

Council to run new scheme to help the homeless

When you visit any city and see homeless people begging on the streets it cannot be anything other than a statement about the city itself. We have a number of people sitting on our pavements who beg from residents and visitors alike, but these are not the people who necessarily fall within the designation of homeless.

There are others who really fit within the category and who require council assistance to find a new home. This might be a result of a variety of factors and is not always the fault of the individual themselves.

In an effort to address these problems an innovative new pilot scheme to reduce homelessness has been launched by the council.

Focusing on resolving and preventing homelessness, a range of specialist services will be delivered through a partnership with third sector organisations the Bethany Christian Trust, Edinburgh Cyrenian Trust, Foursquare and CHAI (Community Help and Advice Initiative). The partnership hails the beginning of a new collaborative approach to supporting people in the capital who are at risk of losing their homes.

The council, providers and service users are working in partnership to rebalance housing support services and place more emphasis on prevention, through mentoring, befriending, group work and visits from housing support staff. This approach will help resolve some of the crises that lead to homelessness and also deliver initial savings of £400,000, with potential further savings in the future.

✘ The council's Housing Leader, Councillor Cammy Day, said:
"Taking early action is the best way to combat

homelessness. It is vital that we act quickly so we can prevent more people from losing their homes and better protect their well-being.

“By working alongside our third sector partners, we can gain from their expertise and deliver the highest standard of support to those who need it across Edinburgh. This way we can tackle the root causes of homelessness and provide important advice on budgeting and tenancy issues, to build a better future for those at risk and help them to keep their homes.”

The pilot will provide:

Budgeting and debt advice (including rent, utility bills and fuel poverty)

Information about benefits, including changes due to welfare reform

Advice about tenancy issues and housing options

Links to employment, including volunteering, education and training

Help to avoid social isolation

People who are homeless and in temporary and insecure accommodation will also receive support to move into more sustainable accommodation, in both the public and private sectors.

Iain Gordon of SHAPE, the umbrella organisation representing the third sector partners, said: “Our hope is that this new way of working will help people who find themselves at risk of becoming homeless to be more secure in their homes, so that they can live active and productive lives.”