on issues and avert conflict. There is not one solution to this, there is no one size fits all and therefore the project has to be very flexible in how they work.

“ We have learned that one size does not fit all and that we have to be very flexible. We have also realized we have to think on our feet and become very good at problem solving to deal with issues we have not encountered before. ”

One of the main enabling factors is good communication between the landlord and the local authorities.

“ It took a few individuals to take a chance and to take a risk to do something different. Following this as a service we had to prove our worth and over time we've managed to get more people on board. ”

Another factor that helped immensely is having a separate pot of money as part of their funding that can pay for any damages to properties or that can cover any deficit in rent should an individual leave with rent arrears.

More Information

At EYHC, we will offer any help or support for organisations to understand more about Pobl's Shared Accommodation scheme. If you'd like to get in touch please contact: billrowlands@llamau.org.uk

Or if you'd rather you can get in contact with the team directly through their Service Manager Louise Easter louise.easter@poblgroup.co.uk