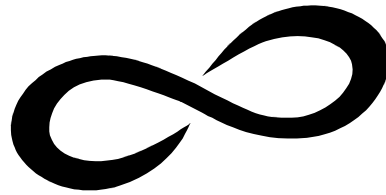


Northamptonshire
Community Housing Network



Housing Newsletter



26th April 2011

Progress on Making The Housing Plan happen and Creating the Community Housing Network



What's been happening, the Headlines

- (1) Making the Housing Plan Happen
- (2) Learning Disability Partnership Board support for the Housing Plan
- (3) Local Council's coming together to work on Housing matters
- (4) Handing Over and Setting up the Network
- (5) Money promised to help set up the Network
- (6) Looking for more people to make the Network happen
- (7) Understanding how to find a home through the local council – a new study is unveiled
- (8) Setting up the Network Timebank
- (9) Creating The Housing Teaching Programme
- (10) The Getting a Life Housing Event





(1) Making the Housing Plan Happen

In February we had our last meeting of the Housing Steering Group. The group ended as it had finished its work, to produce the Plan.

It also started to set up The Community Housing Network. The group has been working hard to find money and a host agency for the Network. A host has been found this is 'Delos Community'.



(2) Learning Disability Partnership Board support for the Housing Plan

The Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) met on 31st March and agreed that it wants to focus some of its time on Housing matters in 2011-2012. and has made Housing one of its top 3 priorities.

The Board has produced some housing aims for this year which are being shared with people and suggests that the Housing Steering Group is restarted, but only meets 4 times in the year.

Its role will be to make sure that the actions in the Housing Plan are happening; this is called 'overseeing' or 'monitoring' the Plan.

It will also make sure everyone has a voice on how the plan is happening

It is suggested Andy Horwood, from the Supporting People Team, will Chair the Group and it will be made up of people and professionals as it was before.

For more information about The Housing Steering Group contact Andy



Horwood on 01604 237757 or email ahorwood@northamptonshire.gov.uk

For more information about the Partnership Boards Plans for 2011-2012 contact Dawn Crawford on 01536 532887 or email DaCrawford@northamptonshire.gov.uk



(3) Local Council's Coming Together on Housing Matters

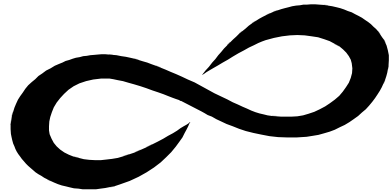
In early March 2011, some people from the 7 Local Council Housing Offices met with people from Social Services to discuss how they can work together to make housing services better in Northamptonshire for people with a learning disability.

The meeting was very successful and they agreed to meet a few times this year to work on things such as:-

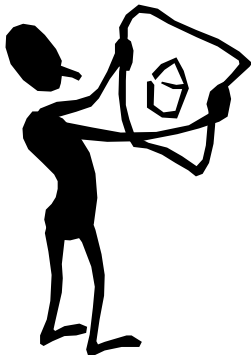
- ❖ Making the housing plan happen
- ❖ Improving referrals between Social Services and Local Councils
- ❖ Improving information sharing
- ❖ Improving housing needs information for people with a Learning Disability



After the meeting two Housing Offices volunteered to join the Learning Disability Partnership Board to make sure there are local voices about housing on the board.



**Northamptonshire
Community Housing
Network**



(4) Handing Over Setting up the Network

On Friday 15th April 2011, there was a meeting to discuss the setting up of the Community Housing and Support Network.

The meeting arranged the hand over of setting up the Network from Northamptonshire County Council's Supporting People Team to the Delos Community.

At the meeting we looked at how to set up the Network, the services it aims to offer this year and how to do this work. It was also agreed that Marion Turner would Coordinate the setting up of the Network.

In preparation for the meeting an Action Plan was produced it covers the main actions for the Network 2011-2012.

A copy of this plan will shortly be available on the website at www.myhomemysay.co.uk, or you can contact Marion Turner for a copy by emailing mturner@myhomemysay.co.uk or calling 01933 381467



(5) Money promised to help set up the Network

At the end of March 2011, we heard that our work to find some money to help set up the Network had been successful.

We will receive £15,000 towards setting up the Network, this comes from:-

- ❖ Northamptonshire County Council – Social Services - £10,000, and
- ❖ Northampton Borough Council – Housing Service - £5,000

Other Councils are offering facilities and support instead of money

This money will help us get the Network started. More money and help will be needed to ensure all the actions of the Network this year can happen.

Other Funding for The Network

A group within the Network has already met to talk about this and think how the Network can find enough money to do all the things it wants to.

A small group of people met on the 4th April to talk about this.

A further meeting about funding and agreeing rules on how the Network will operate, called a 'Constitution', will be held shortly (in May)

If you would like to join this group please contact Marion Turner





(6) Looking for More people to make The Network Happen

We are looking for more people to join us to make the Network happen. To do this we are holding two meetings in May.

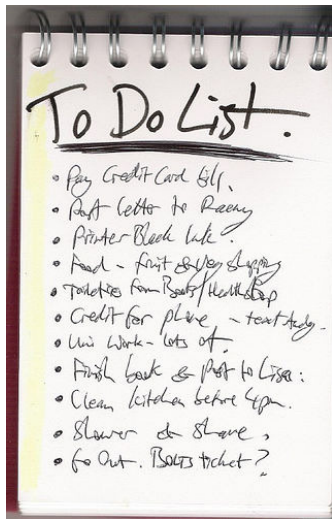
These will be on :-

- (1) Friday 13th May – 2.00pm to 5.00pm and
- (2) Thursday 26th May – 2.00 to 5.00pm

The aim of the Network is to help you to help each other as you explore your housing options, plan to change how you live and settle in to your new community

The meetings will be at DELOS Head Office in Wellingborough

For more details of these meeting please see the website or call Marion Turner on 01933 381467



Housing Work for 2011-12

The planned work actions for this year are to:-

- (a) Set up the Network and the Timebank
- (b) Start supporting an agreed number of people on their housing journey
- (c) Produce all the information and tools to help people and families
- (d) Work with local housing offices to improve their services for people with learning disabilities
- (e) Make contact with Housing providers to create other housing solutions

- (f) Work to improve the housing needs picture of people with learning disabilities across Northants



(7) Understanding how to find a home through the local council – a new study is unveiled

In March 2011, members of the Community Housing Network worked with colleagues from Kettering Borough Council and Keyways Choice Based Lettings Scheme to look at the way they allocate the housing they rent out, this is known as Social rented housing.

We looked at how fair the rules used to allocate housing are for people with a learning disability. We also looked at how easy the Choice based lettings scheme is for people with a Learning Disability.

Keyways

Choice Based Lettings is the approach used by 6 of the 7 Local Councils in Northamptonshire to allocate Social Housing (council or Housing Association Housing) in their area. It is not used in South Northants at present

There are some very important things we found out, these include:-

- ❖ Council's are expected by law (the Equality Act 2010) to provide extra help to people with disabilities to use their services
- ❖ They are also expected to change their policies or rules where they can be shown to be unfair to people with disabilities





- ❖ We found that Keyways need to do much work to make their Choice Based Lettings Scheme easier for people with learning disabilities to use,
- ❖ They also need to think about their rules for deciding who should be offered housing soonest, this is known as ‘banding’. At present people with Learning disabilities living at home with their families would be low on the waiting list or have a low band. We don’t think this is fair as it does not take into account people’s needs, government policy or people’s wish to be independent
- ❖ We found it is really important for you to get help in filing in forms and describing your housing needs. Many people could be put in a higher ‘band’ if they are able to explain their needs better on the forms.
- ❖ This problem isn’t helped as the applications forms are not very easy to read or good at collecting the right information for people with care and support needs
- ❖ The Valuing People report noted that people with learning disabilities need practical support and help in all the stages of the allocations process,
 - *including thinking out their needs & desires before they start ‘bidding’ for a home,
 - *in viewing a home and thinking out if it’s the right place for them and
 - *in finding and arranging the care & support they need to live there.



❖ Our report shows little of this ‘extra’ support is available for people. This is the very help the Community Housing Network would offer.

Although these findings are to do with Keyways and Kettering Borough Council, we found that the problems identified are common to many Choice based lettings schemes and allocations policies.

To help Local Council partners improve their services for people with a learning disability we:-

- (a) Produced a Questionnaire that Council’s can use to ‘score’ their own service against good practice standards and the things the Equality Act says they should be doing.
- (b) We are thinking of making an award scheme to encourage Council’s to make their services better for people with Learning Disabilities

To help people better use Choice based lettings schemes & understand allocations policies we also produced:-

- (a) a plain English Guide to Keyways Scheme for families & supporters of people with a Learning Disability, and
- (b) an easy read guide to Choice based Lettings for people with Learning Disabilities

All the findings of our work can be found in a report we have produced called:-



'Reviewing Keyways Choice Based Lettings Scheme and Housing Allocations Policy' by Marion Turner for The Community Housing and Support Network. April 2011.

The report is being agreed by partners at present and will shortly be available via the website www.myhomemysay.co.uk or from Marion Turner.

Thanks very much to The Learning Disability Partnership Board for the Money for this work and to Kettering Borough Council for volunteering to join us in this project. Thanks also to colleagues from Housing Options & the Valuing People team for sharing their work with us.

It is hoped all Housing Authorities and Choice based lettings schemes in their area, will take the opportunity to review their own services, given this work, and join with us in committing to make these better for people with learning Disabilities across the County.



(8) Setting Up the Network Timebank

One of the ways we plan to help the Network make things happen is by using Time sharing or Time banking.

Timebanking is where people agree to pay each other 1 time credit for each hour of help they give to some one else.

So we aim to use timebanking to 'pay' members for volunteering some of their



time to help create and run the Network.

To help us understand what we need to do to start a Timebank we visited a Timebank that has been going for 4 years on Tuesday 12th April 2011. this Timebank is called 'The Skills Exchange' and its in Nottingham.

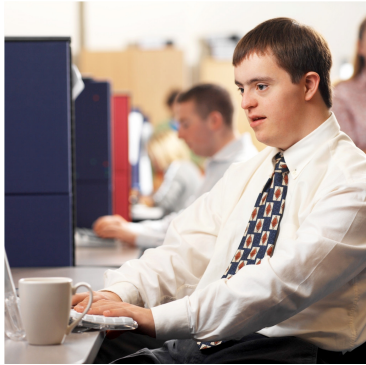
The people there were very helpful. They told us their story, talked about their members and some of the things they do & skills they share with each other. They have about 250 members and about 200 of these use the time bank regularly.

They showed us what we will need to think about and the computer system they use to help them keep track of all the time sharing that's happening.

We also visited Timebanking UK in Gloucestershire on **Monday 18th April 2011** and talked to them about registering and becoming a member of their association. This will cost £100 and includes;-

- ❖ access to all the information about Timebanking they have produced
- ❖ access to their 'Time on Line' Timebanking software and
- ❖ CRB checks for all members

If you are interested in helping us set up the Timebank please get in touch with Karon Hawes via email timebank@myhomemysay.co.uk



(9) Creating The Housing Teaching Programme

Work on this is going well. A project plan for this was produced in March 2011 and is available on the website www.myhomemysay.co.uk.

Marion is working on producing the housing Information guides to support the programme and teaching colleagues are working to create lesson plans & a year by year housing work programme for 11 – 19year olds at school.

There will be a meeting to work on the teaching part of the programme in May 2011. If you are interested in joining in the work to make the housing teaching programme please let us know.

(10) The Getting a Life Housing Event

As part of work to help young people and their families think about how they might like to live in future, an event was held at Wrenn Spinney School in Kettering on 29th March 2011.

Lots of people from organisations came and shared with people about housing.

Ashley from the Network gave a talk about her housing story and her experience of living in her own place. She received a round of applause.

All the information shared at this event is available from Amanda Smith at amsmith@northamptonshire.gov.uk - Ashley's story will shortly be on the website www.myhomemysay.co.uk





You can contact the Network by ringing – 01933 677889 and asking for Marion Turner, or

By emailing – mturner@myhomemysay.co.uk