



# **KEY PROJECT**

## **Housing Support Service**



# **Annual Report**

**September 2007-September 2008**

4 Carden Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1UT  
Tel: 01224 625822  
Fax: 01224 625830  
[www.castlehillha.co.uk](http://www.castlehillha.co.uk)

# Key Project, Castlehill Housing Association

## Annual Report

### September 2007-September 2008

#### **Background**

Castlehill Housing Association's Key Project is a housing support service offered to tenants. The aim of the housing support service is to help sustain a successful tenancy, in other words, to 'keep the key'. The service provides a holistic approach to tackling any risk which may threaten the tenancy and supporting the individual whatever their particular needs may be.

The Key Project was established in April 2001 and was originally financed through the National Lottery Community Fund. In 2003, the Key Project secured funding from Aberdeen City Council Supporting People for 60 hours housing support per week and in August 2005, funding was secured from Aberdeenshire Council through Supporting People for 18 hours per week.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, 'ring fencing' around Supporting People funding from the Scottish Government to the local authorities was removed. Aberdeen City Council continues to have a Supporting People Team and funding for 60 hours housing support from the Key Project is in place until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. In Aberdeenshire, however, funding for Key Project housing support service was transferred from the Supporting People Team to Housing (Options and Estate Management), within Housing and Social Work. A 3 year contract, until 31 March 2011, is now in place to provide 18 hours per week housing support within Aberdeenshire.

#### **Staffing**

The project employs 3 part time members of staff;

1 Housing Support Officer	22 hours per week
2 Housing Support Workers	28 hours per week each

Within Aberdeen City, each member of staff works 20 hours per week. For the Aberdeenshire contract, the Support Workers provide 8 hours each with the Support Officer adding a further 2 hours, weekly.

## Statistics 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007- 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008

### Tenancies receiving Key Project housing support

	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2007	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2008
<b>ACC</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Aberdeenshire</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>72</b>

Over the past 12 months, there has been an increase in the number of tenancies where the Key Project has been offering housing support . At present, the project is operating at capacity. The level of support is tailored to the individual's need which can mean contact on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis, dependent on need.

For Aberdeen City we have an agreed capacity of 45 plus or minus 5 tenancies, dependent on need. The contract with Aberdeenshire is for housing support in a minimum of 15 tenancies.

### Referrals

From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008, there were **56** new referrals for housing support from the Key Project, **39** of these were tenancies within the Aberdeen City area and **17** within Aberdeenshire.

	<b>ACC</b>	<b>Aberdeen shire</b>
Assessed as having housing support need and receiving service	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>
Not wishing service or no contact	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
Significant support from other agencies	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>
Very short term	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>
Not yet allocated	<b>6*</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>17</b>

\*Unusually high number of referrals unallocated at end of September 2008 as result of new housing development

Increasing housing stock within Castlehill Housing Association links directly with increased demand for housing support. As indicated above, this can lead to pressure on the service when a new development is allocated.

## Ending the Service

During the 12 month period, housing support was ended in **29** tenancies, **21** in Aberdeen City and **8** in Aberdeenshire.

### Reasons for ending

No longer requiring support	<b>8</b>
No longer wishing support	<b>1</b>
Deceased	<b>3</b>
Moved from area	<b>1</b>
Abandonment	<b>2</b>
Eviction	<b>1</b>
Contact lost	<b>13</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

It is recognised that the 'contact lost' category is high but this can be for a variety of reasons. If planned and unplanned visits and phone contact have been unsuccessful, then a letter is sent saying that if the tenant does not make contact within for example, 2 weeks, then we will assume that the tenant does not wish/require Key Project housing support to continue in the meantime.

### Number of tenancies supported 1/10/07-30/09/08

During the 12 month period, Key Project has provided housing support in:

**100** Castlehill Housing Association tenancies  
**68** within Aberdeen City and **32** in Aberdeenshire.

### Profiles of tenants currently receiving support

#### Housing support need profile

	Aberdeen	Aberdeenshire	<b>Total</b>
Older people	5	3	<b>8</b>
Young people	3	4	<b>7</b>
Learning disabilities	2	1	<b>3</b>
Physical illness/disability	9	2	<b>11</b>
Mental health related problems	10	7	<b>17</b>
Alcohol related problems	5	2	<b>7</b>
Drug related problems	3	0	<b>3</b>
Domestic Violence	4	1	<b>5</b>
Single homeless	3	0	<b>3</b>
Homeless family	1	0	<b>1</b>
Other	3	4	<b>7</b>
	48	24	<b>72</b>

## Age Profile

	Aberdeen	Aberdeen shire	All
Under 18	0	0	0
18-25	8	6	14
26-59	33	14	47
60-70	3	1	4
70+	4	3	7
	48	24	72

## Previously Homeless

**24** of the 48 tenants (**50%**) currently being supported in Aberdeen City area were previously homeless and **11** of the 24(**46%**) in Aberdeenshire.

## The nature of housing support within the Key Project

It can be quite difficult to describe what we actually do in the Key Project, as there is often no set pattern. People and their widely varying housing support needs often produce unexpected difficulties and areas where staff have little or no experience. Research is therefore a crucial tool in offering advice to individuals. The difficulties which tenants are facing may not be obvious at the outset and are only shared once there is trust in the relationship. The presenting difficulty may be a housing rent arrear, for example, yet the circumstances around this may range from a one-off crisis to a longer term multiple debt situation with an added physical or mental health related problem. As a result, some of the Key Project contact with individual tenants can be short term, yet, others may have long term housing support needs.

There remain two main strands to our work, housing support to existing tenants and housing support at the beginning of the tenancy.

For existing tenants, an increasing part of support is enabling and assisting tenants to move on to more suitable accommodation, for example, sheltered housing.

At the beginning of a tenancy, the first 6 months can be critical in terms of sustaining a successful tenancy. First of all, the tenant may have difficulty in moving in, particularly if they have no furniture, floor coverings etc. The availability of a furniture package from **furnitureinc.** has greatly alleviated this potential delay. Completion of Housing/Council Tax Benefit forms and submission of required evidence to substantiate the claim is another area which can have a serious impact on the successful sustainability of a tenancy.

## **Income Maximisation**

Over the last 12 months, housing support from the Key Project has directly generated approximately **£17,159** for tenants. In addition, we have forged a very successful partnership with the Outreach service of Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau to assist tenants to apply for Disability Living Allowance. Over the last 12 months, this has realised approx. **£10,424** in successful claims. A further **£2288** Attendance Allowance per annum was also successfully claimed. These are very important benefits for individuals as they are not included as income for other means tested benefits, such as Housing Benefit.

In total, it would be reasonable to claim that Key Project housing support service has been instrumental in increasing the income of tenants supported, by **£29,871** during the 12 month period.

### **Agencies we work with:**

The Key Project works in partnership with a number of agencies within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. These include:

#### **Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils**

Council Tax, Housing/ Council Tax Benefit, Education, Community Education, Social Work, Leisure, Taxi cards, Concession cards

#### **Department of Work and Pensions**

Job Centre Plus, Pension Service, Child Support Agency, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance

#### **NHS Grampian**

GP and associated practice based services      Occupational therapy  
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary                              Stonehaven Community Hospital  
Cornhill Hospital and associated psychiatric services      Roxburghe House

#### **Other agencies**

Smart Money Advice Project  
Outreach Service, Aberdeen Citizen's Advice Bureau  
Welfare Rights                              Instant Neighbour  
Aberdeen College                              Adult Learning  
Aberdeen Cyrenians                              Grampian Police  
Grampian Credit Union                              SCARF  
SSAFA    Sacro – Community mediation  
Alcohol Support Ltd                              ACIS(Aberdeen Counseling & Information Service)

Various Trust Funds – both local and national

#### **Utilities**

Gas and electricity suppliers  
Scott & Co (debt collecting agency)  
Sterling Park(debt collecting agency)

## **Tenants' feedback**

Receiving feedback from people who use our service is particularly important and below are some of the comments that have been made in individual's Housing Support Plan reviews:

*'Extremely helpful'*

*'Would find life quite daunting without your help'*

*'Made everything easy for me – I would never have managed on my own'*

*'Have appreciated support from someone independent'*

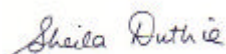
*'Suppose having a nag is necessary as I have a mind like a jellyfish !'*

## **Summary**

The Key Project continues to provide a housing support service which is valued and appreciated by the majority of the tenants who are offered support. The work can be challenging but can also deliver great job satisfaction. Many of the outcomes of housing support as offered by the Key Project are not measurable, but actual increase in income is an area where the outcome is visible and is also much valued by the tenants.

The funding situation with regards to Aberdeen City is concerning and hopefully this position will become clearer within the next 2-3 months. In Aberdeenshire, we hope to negotiate an increase in the number of hours of housing support.

The Scottish Government has researched the value of the Supporting People spending throughout the whole of Scotland. This research concluded that for every £1 spent on Supporting People, £1.10 was saved in other services. Even though ring fencing has been removed from Supporting People, housing support can continue to offer these cost savings to other public services



Sheila Duthie  
Housing Support Officer

20<sup>th</sup> November 2008