



**Which Council Aim does this case study deliver?**

*To meet housing need in the Ryedale District Council Area*

*To create the conditions for economic success*

*To have a high quality, clean and sustainable environment*

**Delivery of priority services and outcomes**

Bridge House is the name for Ryedale's Hostel for homeless single people. The property has 9 letting rooms, some en-suite, shared Kitchen and Bathrooms with an office facility. The Housing Options team have been responsible for managing the project since January 2008. The building is situated in the middle of one of the main market towns in Ryedale and is easily accessible due to the bus and rail links. This was the first time that the Council has been involved in directly managing such accommodation since stock transfer in 1991. The Council successfully attracted "Places Of Change" funding from Communities and Local Government, which allowed the Council to cover lease payments and employ a Resettlement Officer until September 2009.

The Resettlement Officer's post provides responsive, effective, client-based support and resettlement service to the vulnerable single people in our project. The support enables clients to make a positive and planned move to independent, sustainable accommodation. They are equipped, through this support, to make the move and then maintain their own independent accommodation. The appointment of a Resettlement Officer has been invaluable in enabling our residents to move forward in life and into independent accommodation. Prior to this it was extremely difficult to find alternative accommodation for our clients and work on the barriers that were preventing them from moving on and as such many of our clients were unable to see a way forward. They often reverted back into old ways and were evicted or gave up their accommodation only to return a few months later. Their situation had often taken a turn for the worse, either through enhanced drug or alcohol use, pregnancy or having served a prison sentence.

Whilst at Bridge House clients work with the Resettlement Officer to create an individual, realistic and achievable "pathway to permanent living plan". They will learn the skills, which will be required for them to successfully manage and retain a tenancy

It is accepted that homelessness is a socially isolating and emotionally difficult experience. The Resettlement Officer aims to encourage clients to participate and positively engage in the life and activities of the wider community. This will help to lessen clients' sense of social exclusion.

The project currently houses some of the most vulnerable members of the community and includes NEETS (Not in Education, training and Employment), care leavers, young people with Special Educational Needs or Learning Disabilities/Difficulties, young offenders, drug and alcohol users and those suffering with mental illness. It can be extremely challenging to persuade our clients to engage in any mainstream services and we needed to look at new innovative approaches to improve this integration.

Since the property opened in January 2008 we have housed 70 single homeless clients. The majority of which were not in any form of education, training or employment. Many residents have needed specialist support for drug and alcohol issues and over 10% were receiving specialist support for Mental Health issues. Of the 70 residents 65% to 70% were aged 25 and under.

Over a third of our residents are heavily involved with other agencies such as Social Care, Youth Justice and Probation. Some of our residents have been on an electronic tag and many have been subject to curfews. About 10% of our residents have been perpetrators of domestic violence and by providing them with accommodation we have ensured that families have not been made to leave their homes.

The majority of our residents have literacy issues and many are suffering with emotional issues.

We were fortunate to work in partnership with Foundation Housing and secure the employment of a part time Positive Activities Organiser. The post has been a real success with over 150 activities taking place for residents of Bridge House. Over 60 different clients have taken part in these activities which have included abseiling, mountain biking, cooking, relaxation therapy, camping trips, football training, scuba diving, canoeing, drum lessons and photography.

Those who present as homeless are rarely affected only by the lack of a home. They almost always have a range of other complex issues such as family breakdown, mental health problems, addiction and behavioural difficulties with which they need support. The officers at the project will encourage and assist clients to link with specialist support workers who can help them to tackle the problems, which, in all likelihood, contributed to their homelessness. Many clients have a propensity to disengage from services when they are being asked to be responsible for their own actions, lives and futures. The Officers will remain engaged with them to try and ensure that the chances of this happening are greatly reduced, acting as advocates when required and being flexible in their approach in order to achieve positive outcomes.

Many clients are young people (16-25) and are given temporary accommodation at Bridge House whilst efforts are made to put mediation services in place. The aim is to try and negotiate for them to return to the family home, thus reducing youth homelessness. Whilst at Bridge House they will be fully supported by the Resettlement Officer in removing any barriers to making this happen.

The initial funding allocated through the CLG came to an end in September 2009 which meant that the project would have had to end if alternative funding could not be found. The Council would have had to find alternative accommodation for homeless single people but would have had to limit this to those found to be in priority need under homeless legislation as we would not have had the ability to use our discretionary powers due to lack of accommodation. This would mean that many homeless single people would not be provided with services from the Council. The accommodation sought would often have to be Bed and Breakfast meaning that once again we would not be able to work closely with the most vulnerable members of the community keeping them safe and secure and empowering them to move forward in their lives.

The Council applied for funding from North Yorkshire County Council Community Fund via the Ryedale Strategic Partnership and following a successful bid was able to employ both the Resettlement Officer and a Life Skills and Activities Officer for a further 12 months, commencing September 2009.

Ryedale is currently the lead authority on homelessness across the sub region following an Audit Commission Report on Affordable Housing and as such we were heavily involved in the first sub regional Homelessness Strategy. We renewed our Homelessness Strategy in 2008 and the continuation of the project is seen as a real priority for the area. Our aims also fit alongside the change for children 'Every Child Matters' and our bid met the aims and objectives in the North Yorkshire Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011.

### **Successes of the Project**

- Ryedale is a small rural authority and is very limited in the amount of specialised services available.
- The scheme is managed with very limited funding.
- Multi agency working and intervention. It addresses a multitude of difficulties faced by our clients, which are not just purely housing related
- We follow the government agenda of "Places of Change"
- Council acts as a focus enabling other services to be accessed and deployed.
- It has overcome some of the difficulties in being innovative when facing a scarcity of resources.

- Attracted external funding both from central government and the County Council

### **Key achievements**

Facilitated move-ons for service users into permanent accommodation  
Provision of an advocacy service for the client  
All complete a pathway to permanent living plan  
Positive move-ons with ongoing support  
Reduction in eviction/abandonments

Softer outcomes have included raised self-esteem as clients engage on a one to one basis to work towards their own targets and positive outcomes

Participation in the wider community helps to reduce the incidence of social exclusion amongst local single homeless people

### **Positive activities**

Encouraging participation in meaningful activities for all single homeless residents in temporary accommodation.

At least 2 different activities every week improved motivation and inclusion into the community

There has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour in the accommodation as a result of being engaged in positive activities

Encouragement of healthier lifestyles for residents of temporary accommodation

Promotion of improved life skills for all residents of Bridge House

The property provides a useful facility to allow other agencies to have a base in our area as opposed to clients having to travel to access services. This also allows for a closer professional relationship with the client.

The accommodation provides security and an enhanced sense of well being for our clients, many of whom are extremely vulnerable.

### **Other organisations working with us at the project:**

Making Safe Scheme  
Young Persons Supported Housing Project  
Police  
RADAC (Drug and Alcohol Service)  
Children and Young People's Service  
Youth Justice  
Probation Service

Not only does the project provide major benefits to the service users it also meets the aims and objectives of many of our partner organisations. At the request of the Council's Chief Executive the Housing Options team presented the above information to the RIEP in December 2009. As a consequence of this and through partnership working the project has been allocated £50,000, which will ensure the scheme can run as it is for a further 12 months to September 2011.

The Council believes that the scheme is not reaching its full potential. There are many problems and concerns when managing such a project with extremely high risk vulnerable clients residing there and additional funding is needed if the project is to continue to operate effectively. 24 hour staffing at the building is required in order to satisfy the needs of our partner organisations and afford our clients the opportunity to maximise the opportunities available to them to effect the life changes they may need to make.

The Council therefore undertook some comparative costs analysis in order to argue the case for additional funding.

For example, Costs £55,674 to imprison a young offender for 12 months  
Mental Health Services LA Residential £485 per week plus care package  
Residential Care for 16/17 year olds is some £3,000 to £5,000 a week  
Foster Care costs £296 plus per week

### **Bridge House £140 a week £7,280 a year**

In order to increase our funding and improve the project a further presentation and visit to the project has been arranged. The Director of the DWP and Chief Officers from all our major stakeholders will attend this. It is hoped that the importance of the continued operation of the scheme will become apparent.

Ryedale may be a rural authority however our problems are exasperated as we do not have the infrastructure or the services locally to enable the vulnerable members of our community to have access to the support they need in order to move forward in their lives and integrate into society. We feel this project allows that to happen and we will continue to work hard to try and improve the opportunities available to our clients, which the project offers.

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