



KEY PROJECT

Housing Support Service



Annual Report

April 2016- March 2017

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Key Project, Castlehill Housing Association

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Background

Castlehill Housing Association's Key Project is a housing support service offering direct support to a number of Castlehill tenants in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, underpinned by a flexible approach to meeting individual needs. Housing Support from the Key Project aims to assist tenants to sustain a successful tenancy and 'to keep the key'.

The Key Project was established in April 2001 and was originally financed through the National Lottery Community Fund. Since 2003, the Key Project has been partly funded by Aberdeen City Council for 60 hours per week and from August 2005, Aberdeenshire Council has partly funded 18 hours per week. Additional funding for Key Project is met by Castlehill Housing Association.

The Key Project is based within the Housing Management department and forms part of Castlehill Housing Support Services, which are registered with the Care Inspectorate. The Key Project housing support service is specifically identified as an element of Castlehill's contribution to addressing homelessness in the organisation's Strategic Plan. It thereby contributes to the Association's aim of assisting local authority partners to meet legislative targets with regard to homelessness.

Castlehill Housing Association has a housing stock of 756 general needs and amenity tenancies in Aberdeen City and 373 general needs tenancies in Aberdeenshire. There are 229 Sheltered and very sheltered tenancies in the City and 250 in Aberdeenshire.

In the main, Key Project housing support is offered to general needs and amenity tenants but increasingly, especially where tenants have no family support, Key Project offers support in sheltered/very sheltered accommodation. This reflects the allocation of sheltered housing to a wider range of age and housing support need.

Over the last 16 years the Key Project has provided housing support in 493 Castlehill tenancies.

Staffing

Until October 2016, Key Project employed 4 part time members of staff, 3 Housing Support workers and 1 Housing Support Officer. However when 1 housing support worker left, her position was not filled. This reflects the reduction in funding by Aberdeenshire on 31/3/16.

The stability of staff has enabled the establishment of an extensive pool of resources and wide partnership working, leading to effective housing support service for tenants.

All staff use Guardian 24, a personal safety telephone link, when lone working. We are also now using mobile tablets. This means that we can complete the increasing number of online applications when we are with tenants.

Ongoing training and awareness sessions during the past twelve months have included:

- House Exchange update- House Exchange
- Dementia Project - Aberdeen Care & Repair Project
- Having Difficult Conversations -ACAS
- Health & Safety on line training - iHASCO
- Mental Health First Aid – NHS
- Complaints Handling and Procedures-CHA
- Dealing with Destitution – CPAG
- Child Protection –Confidence in practice – Child Protection Partnership
- Self Harm – Penumbra
- Universal Credit and Welfare Reform 2017 – Aberdeenshire Council

On rotation, 1 member of staff has attended the quarterly meetings of Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Advice Forum

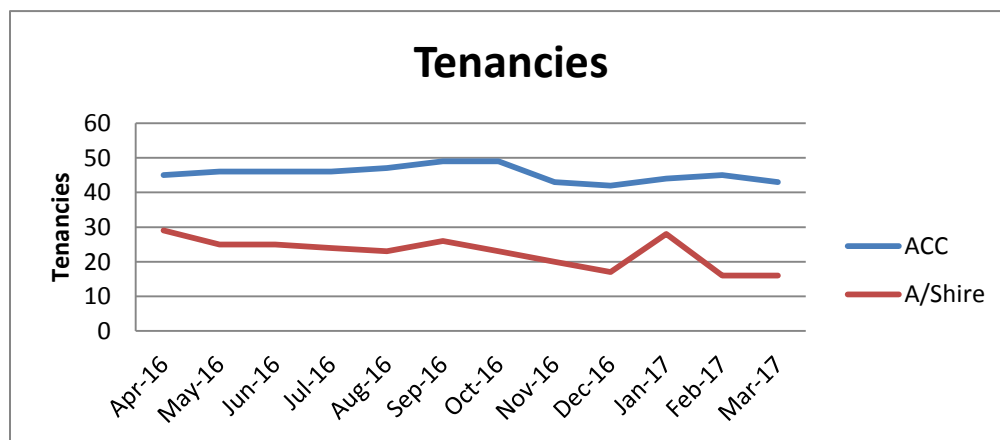
Activity Levels 1st April 2016 -31st March 2017
Tenancies receiving Key Project housing support

	At 31 st March 2016	At 31 st March 2017
ACC	44	43
Aberdeenshire	29	16
Total	73	59

Monthly totals of tenancies supported

	April 16	May 16	June 16	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sept 16
ACC	45	46	46	46	47	49
Shire	29	25	25	24	23	26
Total	74	71	71	70	70	75

	Oct 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Jan 17	Feb 17	Mar 17
ACC	49	43	42	44	45	43
Shire	23	20	17	18	16	16
Total	72	63	59	62	61	59



The Key Project continues to operate at full capacity in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

For Aberdeen City we have an agreed capacity of 45 plus or minus 5 tenancies, dependent on need. The updated contract with Aberdeenshire effective from April 2016 is for housing support in a minimum of 15 tenancies. The reduction in the number of tenancies being supported in March 2017 reflects the reduction in staffing.

Although the number of tenancies supported is one indicator, the complexities of the needs of individual tenants are not reflected in numbers alone. Some tenants require more input than others, for example, at the beginning of a tenancy, or as their circumstances change during a tenancy, or when they move house.

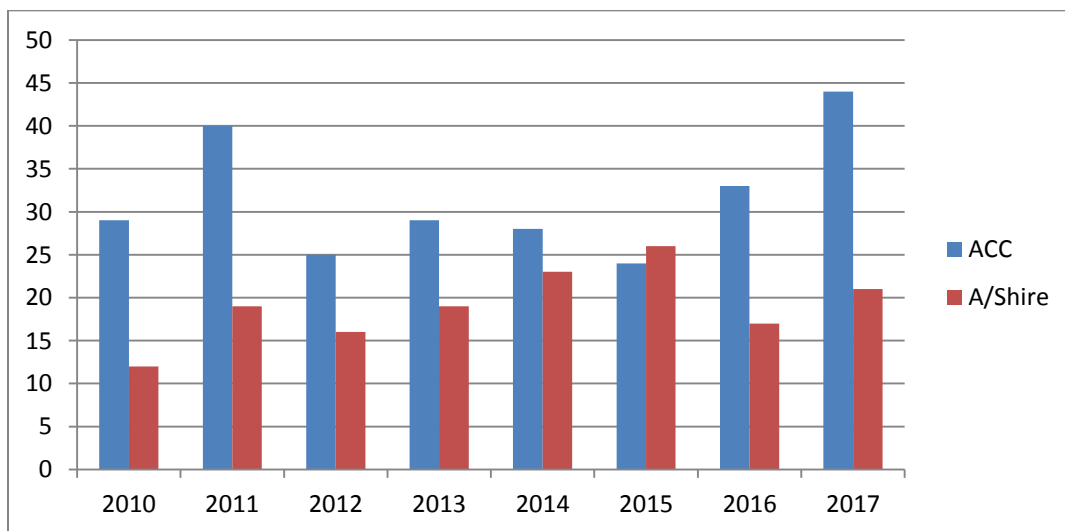
New Referrals

There were **65** referrals during the 12 month period, **44** in Aberdeen City and **21** in Aberdeenshire. **2** referrals were unassessed at 31/3/16, **5** were unassessed(2 on hold) at 31/3/17.

	ACC	Aberdeenshire	Total
Assessed as having housing support need and receiving service	31	15	46
Not requiring/ wishing service or no contact	5	4	9
Significant support from other agencies	2	0	2
Short term	3	2	5
Support on hold	1	1	2
Yet to be assessed @ 31/3/16	3	0	3
Total	45	22	67

(Figures include 2 previously unassessed @31/3/16)

There was a significant rise in referrals in both local authority areas during the year 2016/17. However, the numbers supported during the year did not really reflect this – reason being the higher number of short term contacts where no ongoing housing support need was identified.



Ending the Service

Housing support ended in **58** tenancies, **33** in Aberdeen City and **25** in Aberdeenshire.

Reasons for ending

	ACC	Aberdeenshire	Total
No longer requiring support	23	13	36
No longer wishing support	3	1	4
Moved to residential/hospital	2	1	3
Deceased	1	0	1
Planned tenancy ending	1	5	6
Abandonment	0	1	1
Other agencies	0	1	1
Contact lost	3	3	6
Total	33	25	58

In 77% of tenancies where housing support was ended, the tenant no longer required housing support, had moved to residential/hospital, another agency providing support or had moved to accommodation more appropriate to their needs. This is consistent with previous years' statistics. One tenant passed away during the year, leaving a balance of around 20% where either contact with the tenant was lost, tenancy abandoned or the tenant no longer wished housing support.

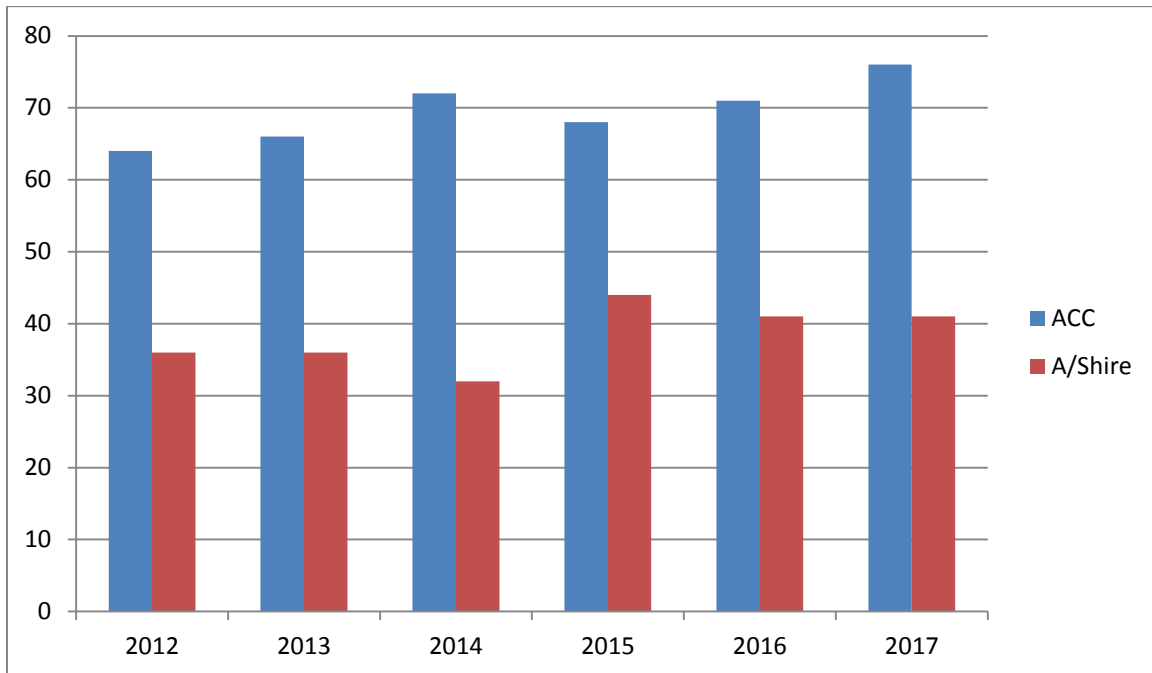
Overall although we dealt with a higher number of referrals during the year, there was a 30% increase in endings over the year reflecting a higher number of short term housing support.

Number of tenancies supported 1/04/16 – 31/03/17

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

117 Castlehill Housing Association tenancies
71 within Aberdeen City and **41** in Aberdeenshire.

No of tenancies supported	@ 31/3/17	Ended during year	Total no of tenancies	Total no of tenants supported during year
ACC	43	33	76	76
Shire	16	25	41	41
Total	73	58	117	117



There was a rise in the number of tenancies supported in Aberdeen City but as explained above, a higher proportion of these were short term. It is expected that the number of tenancies supported during 17/18 will decrease to more accurately reflect staffing level.

Gender		@31/3/17	Ended	Total
Male	ACC	16	17	33
	Shire	11	11	22
Female	ACC	27	16	43
	Shire	5	14	19
Total		59	58	117

Age		@31/3/17	Ended	Total
Under 18	ACC	0	0	0
	Shire	0	0	0
18-25	ACC	5	1	6
	Shire	1	3	4
26-59	ACC	25	27	52
	Shire	5	14	19
60-70	ACC	11	2	13
	Shire	8	5	13
70+	ACC	2	3	5
	Shire	2	3	5
Total		59	58	117

Ethnicity		@31/3/17	Ended	Total
White	ACC	41	31	72
	Shire	16	25	41
Asian	ACC	2	0	2
	Shire	0	0	0
Other	ACC	0	2	2
	Shire	0	0	0
Total		59	58	117

Category of Need *	At 31/3/17	Ended	Total	Total
Physical Illness				
ACC	15	13	28	37
Shire	5	4	9	
Mental health				
ACC	14	7	21	31
Shire	4	6	10	
Learning disability				
ACC	4	1	5	6
Shire	0	1	1	
Alcohol related problems				
ACC	0	1	1	4
Shire	1	2	3	
Drug related problems				
ACC	0	2	2	2
Shire	0	0	0	
Young with housing support need				
ACC	3	1	4	7
Shire	1	2	3	
Older with housing support need				
ACC	4	3	7	16
Shire	4	5	9	
Women fleeing violence				
ACC	1	1	2	3
Shire	1	0	1	
Harassment/ Psychological Trauma				
ACC	0	1	1	1
Shire	0	0	0	
Offender/Ex Prisoner				
ACC	0	0	0	0
Shire	0	0	0	
Prev.Homeless				
ACC	1	3	4	6
Shire	0	2	2	
Ex travelling people				
ACC	0	0	0	1
Shire	0	1	1	
Other vulnerability				
ACC	1	0	1	3
Shire	0	2	2	
Total	59	58	117	117

**Self assessment on first contact. Other needs can become apparent during contact with the tenant.*

In the main, the above statistics show similar trends as in previous years. Tenants with physical and/or mental health needs account for over 50% of those being supported and the next largest group is older people with a housing support need. However, there continues to be a wide range of other housing support need, albeit in smaller numbers.

It is noted that, in Aberdeenshire particularly, there has been an increase in the number of male tenants receiving and accepting housing support from the Key Project. Again in Aberdeenshire, significantly more older people are receiving support that in previous reporting periods.

Homelessness and Tenancy Sustainment

Previously homeless	@31/3/17	Ended	Total
ACC	8	8	16
Shire	4	11	15
Total	12	19	31

Strategically, the work of the Key Project links with both homelessness and vulnerability. This is important, as having a tenancy in itself may not be enough. The factors which led to homelessness may still exist and these vulnerabilities may still pose a risk to sustaining the tenancy.

Likewise, existing tenants whose circumstances change, may also find that there are risks to their tenancies.

There was one abandonment during the year 16/17 but all other tenants who were receiving housing support from the Key Project remained in their tenancies or had moved out in a planned way either to another landlord or to sheltered/residential care.

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.

The difficulties which tenants are experiencing may not be obvious during the initial contacts and are only shared once there is trust in the relationship. The presenting difficulty may, for example, be a rent arrear, 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 are two main strands to our work, housing support to existing tenants and housing support at the beginning of the tenancy. Housing Officers are now very skilled at identifying potential housing support need, both as a result of their contact with existing tenants or when new tenancies are being allocated. This early identification, typically of a potential risk to the tenancy, enables effective housing support from the Key Project.

Housing support work has continued to be wide ranging and varied as described in previous annual reports and the input from Key Project staff has continued to be extensive, creative and at times doggedly persistent. Along with 'successes', however, we recognise the inevitable 'failures'. Sometimes tenants' needs are greater than our housing support can resolve or perhaps the timing isn't quite right for the tenant in terms of accepting housing support.

Some 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, Social Work, Housing, Adult Protection, Scottish Welfare Fund, Bereavement Services.

Department of Work and Pensions

Job Centre Plus, Pension Service, Child Support Agency, Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance

NHS Grampian

GP and associated practice based services, Occupational Therapy, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Cornhill Hospital and associated psychiatric services,

Other agencies

Smart Money Advice Project	Smart Income Advisors
Welfare Rights	Home Start
Bethany Trust English Classes	Trussell Trust
Grampian Police	Buttle Trust
Grampian Credit Union	North East Scotland Credit Union
Cash in Your Pocket	Family Holiday Association
SSAFA	SCARF
MacMillan	CAB
Instant Neighbour	Somebody Cares
Magpie	C Fine
Various Trust Funds – both local and national	
Other social landlords	Apply4Homes
House Exchange Register	
Gas and electricity suppliers	Debt collection agencies

Income Maximisation

Over the last 12 months, Key Project housing support staff have generated an additional **£72.622.12** on behalf of tenants. This is mainly as a result of assistance with applications for State Benefits, eg ESA, PIP, backdated Housing/Council Tax Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Warm Homes Discounts. As in previous years, the real value of this additional income lies in the fact that many of these gains are not one-off payments but will be ongoing payments which will continue to contribute to the tenant's income.

In addition, Key Project staff have assisted tenants with applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund. Community Care Grants awarded during the year consisted of floor coverings for 5 properties, curtains for 3 properties, 3 cookers, 3 fridge/freezers, 3 washing machines, various other furnishings and 2 removal costs.

We have continued a very productive partnership with the SMART Project available to tenants of housing associations both in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. Again, Key Project housing support workers have worked with the tenants and the Money Advisers, leading to considerable debt reduction and more manageable financial positions.

Warm Homes Discount

Over the winter 16/17, Key Project staff have assisted tenants, who are on qualifying benefits or low income, to apply for the Warm Homes Discount. This is a joint venture between the Westminster Government and the energy suppliers. Tenants who qualify have £140 each year credited to their electricity account. This has helped many tenants with their mounting energy bills.

Care Inspectorate

There was no inspection by the Care Inspectorate during the year April 2016-March 2017. The previous report, published in August 2015, is publicly available.

Key Project Home Decoration and Hardship Fund

The Key Project is indebted to the Trustees of the George Crombie Fund for the award which has enabled Castlehill Housing Association to set up the Key Project Home Decoration Fund and the Key Project Hardship Fund in 2009.

Key Project Home Decoration Fund

Decoration within a property is a tenant's responsibility. We are particularly pleased that we are able to offer assistance with redecoration costs as we had previously been unable to identify any statutory or voluntary agency funds which would offer financial assistance for this.

The Home Decoration Fund operates on 3 levels:

1. **Materials only.** Where the tenant is able to redecorate themselves then an award can be made for the purchase of decoration materials
2. **Materials and Labour.** Where the tenant is unable to redecorate and is unable to afford decorating materials
3. **Labour alone.** Where the tenant is unable to decorate but can afford the decorating materials.

Over the last 12 months, the Key Project Decoration Fund has assisted in **5 tenancies**. The total spent was **£869.08**.

Key Project Hardship Fund

This fund is much less specific. Most frequently grants have been awarded to tenants who are working but on a low incomes and therefore not eligible for state benefits. For example, for floor coverings at beginning of tenancy, replacement white goods during tenancy and food.

Grants from the Key Project Hardship Fund have been awarded in **8 tenancies** during the past year. The total spent was **£536.99**.

Tenants who have been assisted by the Home Decoration and Hardship Fund have appreciated this help, especially when it is unavailable from other sources.

Tenant feedback

Receiving feedback from people who use our service is particularly important and is also a useful way of consulting with tenants regarding any suggestions re improving or altering the service. Below are some comments from Housing Support Plans during the 12 month period.

'I find the housing support a great help to me in dealing with things that crop up and I don't feel so isolated'

'It has been very beneficial to have XX come in and help with issues that I had with the house and with my son's schooling. I would like to say a big thank you for the work that she carried out'

'Support has been a tremendous help in resolving financial matters with bank which has been a problem for over 10 years. I would have been unable to deal with this myself. I now feel like a black cloud has been lifted from my life. Thanks to Key Project my benefits are now in place making my life easier and able to cope with disability.'

'Fantastic service from XX, without support woULD be homeless and probably had a mental breakdown. Greatly appreciated.'

'Support invaluable as have no other support. Regularly rely on to help with forms or phoning for information. XX helps me fill in forms, phoning people such as the tax office about ongoing benefits something I have difficulty in doing due to anxiety dealing with people I don't know.'

'She is very appreciative and very happy with all the help and support that she has been given. Without the help and support she will not be able to cope and do everything herself'(This comment was via a translator)

'I am very pleased with the service Key Project provides. She has helped me immensely in a very difficult period without which I would not have coped very well at all'

Heaps of thanks for all your help.

'I have been seeing XX for some time now. During this period there have been times when I have had mental health issues. One of these times was particularly serious and I saw XX that day. She enabled me to take my medication and also to speak with my doctor at the hospital. Had she not done that I would probably have been sectioned. She has always been supportive to me and I am grateful for all the work we have done together.'

Feedback from 2 young people previously supported by staff in Key Project

'That's me qualified now. We are starting to save up a deposit for a house/flat. I wouldn't have ever thought that I would be doing this well at my age and you helped me a lot to get me here. You're a star!'

I would like to thank Castlehill Housing and the Key Project for all the support over the years. The flat I have rented has been a constant aspect of my life that has enabled me to settle study and start a new chapter. I started the tenancy with nothing and left with an honours degree, full time job, car, house etc. However not just materialistic things – I have become very independent, more confident and have a real understanding of responsibilities and managing money on a low income. I think it's important to realise how important having one thing constant (in this case a flat) can change a person's life for the best.

I hope to do more radio shows etc as I would love to ensure that I can do something to ensure young people stay positive when times are difficult.

Key Project 2001- 2017

In 2001, when the Key Project was established:

- Tony Blair was Prime Minister
- Department of Work and Pensions had not been created
- Sven- Goran Eriksson had just been appointed England football manager
- Al Megrahi had been found guilty of the Lockerbie bombings
- There was a foot and mouth epidemic
- the first series of Celebrity Big Brother was about to begin,
- Manchester United paid a record fee of £19 million for Ruud van Nistelroy and of course,
- The attack on the World Trade Centre in New York was to happen later in the year

Technology over the years

In 2001, Key Project shared a room with the Director of Housing. There was 1 shared phone line and 1 computer.

Over the years, the room was shared with Housing Officer(sheltered), then established as Key Project room but there was still only 1 phone, but by now, a dedicated line, and one computer. Typewriters still being used in other departments!

In 2017 we have a Key Project room with 3 phone lines, 3 computers then 3 smartphones and 3 tablets!

Excerpts from the original application to the Community Fund submitted in 2000

Factors identifying need for a housing support service

‘that an increasing number of tenancies are failing within our organisation, that there is a need to assist those vulnerable tenants who are at risk of failing before there is irreversible breakdown of their living situation.’

‘Factors contributing to tenancy failure : poverty, debt, ill health, drug or alcohol misuse physical/ emotional abuse, loneliness, low self esteem, crime, background of a dysfunctional family’.

Today the indicators of risk to a tenancy which we record are:

Physical disability/illness, mental health related problems, learning disabilities, alcohol/drug related problems, older/younger people with support needs, fleeing violence, previously homeless, travelling people, offenders/ex prisoners.

Over the years, the need has not changed. In spite of the Scottish Government pledge that by 2012 there would be no homelessness in Scotland, homelessness does still exist.

According to the latest Shelter Scotland Impact Report, 2017, *“The statistics speak for themselves – on average, a household in Scotland becomes homeless every 19 minutes. We are seeing more reports of rough sleepers dying on our city streets. Unknown numbers are sofa surfing with friends and families, as they don’t have, or cannot afford, a home of their own.*

Whilst we generally record only one risk factor per tenancy, many of the tenants being supported by the Key Project today experience more than one risk indicator.

Shelter again comments

‘Behind those statistics are people, families, individuals – people on low incomes, people with complex needs, people in crisis – some of the most vulnerable people on our society.’

Aims of Key Project in 2001

To assist and motivate tenants to:

- Care for and maintain their homes
- Implement their rights and responsibilities as tenants
- Be involved as members of the community and neighbourhood
- Cope with financial management of their homes
- Take advantage of educational/employment and training opportunities
- Be aware of health conscious lifestyle
- Access services and provisions from relevant agencies and organisations
- To provide informal visits to tenants who lack contact with others

Aims and Objectives 2017 The Weaver's Triangle

- **support to vulnerable tenants**
- **prevention of homelessness**

The changes or differences we hope to make

- **Sustained tenancies**
- **Increased household income**
- **Improved physical and mental health**

Activities - what we do to achieve these changes

- **Regular contact**
- **Advice on tenancy matters**
- **Assistance with benefit claims**
- **Assistance to reduce housing debt**
- **Advocacy/liaison with other agencies/ professionals**
- **Explore housing options**
- **Assist to access/attend appointments**
- **Signposting/referral to specialist agencies**
- **Applications to Trust funds**
- **Build positive and supportive relationships**

Different words and slightly different emphasis but the aims and objectives have remained remarkably similar.

2001 Projected effect of housing support service

'We recognise that a secure, comfortable home is the core of a stable lifestyle and until this is in place, many people cannot function normally in the community.'

'Major contribution to social inclusion agenda. We aim to build balanced communities, allowing disadvantaged people a valid place in society'.

'Aimed primarily at existing and potential tenants as a service to support people who may be at risk in failing in their tenancies. This is an individual service, much broader than our housing management whereby the Project staff would identify each person's specific needs and then tailor a support package.'

Housing is a basic human need. Whilst Castlehill Housing Association can provide the property, there can be many risks to the sustainability of the tenancy. Over the years, Key Project has been effective in assisting some tenants to sustain their tenancy and thereby reduce the risk of homelessness but the underlying social pressures and inequalities have not disappeared.

Since 2001, there has sadly been little progress in terms of alleviation of poverty or social inclusion. As a result of 'austerity', it can be argued that today there is an ever widening gap in terms of wealth and opportunity . As a result disadvantaged people can feel more excluded now than in 2001.

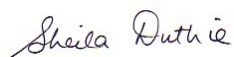
Summary

Before the establishment of the Key Project housing support service, Housing Management staff at Castlehill were acutely aware that some of the tenants had needs which were not being met and they were concerned about the tenants' vulnerability and the risk to their tenancies. However, staff were also aware of their limited capacity in meeting these needs, both in terms of time and resources. A successful application to the Community Fund enabled the establishment of the Key Project in March 2001 and from very small beginnings, the Key Project has over the last 16 years developed into an integral part of Housing Management within Castlehill Housing Association. On average, the housing support service is offered in around 10% of Castlehill general/amenity needs stock per year. As the housing stock has grown, so has the demand for housing support.

Key Project continues to provide a housing support service which is valued and appreciated by the majority of the tenants who are offered support. As the age range is wide and housing support needs are varied, the work can be challenging but can also bring great job satisfaction. By focusing on risk to tenancy, Key Project has contributed to tenancy sustainment at Castlehill Housing Association.

Over the last 16 years, Key Project housing support service has been valued by the tenants supported and Castlehill Housing Association in general. We continue to believe that housing support from the Key Project is a cost effective use of public money in terms of prevention of homelessness and has cost benefits for other health and social care agencies.

Whilst the Key Project has over the years helped to reduce the risk to the tenancy for some tenants, as things stand, there is plenty more to be done!



Sheila Duthie
Housing Support Officer

24th August 2017