

Housing Independence Project (HIP) – Carmarthenshire County Council

Young people in Carmarthenshire who lacked family support and could no longer live at home found themselves increasingly isolated and often in accommodation that was not suitable for them. Within the Housing Department, the issue was causing significant concern and following discussions with various partners, the idea for the Housing Independence Project (HIP) was born and it became a reality, with our first training flat becoming available for a young person in 2021.

The purpose of HIP is to provide good quality and affordable accommodation to young people who would have the benefit of living independently whilst learning life skills, receiving support and bespoke training from our Pre-Tenancy team, Youth Worker and Tenancy Support Officer.

The project offers young people the opportunity to gain skills, training and employment which would lead to permanent accommodation and to help them integrate and contribute positively to their communities. Specific support is also provided by a named tenancy support officer and youth worker.

Our Pre-Tenancy team is pivotal in supporting the young people, prior to them becoming tenants by delivering realistic, interactive and inspiring training specifically designed to meet the need of the young person, whilst in the training flats.

A description of how the project came into being, its aims and how it was carried out

The proposal to establish the HIP alongside the introduction of a specific tenancy support officer for young people would help to address the challenges identified in our Homeless Strategy and help to achieve the Local authority objectives as stated below.

Through consultation, it was agreed that the project would need to be in the main towns of the county to be as accessible as possible for young people to access future education and/or employment opportunities.

We have 3 properties that provide the accommodation for the training flats. Within these premises, occupants have their own room with a shared kitchen and living room area.

Quote from young person in the project

“The location is brilliant for me because college is just down the road, it is also pretty central without being too close to some of the negative influences in Llanelli”.

“Been alright, I have managed to find work and get on a traineeship, so things are much better”

The aim of the project is to support young people to learn the skills necessary to live independently, find employment or continue in education or training. Once the young person has the skills and confidence to live independently, they are supported to move on to their own independent tenancies. Our Pre-Tenancy team and Youth Team have worked really closely and devised a very successful training course to help our young people to develop the skills required to maintain a successful tenancy.

Quote from young person in the project

“I feel like I’ve got a lot more support now, getting help with my money management has really helped me.”

“Having a roof over my head and support in place has let me think about the other things in life like finding work. Since starting I have been attending training, applying for jobs and attending interviews.”



All services are linked together under the 16 – 25 Young Persons Forum and the Youth Accommodation Panel.

The team will monitor and support the young person during their tenancy, bring in additional support where it is needed and withdraw services where the client is progressing well.

Once ready, the young person will be supported to look for independent accommodation, and if required, floating support put in place.

An account of the challenge the authority/team faced

- There was a significant gap between young people presenting as homeless and moving quickly on to secure, independent living;
- Many young people fail within the first 6 months of their tenancies because they lack basic skills to live independently;
- That there is no dedicated/ focused support for young people to secure accommodation in the private rented sector;
- A system that specifically addressed the needs of young people and a holistic approach to support provision.
- There was no suitable accommodation within the housing stock to provide the shared accommodation.
- Developing a relationship with the young person that was meaningful, supportive and holistic.

The obstacles that were overcome to achieve it

- The changes in legislation brought about by the pandemic required the local authority to pick up all homeless people, and some of our temporary accommodation was not suitable for the young people due to individual vulnerabilities.
- We had no specific accommodation that suited the needs of the young person.
- Previously, teams worked independently and there was little partnership working to look for the best and most sustainable outcome for the young person.
- Lack of long-term coordinated support.

We have as part of the HIP created this person-centered approach which considers the initial and ongoing support needs of the young person. This has resulted in the following outcomes:

- The Youth Accommodation Panel (YAP) to look at the needs of the young person and identify the best accommodation for them, taking account of their individual circumstances.
- The Pre-Tenancy training itself helps to identify a young person's challenges and then tailors a bespoke training package to suit individual needs. This would include budgeting, being a good neighbour, understanding the responsibilities of a tenancy and what issues need to be raised with the landlord as part of their responsibilities. The team work hard to understand the needs of the young person and develop a relationship built on trust.
- Ongoing, long-term partnership working which has led to more sustainable tenancies and has marked a move away from traditional allocation procedures.
- Named dedicated Tenancy Support Officer and Youth Worker who give guidance and support as required and have regular and sustained contact with the young people.
- Ongoing support provided across tenure after move-on from the project.
- By establishing the HIP, we were able to work in partnership with private landlords and source accommodation that was suitable to use for the purpose of shared living. It is classed

as temporary accommodation, allowing the team to claim housing benefit to cover the rent, with the tenants responsible for the additional service charge of £20 per week to cover all household bills, including WIFI.

Whether the planned outcomes were met

The objectives that were agreed collectively:

- To allow young people access to supported accommodation with the opportunity to experience independent living
- Develop/ learn life skills with the right support so that they can go on and maintain their accommodation
- An officer will work side by side with Private Sector Development officers to identify suitable properties within the PRS for young persons accommodation
To help move young people that experience homelessness through the service quickly, to a point of permanent and independent housing to fit in with the 'Housing First' and Prevention agenda
- To educate and provide information on how best to manage a tenancy along with budgeting and income maximisation.

Case Study

Prior to getting a place in the training flats person X was sofa surfing as her relationship with her Mum was quite toxic.

She was not engaged in any training, education on employment. She would be the first person to admit that she didn't have much direction in life.

Since having a place in the training flat she has engaged really well and taken every opportunity available to her. She has widened her understanding of what it takes to successfully manage her own tenancy by taking part in the training regularly. She has covered topics such as understanding resettlement, community awareness and isolation, managing your tenancy, utilities and much more. She has got herself onto a traineeship in the area and found some part time work to do alongside it.

She has also received support alongside the training with things like registering with the local GP, improving her mental health and managing her finances. All together she is in a much better place and feeling a lot more confident about her move on into independent living. She has been an excellent example of what we hoped to achieve with this training flats project.

Two of the projects have also come together to develop and enhance social skills and cement their relationship with Youth Workers and their support providers by arranging social activities together. Not only are they having fun but learning essential life skills of social interaction.







Since the start of the project 12 young people have had the opportunity to experience independent living, with 2 moving to independent tenancies, with the knowledge and skills they have acquired – see Appendix 1

Instilling confidence into the young person which allows them to live independently and successfully in their new homes and the community.

Acquiring more properties in the private rented sector into our Social Lets programme to allow successful move on when required.

How the project met the corporate aims of the authority

Three of our corporate core values are:-

- Customer first
- Listening
- One team

The ethos and partnership working of the individual officers that come together to educate and support our young people in the HIP meets all the above values. Officers are responsive to the needs of the people being supported and ensure a bespoke service is always delivered.

Carmarthenshire's homeless strategy identified a key action relating to young person accommodation.

- Remodel the provision of temporary accommodation for young people, making sure that wider issues such as employment and training and health impact are addressed.

The HIP has completely transformed the way we allocate, house, educate, train and support our most vulnerable young people.

Young person quote of what life was like before getting a place in the training flat.

“I was homeless, alone and skint”

“I wasn’t really doing anything, bouncing back and forth between mates’ places without any idea of what I was going to do next”

“I was there here, there and everywhere just trying to get by.”

The young people in the project had varying social skills and often found it difficult to engage and bond with others and support providers. Since being in the project, the young people have held events such as come dine with me – improving their skills in preparing fresh, nutritious food, a fun night and an excellent bonding opportunity.

Examples of the food prepared by young people in the project





How much of the ideas behind the project were locally-driven

The whole idea for the project was identified from local need for local people. The project is delivered locally, in the main towns so that the young people can stay within the area where they have the best support or connection.

What funding was accessed

Welsh Government Innovation grant funding - £69,000 annually over 2 years.

The level of partnership working involved in the project, either cross departmental. public-public or public-private

For the project to succeed, a significant amount of partnership working is required due to the complexities of the young people. The project is run and managed by the Housing Department of Carmarthenshire County Council and the main council departments involved are:

- Social Lets team
- Youth Service
- Pre-Tenancy
- Children Services
- Supporting People

We used to work closely with floating support providers, however, taking onboard the comments of our young people, this no longer happens. Due to the level of support being provided by the Youth Support worker and Tenancy Support officer, anything over that support was considered overkill by the young people. As this project prides itself on being responsive, this change was implemented with immediate effect.

Training should have been provided by Area 43, but due to capacity issues, they withdrew from the project and all training except for Pre-Tenancy is provided by the Youth Worker.

Not forgetting our private landlords, who have allowed their properties to be adapted to suit the needs of the project.

We continue to work closely with the following as part of the Youth Accommodation Panel and 16-25 forum.

- *Our Young Homeless Clients*
- *Supported lodging providers (Llamau)*
- *Ffostering Services*
- *Caerlas (Young Offenders)*
- *Mental Health and Learning Disabilities*

Appendix 1

Case Studies for Young Persons who have moved on from Training Flats

Case Study – Person C

Even though Person C was only at the training flat a short while and didn't have a chance to complete all the training involved he engaged with support services well when he was there. He received support around his finances, EET, mental health and relationships. When his circumstances changed, and C needed to move out of county he was better prepared for the move and handled his affairs really well. He moved to Cardiff, was able to locate and arrange suitable accommodation in a shared house and found work in a local coffee shop. The experience and support provided while at the training flat eased his transition into independent living.

Case study – Person J

Youth Worker Scott began supporting Person J in September 2021 when he gained accommodation in the Burry Port training flat. Person J was only at the property for 4 months and did not finish all the training that was involved while he was there but did engage with support services. He received support for benefit's, job searching, household living skills and finances. After gaining a job opportunity in Swansea, Person J decided to move Swansea with his girlfriend to be closer to work. Having the experience and support whilst living on his own in the training flat has helped him gain basic living skills. He is now holding his own independent tenancy and to date there have been no issues.