

Newsletter

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Employment...is a key part of the solution to homelessness



Thatcher's Grandchildren?

The term "Thatcher's children" has been growing in usage by politicians and the media recently. Sometimes used as a proud statement to signify political intent and sometimes used with concern to reference the similar economic and political realities between now and the eighties. For those people who have experienced ravaging intergenerational unemployment in the years since and who have suffered the hardships of marginalised existence in insecure or no housing it is, however, more than a throwaway term. With the coming changes to Housing Benefit and the planned introduction of the Universal Credit system with its increased conditionality, it is to be hoped that there will not be a new and successive generations of Thatcher's children, or Cameron's, or the Coalition's.

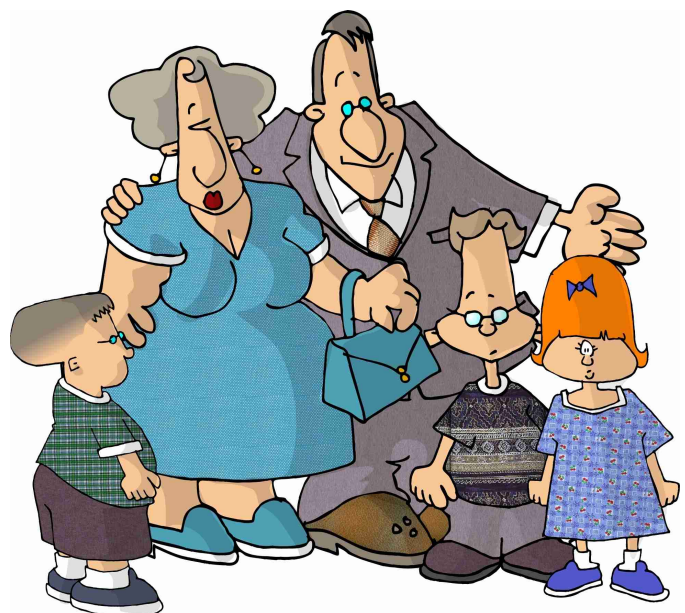
In an age where it's been reported that a London school is building on site accommodation to house those pupils who want to remain in education but are stopped from doing so by being homeless or inadequately housed, it is understandable that many in the Third & Public sectors are so concerned about the impact of welfare reform on people's ability to sustain accommodation and continue their journey to work. With the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance, changes to qualifying criteria for child benefit, child tax credit, working tax credits, income support for lone parents, and the heightened family problems that can arise from economic downturn there is much that could increase the risks of homelessness for a young person.

Somewhat ironically changes to Housing Benefit rules will mean that the shared rate only will be available to those under 35, with only those older being considered 'mature' enough to warrant single person accommodation. What does this mean for those who've been homeless and need their own single person accommodation to continue their recovery? Many homeless people will be adversely affected by the 10% cut in Housing Benefit after 12 months of unsuccessful

job seeking – what can we do to support people on this journey?. The Scottish Government's Cross Sector Working Party on Supported Accommodation will be compiling its recommendations in February and will add a welcome voice to the call for the specific housing and employability needs of those in supported accommodation to be considered.

SHEN is organising two events to explore the issues, garner feedback to influence decision making and share ideas and solutions. The Gathering Storm on the 3rd March at the West Park Conference Centre in Dundee will focus on young people and employability, particularly within the context of welfare reform, and the SHEN Annual Forum – On Your Bike?, at Out of The Blue, Edinburgh on 22nd March will provide an opportunity to ask questions of a Jobcentre Plus panel, and hear of innovative approaches to homelessness & employability in difficult times.

Thatcher's grandchildren? Unfortunately for many this could come to mean more than a media sound bite.



KEEP IN TOUCH! VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.shen-scotland.org and join our mailing list.

The SHEN *interview*



This issue I spoke with Dr Whittle who provides medical services for homeless people in Inverness.

CA: Can you tell us where you work and what you do?

LW: I am the GP for homeless people using a day centre in Inverness. I work part-time and my role is that of any bog-standard GP—ie a mixture of everyone and everything—but with a lot of mental health and addictions work.

The Health Team comprises myself, a full-time CPN[A], a part-time CPN and a very part-time general nurse.

We are not an actual GP practice but are 'hosted' [as in parasite] by a local GP practice—and we share their computer system for records etc.

We share a Housing dept—run building which is a day centre for Homeless people—providing 2 meals a day and support and advice from the day care officers. We work very closely with the Housing dept which is beneficial to both the health and housing outcomes for my patients.

We have a small case load compared with a normal primary care team, but our patients are very demanding and require a lot of intensive input from the team

Historically in Highland Region, opiate substitute programmes have been initiated by the local specialist centre, and primary care teams are only involved with maintenance prescribing once the patient is thought to be 'stable'.

CA: How do you see your work fitting in with employability?

LW: About 4 years ago, because we have such a high proportion of addiction patients, we decided to start initiating methadone and suboxone programmes at the Day Centre. Although this resulted in a certain level of stability for these patients—it has become increasingly obvious that a chemical treatment is only part of the answer. The majority of these patients seem content to accept that a lower usage of heroin and less time spent in jail is their ultimate goal, and that they can't achieve any more than this. As a result we see a lot of the 'revolving door' type patient—especially as inability to maintain any form of tenancy is also built into the equation. Co-incidentally with this realisation, the Recovery model has become very prominent in the addictions and the political fields, and it's been encouraging for me to hear and read experts in the field of addictions come up with evidence that totally supports the idea that medical treatment is one part of a whole treatment package.

I do feel that these patients have very low aspirations—not because they are 'lazy' or of 'the wrong' mind-set, but because of many factors in their lives. It seems to me that unless we encourage them to aspire higher, they are very unlikely to recover from their addiction.

The evidence—and my own gut feeling— all points towards employment [in its widest definition] as being one of the main factors in helping these folks recover.

CA: Can you explain your vision for the service you're trying to put in place?

LW: I am trying to set up a project where employment support is an integral part of the opiate substitute programme. ie we accept that treatment is not purely medical and that recovery will not happen without goals and aspirations and progress towards some form of meaningful activity. So—rather than waiting for this mythical state of stability, we will start to offer this very focussed support as soon as the patient feels comfortable[ish] on their drug treatment—ie 1-2 weeks.

Broadly speaking, it will involve identification of the patient's goals and ways to achieve these, working with the patient and with various local and national agencies to overcome obstacles to this progress. The ultimate goal will be employment and full recovery from addiction. The support will be much more focused and tailor-made than that which established employment support agencies are able to offer. This is possible as the support occurs within, and in the same place as, the initial prescribing team and as an integral part of the treatment programme.

CA: Is this something that you are aware happens anywhere else in Scotland?

LW: As far as I can tell this is a unique approach to addictions treatment—and seems to me to be common-sense, to offer much in the way of streamlining the whole process—and also to fulfil all the aims and objectives outlined in governmental reports on Recovery programmes. I have had a lot of support from organisations and individuals, including a lot of help from SHEN—for which I am most grateful.

I am working with the Highland Council and Research and Development from Highland Health Board, to get funding for both a pilot and a research project, to develop these ideas.

I know that purely offering chemical treatment, even with addiction counselling, to these patients will not work, if we are aiming at recovery as the ultimate outcome, we have to offer something else. All the evidence points to this being employment—or some meaningful activity.—To incorporate this into the treatment programme from the start seems to me, to be the obvious way forward. If anyone is involved in this kind of work I would really welcome the sharing of information and experiences.

The Lanarkshire Equally Well Test Site Information for Services

The Scottish Government established the Health Inequalities task force to consider measures that could be put in place to help reduce the inequalities in our population. The resultant programme of activity is 'Equally Well' and the Lanarkshire Equally Well test site is one of eight test sites across Scotland aiming to generate evidence on what works to help tackle health inequalities in Scotland.

The Lanarkshire test site is aimed at alleviating poverty and improving health by increasing potential employability.

A key feature of the Lanarkshire Equally Well test site is to work with partner services not traditionally engaged with employability needs of clients such as social work services, housing services, NHS services and the third sector. The main thrust of the service relies upon housing, social and health services frontline staff in Lanarkshire encouraging unemployed clients, who are recovering from a health condition or illness, to engage with the service via a single phone call. The service is voluntary and the call is to a free phone number – 0800 1412865. A qualified Occupational Health Advisor from the Health Working Lives team will provide advice about the clients condition and also, should the client wish, connect their call

to a relevant local Employment Agency for further advice and support on their journey back to work.

Activities within The Lanarkshire Equally Well test site include:

- Increasing health and employability awareness among front line staff via a variety of platforms including staff awareness/training sessions support clients with more choices as part of their recovery pathway, network events for front line staff to find out about the support that local employment services can offer clients, development of e-module on Health and Employability, setting Performance Indicators for services/localities
- Implementing a social marketing campaign to assist front line staff to support employability and generate self referrals
- Promoting a single point of access to employability services via Equally Well Service Free Phone number
- Developing a feedback system on clients progress/pathway

For more information, contact Lesley Mackay on 01698 454726 or email lesley.mackay@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

SHEN Update

SHEN undertook a highly successful inaugural Study Tour to London, visiting the 2 major organisations working within homelessness, St Mungo's and Thames Reach with 9 people from key organisations from across Scotland. We focused on finding out about the positive impact of client involvement on employability, apprenticeship schemes to train former and current service users to work within homelessness organisations and the Places of Change agenda within England. The group will be writing a report which will be available on the SHEN website early next year, and will be presenting at the SHEN Annual Forum on 22/3/11. If you are interested in finding out more or would be interested in future tours contact clare@scsh.org.uk.

SHEN delivered employability awareness training to frontline homelessness workers in Argyll & Bute. Contact clare@scsh.org.uk to arrange this for your team, organisation, or region.

In conjunction with SCSH's Youth Team, SHEN has arranged The Gathering Storm, a timely conference focusing on young people and employability, particularly



within the context of welfare reform. The day will be an opportunity to be appraised of the issues, reflect on practice, and to be inspired by ideas. For more information or to book a place for the all day event which will be held at the West Park Conference Centre in Dundee on Thursday 3rd March, contact admin@scsh.org.uk.

The SHEN Annual Forum will be held on Tuesday 22nd March, 2011, at Out of The Blue, Old Drill Hall, Dalmeny Road in Edinburgh and will again be limited in size in order to give delegates the opportunity for hands on learning and the chance to really talk to each other in a relaxed environment. Priority will be given to SHEN members. For more information or to book contact admin@scsh.org.uk.

The SHEN Employability Toolkit will be available soon.

To complement the Toolkit SHEN will be making a short film to highlight the barriers and solutions to employability for people experiencing homelessness, if you or your service users would like to be involved please contact clare@scsh.org.uk

Ingeus helps Heather find the Pathway to a new career



Many homeless people on benefits for health related conditions can find themselves linked to Ingeus, and as such Ingeus take a positive approach to building both their knowledge of homelessness and relations with homelessness organisations.

When Heather joined Ingeus' Pathways to Work programme in Edinburgh, she had been unemployed for 12 months, having left her job due to mental health issues.

When Heather met her Ingeus advisor, she explained that she had previous experience working in boarding kennels and at a local supermarket, but being out of work had left her unsure of her prospects. She felt that employers would not be interested in her, and she didn't have a clear idea of the kind of work she wanted to do.

Heather says' "After being unemployed for a while I lost my confidence and self-esteem. I didn't know what to write in an application to make an employer interested in me. I was afraid to open my mind to suggestions, and the idea of applying for lots of different jobs frightened me."

Heather's advisor talked to her about her job goals, and determined that she was interested in starting a career in social care. Heather had no experience in this area, so her advisor showed her the kind of roles that she could apply for.

Having a goal helped to focus Heather, and she started attending Ingeus' workshops, which include Confidence Building, CV Writing, and Interview Skills.

Heather started using the computers and phones at Ingeus' Job Station to find and apply for work, and her advisor arranged for her to attend mock interviews so she would be ready when the time came to meet employers.

Heather's efforts soon paid off, and she has now started a job with Lothian charity, Elcap as a support worker. Heather is now planning the next step in her career path, and intends to gain some qualifications through her work, then move on to university to study social care.

Heather says, "Ingeus helped me realise my potential, and now my life has changed. I love my job and I get up every morning raring to go. I feel like I am part of the world now, instead of just watching it pass me by."

About Ingeus UK

Since 2002 Ingeus has been supporting people in the UK to make the move from benefits into work. Our Pathways to Work programme is delivered in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, and helps people on health-related benefits to find suitable, lasting work.

Joining the Pathways to Work programme will not affect your benefits, and when you join you will have access to your own personal employment advisor, in-house workshops, calculations to show you how much financially better-off you will be in work, free job hunting facilities, specialist advice from physical and mental health experts, and ongoing support once you start work.

In Scotland Ingeus delivers the Pathways to Work programme from offices in Edinburgh, Galashiels, Livingston and Musselburgh.

For more information:

- Call Ingeus on 0800 321 3139 (free from landlines) or 0131 221 5300
- Visit our website at www.ingeus.co.uk/health
- Email info@ingeus.co.uk

The Get On Service

The Get On Information Service started life in June 2004 as a mobile outreach recruitment unit to link people to employability projects. In May 2009 it became a mobile signposting service dealing with a range of poverty related issues (housing, health, employment etc).

Since then it has grown into a partnership of organisations with a staff website, guide to services, local information and guidance points across Edinburgh and a staff networking and learning service. It is led by the City of Edinburgh Council along with other partners to help people with everyday issues so that they can move towards better job or life prospects.

It offers free information and help with volunteering, education, training and employment opportunities, as well as pointing people in the direction of support with issues of debt, housing, drug usage, mental health or other life issues. The service is person centred, so it is easy to access, and all staff in the Get On network are trained and approachable. The service works to overcome barriers in new ways,

developing and capitalising on assets which can be used to achieve change across the city. By working with the Neighbourhood Partnerships and a range of partner organisations, Get On is achieving results locally, and is making use of innovations developed at neighbourhood, city and national levels. Get On demonstrates how 'shared services' can really make a difference on the ground.

The Get On bus alone has guided over 1200 people to services across Edinburgh between May 2009 and October 2010 with the addition of the fixed points soon to be active we hope to help many more people into services that can help them resolve issues and improve their lives. With the partnership side to the project we aim to improve worker's knowledge of all the services that may impact positively in their client's lives and thereby improve the service to the public overall.

The motto of Get On is "I can do that myself but I know a man who can"

If you are interested in learning more and/or being part of this project you can sign up on the website: <http://www.geton-edinburgh.org.uk/>

Or contact:

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