

CONNEXIONS HOUSING REPORT

PRESENTING ISSUES

1. Young people approaching Station Road are given P&O appointments several weeks after the initial approach date. This can mean that the situation becomes urgent in that the young person requires emergency accommodation before the date given.

Suggestion: A reasonable time limit given for appointments. This needs to be agreed upon with the P&O and VAT (Vulnerable Adults Team).

2. Young people approaching P&O, who have been picked up by the Social Services out of hours office, sometimes on several occasions, are not provided with emergency accommodation.

Suggestion: Effective joined up working needed between Connexions, Social Services and Housing to ensure appropriate referrals are made and an adequate support package is put into place. This is in the process of taking place in conjunction with relevant services. Clarity is needed around what constitutes an emergency.

3. Young people told that they cannot be housed until they can provide proof that a benefits application has been made. This is to ensure clients are not accruing rent arrears. This means that a letter is needed from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) which takes up to 4 weeks. The delay can result in emergency accommodation being sought or clients being housed by the out of hours services. In extreme cases clients have slept rough. Proof of income/benefits is not a legal requirement.

Suggestion: Connections need to be made between the Benefits Agency and Housing as one unavoidably affects the other. The 16/17 year old advisors at the Tottenham Job Centre have stated their interest in working with the Housing Department. This is something that Connexions can lead on.

4. In cases where the Social Services project worker at Apex House is not available young people are told that housing assistance cannot be given in the interim. At present there is only one part time project worker based at Apex House. The other full time worker is on long term sickness leave.

Suggestions:

- An alternative arrangement made with Social Services that the young person will be seen in their main offices.
 - A referral is made to Connexions with the understanding that a Section 17 assessment can only be done by Social Services.
 - Housing begin their investigations pending the involvement of Social Services.
5. The P&O process is not adequately explained.

Suggestions:

- General processes and procedures explained to young people on approach. This would improve customer relations and encourage transparency.
- Young people made aware whom their P&O officer is once allocated.

Positive Responses.

- Customer services have improved in that staff have been polite and helpful to some young people accessing the service.
- One young person reported being dealt with very professionally and respectfully by a member of the P&O Team.