

# Keys to the Future

An independent evaluation of Shelter's  
Children's Services

Interim summary report of the programme



Shelter



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BIRMINGHAM

### **Acknowledgements**

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Cover photograph by Sophie Laslett. Other photographs by Matt Cook Nick David, Sophie Laslett, Andrea Testoni

To protect the identity of Shelter clients, names have been changed and models have been used in photographs.

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# Contents

Introduction	4
Aims and interventions	5
Programme reach	8
Impact and outcomes	11
Stakeholder perspectives	18
Lessons learnt	21
Appendices	23
1 Evaluation purpose and methods	23
2 Approaches employed by Keys to the Future services to deliver interventions	24
3 Keys to the Future services' progress against targets	25
4 Children's services outcome frameworks	27



## Introduction

This is the third report of an independent evaluation of the Keys to the Future (KTTF) programme commissioned by Shelter. It presents the findings of qualitative research conducted over the past year with Keys to the Future local services and beneficiaries. It aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the local services to date and how they are delivering against the overall objectives of the Keys to the Future programme. In addition, interim findings of a cost consequence case study are outlined. Details of the evaluation framework and the methodology are set out in Appendix 1.



## Aims and interventions

As part of its Million Children Campaign launched in 2006, Shelter made a proactive decision to demonstrate, through a range of pilot projects, new ways of preventing child homelessness and supporting those children who are already homeless to achieve better outcomes. The Keys to the Future programme of local services and wider legal, advice, and policy-focused children's services came out of that decision.

### Aims

The aims of the Keys to the Future pilot programme are to:

- prevent homelessness for children, families and young people through education and helping them obtain and/or maintain a home
- improve outcomes for children in homeless families through early intervention and the provision of a holistic, co-ordinated service with a focus on improving access to services for harder to reach and excluded communities
- disseminate good practice and contribute to effective changes in policy and practice within mainstream agencies working with children and families
- influence changes in policy and the law as it affects homeless children and families.

## Interventions

Shelter took the opportunity, afforded by the Keys to the Future Appeal, to test a range of different approaches to achieving these aims. Some of the approaches Shelter chose were shaped by existing Shelter activities or partnership working; others were developed in response to local opportunities to provide new services. All the interventions were designed to respond to local needs, geography and context.

### The interventions piloted are:

- support to improve educational attainment for homeless children – Scotland (three services) and Newham
- housing needs assessment – Bristol and Knowsley
- tailored packages of support for homeless children – Bristol
- education on homelessness and support for young people through peer education – Gloucestershire
- prevention of families becoming ‘intentionally homeless’ due to antisocial behaviour – Knowsley
- policy and influencing work – four English regions and Scotland
- housing advice to staff in Children’s Centres – Shelter’s Children’s Service Advice Line
- casework and the development of a test case strategy to bring about legislative change – Shelter’s Children’s Legal Service.

## Approaches

The approaches to delivery of the interventions vary across the pilot services. A table in Appendix 2 summarises the range of approaches used and identifies where there are similarities across the services. This is not a comprehensive list of approaches, but it does show that provision of information and signposting to other agencies, group work, and user-involvement activities, are the most common approaches employed by the five practical support services.

The strongest commonality is across Bristol, Knowsley, Newham and Scotland that all provide support services directly to children and families. The core group of approaches offered includes advocacy, engagement in multi-agency working, building family relationships, one-to-one planned meetings with children, and general support activities (responsive to expressed or identified need). Three of these pilot services also provide help with benefit claims and in-kind financial support.

Gloucestershire is different, because it is a peer education service working with young people rather than with children and families. The Children’s Service Advice Line and Children’s Legal Service are different again because they offer professional services to young people and families, rather than support-based services.

This variety demonstrates the pilot nature of the Keys to the Future initiative and its premise of trying a range of approaches. However, it also provides a challenge when trying to identify shared learning and evaluation themes across the programme as a whole.

## Performance

Overall, most of the pilot services are on track to achieve or exceed their key three-year targets (see Appendix 3). The data for those services that have been running for over two years (Bristol, Gloucestershire and Newham) show that some aspects of their phased targets are already being exceeded. The data for services that have started more recently may be skewed by lower delivery outputs during their inception phase, but initial data for Knowsley indicates strong performance considering delivery activity did not start until March 2009.

Some of the services providing direct support to children and families experienced slower than anticipated referral rates, which required them to undertake more active marketing of their services. Some of the same services experienced difficulty engaging with local authority housing departments, from where they had originally expected to receive most of their referrals (Bristol and Newham).

Considerable time was spent building relationships – for example, with schools in Gloucestershire – in order to access the target groups. The spread of Keys to the Future services in Scotland was reduced following the closure of the Edinburgh Support Service in March 2009. The Education Liaison Worker post was relocated to the Glasgow Support Service to enhance its capacity to respond to identified local needs.

Bristol is 22 per cent down on progress towards its ambitious target for completing 900 housing needs assessments. A number of factors have affected achievement against this target, including changes in staffing and staff roles (with the housing needs assessment and Child Support Worker roles being combined) and fewer referrals than anticipated coming from the local authority's homelessness teams.

Performance against targets is particularly impressive given the complexity of needs of many of the children and families worked with, and the fact that some services (Bristol, Newham) found that they needed to work with families for longer than the six-month time period originally envisaged.

The Children's Service Advice Line has experienced a number of changes. Delivery has moved from some of Shelter's advice services to Shelter's call centre in Sheffield. Marketing of the Advice Line was predicated on Regional Children's Co-ordinators being in post, as part of their role but, due to funding constraints, fewer than envisaged Regional Children's Co-ordinators were initially appointed. Promotional material has been successfully distributed to all Children's Centres nationally. However, many centres have only come on stream recently. During their inception, Children's Centre managers have been concentrating on setting up and promoting their own core services and many have not had time to take up the Advice Line offer. Regional Children's Co-ordinators, in collaboration with Shelter advice services, have also provided 'housing information' workshops for Children's Centre staff, and this appears to have encouraged Advice Line uptake.

The Children's Legal Service is set to achieve its casework target, although delivery against the test case target is not on track at present. Pursuing a test case is a responsive exercise, dependent on a suitable case being identified. Keys to the Future is developing a more proactive partnership approach to identifying potential test cases, to increase the possibility of a case being brought forward.



## Programme reach

This section reflects on the reach of the Keys to the Future services to their target client groups. It is not easy to summarise reach across the programme. Even where services have common approaches, the differing needs and environmental contexts in which homeless children, young people, and families are surviving makes comparison difficult.

### Reaching vulnerable and excluded families

There is strong evidence that the Keys to the Future services offering support directly to children and families have reached vulnerable and excluded families. These services are reaching families with chaotic lifestyles, families other agencies find it hard to work with because they do not turn up to office-based meetings or support sessions or because they fall below the increasingly high threshold for access to statutory services. Evidence shows that Keys to the Future services increase access by going out to families when they find it difficult to come to a service – an approach that is particularly valued by families.

Client sources across Keys to the Future services offering family support (Bristol, Newham, Knowsley and Scotland) have described how the responsiveness and flexibility of services to fit around client needs has maintained their engagement. It has helped that Keys to the Future services do not take a heavily 'sanctions based' approach to dealing with families in housing crisis, in contrast to some statutory services that withdraw if clients do not comply with an agreed approach. The Keys to the Future programme's flexibility has also been valued by peer educators in Gloucestershire. It may



be Shelter's non-judgemental ethos relating to homelessness that underpins this client-centred approach. This appears to be a key factor in Keys to the Future's ability to engage families that are falling through the net of other service providers.

### **Reaching black and minority ethnic children and families**

There is good evidence of effective reach into some black and minority ethnic (BME) communities from those Keys to the Future services that record ethnicity data. For example, in Scotland six per cent of the children accessing Keys to the Future services are from African communities, compared to the 2001 Census which recorded the non-white minority ethnic population to be two per cent. Interestingly, its reach is to new migrant communities rather than the more established Asian communities recorded in the Census.

In Newham, 65 per cent of the children Keys to the Future has worked with were from BME communities, compared with Census data that reports a 56 per cent BME population for the area. Newham has a highly transient population and the Keys to the Future ethnicity figures reflect how the make up of the borough has altered in the last eight years, with an increase in refugee and asylum seeker communities. In Bristol, 43 per cent of the children Keys to the Future has worked with were from BME communities, compared with the 2001 Census data that states that 91 per cent of the population in Bristol city were white.

### **Reaching 5- to 13-year-olds**

There is evidence that some Keys to the Future services plug the gap between children aged to 5 years from birth (age range of children supported by Children's Centres) and children older than 13 years who are supported by Connexions. For example, monitoring data shows that 68 per cent of the children Keys to the Future has worked with in Newham, and 61 per cent of them in Knowsley, are aged between six and 12 years, indicating a high level of previously unmet need among this age group.

## Reaching rural communities

Keys to the Future in Dumfries and Galloway has developed outreach homework clubs, supported by volunteers, to extend its reach across a large rural authority area. Shelter's Peer Education Service works county-wide across Gloucestershire, covering six district council areas. The Forest of Dean and other rural districts are identified by Keys to the Future staff as priority areas for delivery because they are more isolated from homelessness advice and the services based in bigger towns.

## Referrals

Where referrals come from has an impact on the ability of services to reach into communities or specific groups. Keys to the Future in Newham and Bristol both expected to get most of their referrals from local authority housing departments, yet departments in both areas have been slow to refer. In response to this situation, Newham developed a good relationship with some schools in the borough and found this to be their main referral route. Consequently, the service mostly works with children who are already attending school. In Bristol, the Keys to the Future service built on Shelter's existing networks and its own involvement with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to develop referral routes with other professionals, such as health visitors. As a result, the service is also able to reach children who are not in school. In both areas, significant time has been spent on building relationships to generate referrals.

## Establishing a profile

Evidence from Keys to the Future services shows how important it is to raise the awareness of a new service and to build a reputation as a reliable provider of services, particularly for vulnerable children and families. This was helped in areas with an existing Shelter service that had already built a good reputation – for example, the Homeless to Home (housing support service) in Bristol and Shelter Housing Support Services in Scotland.

In Gloucestershire, a previous young people's housing advice service had established a good reputation with strategic partners across the county. However, the Keys to the Future Peer Education Service was designed to work primarily in schools, a sector that had not worked with Shelter before, so Keys to the Future initiated contacts with schools, some proving difficult to access at first. Over time, however, as the reputation of the Peer Education Service has grown through school and teacher networks, it has become easier for the service to negotiate access, particularly to the schools with higher numbers of young people at risk of becoming homeless.

In Knowsley, the Keys to the Future service recruited people with existing knowledge of the area and local contacts, who could quickly tap into effective local networking between agencies. These factors appear to have had a positive impact on the reach of the service, which has received referrals from 13 agencies since it began in March 2009.

The difficulties experienced by the Children's Service Advice Line show how hard it can be to raise the profile of a new service when the target client group are themselves new organisations and focussed on the development of their own core services.



## Impact and outcomes

Shelter employs the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework to measure outcomes for the children, young people and families it works with through Keys to the Future in England. In Scotland, the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework is used<sup>1</sup> with a particular focus on educational outcomes.

An analysis of the quantitative case data provided by Shelter indicates that positive outcomes have been achieved for children and families across ECM and GIRFEC indicators. In England, risk factors have been reduced significantly in some categories, including an 86 per cent reduction in risk of unhealthy lifestyles and 86 per cent reduction of children at risk of not attending or enjoying school (in both Bristol and Newham). Knowsley data shows a 66 per cent reduction in the risk of children displaying antisocial behaviour. In Scotland, 51 parents have been supported to engage more fully with their children in homework activities, engage in conversations about school or activities and show an interest in their child(ren)'s education. Fifty-one children are better integrated into school and a further 49 have improved school attendance, all of which clearly indicate that the Keys to the Future service is significantly increasing children's chances of succeeding at school.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 4 for more details.

## Cost consequence analysis

A cost consequence case study<sup>2</sup> indicated that Keys to the Future offers good value for money. The return on investment (eg potential savings for statutory agencies) related to primary family risk alone suggests a return of between £4 and £7 for every £1 invested in Keys to the Future. This is a conservative figure because it excludes both the impact of income maximisation for the family and the potential longer-term cost and consequence implications associated with the other educational, offending/victimisation and emotional risks identified.

## Qualitative impact and outcomes

The following section summarises some of the qualitative impact and outcomes that are being achieved by Keys to the Future, improving the quality of life for children, young people and families.

### Strengthening relationships

When families are experiencing a crisis such as homelessness or domestic violence, parents can be caught up in their own issues. The needs of children can become secondary and parents can find it difficult to find the time, energy or money to play with their children or engage in social activities. Children and parents can become socially isolated.

Keys to the Future services have provided practical and emotional support that has met families' most pressing needs and enabled them to focus more on enjoying 'quality time' together. Spending time as a family and having fun with the children helps to strengthen relationships and lessen the impact of crisis situations on children. Keys to the Future services have provided outings and other social activities to help parents and children enjoy family life more. Parents and children have both reported benefits from these activities:

'It's refocussed me on my family and put me back to where I can be a Mum again. In the kind of trauma I've been through, the kids get forgotten – there's a danger that they grow up in a parentless home.'

**Parent, Bristol**

'I am less stressed, not getting so angry and fighting with my brother so much, so that's better... [my] behaviour in the community is much better now. My behaviour is generally much better now.'

**Boy (12), Knowsley**

### The outcomes identified from family social activities include:

- better communication within families
- reduced stress/friction within families
- less attention-seeking/antisocial behaviour by children (longer term)
- children subsequently becoming engaged with other out-of-school activities and groups.

2 Based on one family's situation and the intervention by the Bristol Keys to the Future service

## Behaviour management

Shelter workers have supported parents with practical behaviour management and coping strategies and have modelled for parents how to implement these strategies with children. The following quotations show how this works from the perspective of a Keys to the Future worker, a parent and a child:

‘The one-to-one sessions aim to build [the mother’s] confidence so she can deal with the boys’ challenging behaviour. She can learn from seeing how I deal with them, by calming them down and setting boundaries. It’s all about getting her in control again.’

**Keys to the Future worker, Bristol**

‘[The worker] dealt brilliantly with their behaviour and has shown me how to deal effectively with it. It’s given me a lot of confidence.’

**Parent, Bristol**

‘She’s [KTTF worker] made me realise about my behaviour, and about not being bad in my area ’cause then stuff can happen to me. I could get arrested. I try to think things through. I don’t want to get arrested, I’d like to go to college and get A-levels and all of that.’

**Boy (12), Knowsley**

### **The outcomes from improved behaviour management include:**

- improvements in challenging behaviour
- reduced stress within a family
- better sibling relationships
- sustainable change by addressing the causes of challenging behaviour, not just the symptoms, longer term.

## Ability to engage with services

Homeless families often have complex needs – social, emotional and economic. They come into contact with a range of service providers, but do not always feel heard or are not able to develop a meaningful relationship with a professional they trust. Keys to the Future services, adopting a non-judgemental approach, have been able to build trust with families and provide reassurance and advocacy that has enabled people to engage more effectively with other service providers. A parent in Newham commented: ‘KTTF provide a great service for families like us with long-term problems. They’re there for you more than anybody else. I called my social worker, and health visitor and I asked the Education Welfare Officer for help. All they were doing was assessments with me. I didn’t get any help until KTTF came along. The support they’ve given me is the best I’ve ever had. If she [the KTTF worker] hadn’t come along I don’t think I’d be here today.’

## Case study: Keys to the Future, Bristol

### Engaging with services

#### Family profile

The family has four children aged three, seven, 12 and 14. Mum (Amy) and Dad (Bill) split up, and Mum moved away with the three youngest children. Amy died suddenly and all the children had to move back to Bristol to live with their Dad. The housing association tenancy was in the Mum's name, so Bill and the four children were then threatened with homelessness as well as coping with the grief of losing Amy. The two eldest children were not attending school regularly and were displaying challenging behaviour.

#### Keys to the Future's interventions

Keys to the Future supported Bill to sort out his benefits, and successfully applied for school uniform grants and bus passes for the two older children which helped them to attend school. Bill said: 'Without their help my kids wouldn't be getting on as well. It's like they're part of the family. Shelter listened and helped but social services have watched and judged. Shelter are mellow and chilled out – that's what helped me to speak to them. They don't talk down to me.'

Keys to the Future worked one-to-one with Ellie and Mark, separately. Both children had a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment. They found Shelter's support invaluable.

'She helps me chill out and get away from things. I can trust her and speak with trust with her, but have a good time as well. Without it, my brain would have been overloaded.

'Yeah, I need to go to school, but she didn't tell me what to do. She gave me advice about what might happen if I didn't go.'

**Ellie (14)**

#### Outcomes

The outcomes of the support Keys to the Future provided were praised by other professionals supporting the family. The issues this family face cannot be quickly fixed, but Keys to the Future has enabled them to cope during a traumatic time by gaining their trust and not judging them.

One professional described Shelter's engagement with the family, particularly Bill who is very mistrustful of statutory agencies, as 'a massive achievement'.

## Improved educational attainment

There is emerging anecdotal evidence that children have been supported to achieve better in school. Keys to the Future services have supported improved attendance and engagement with homework to achieve this impact. For example, some services are offering homework clubs outside school hours to provide children with support with their homework and activities to reinforce learning:

'They got her into a course on a Monday after school and I'm so pleased with how she got on. She hasn't been learning well at school, especially not her times tables and telling the time. But she came home from this and she knew how many minutes were in half an hour. It's really helped in just six weeks. I felt she learnt more from that than she had in school.'

**Parent, Bristol**

Young people engaged as Peer Educators in Gloucestershire have achieved nationally recognised BTEC qualifications while volunteering for the service. For some of them, this is the first qualification they have achieved.

## Case study: Keys to the Future, Glasgow Improved educational outcomes

### Family profile

Jane (aged 11) and her mother (Dawn) were living in unsuitable, overcrowded accommodation when they approached Shelter. This situation has now been resolved and they have a two-bedroom flat, allowing Jane to have her own room.

### Keys to the Future's interventions

On initial assessment by the Child Support Worker, it became evident that Jane had a poor record of school attendance, and teachers reported that she struggled with handwriting. The Education Liaison Worker developed an intensive programme with the family involving practical support (access to school transport), one-to-one homework support in the home, and educational visits.

### Outcomes

The outcomes of these interventions include:

- 'People can understand my handwriting better now, it's so much better. It used to be very scribbly.'
- an improvement in school attendance, from 49 per cent at initial assessment in May 2008 to 86 per cent in September 2008 then 76 per cent in January 2009
- improved relationships within the family, and with Jane's peers, meaning that both mother and daughter were more confident that she would make a positive transition to secondary education: 'I used to get homework. I used to get stuck with it... I didn't used to care about my homework, but I enjoy doing my homework now.'

## Improved social skills, confidence and aspirations for children and young people

In both Scotland and England, Keys to the Future has offered a range of out-of-school activities during the holidays and after school, including leisure and educational visits for groups of children and individual families. Children interviewed have been overwhelmingly positive about the trips and activities offered by Keys to the Future:

'We went on trips to the cinema and to a club after school. There were all different activities and it was fun. We made a bird, and cartoon characters, and there was a painter, and we got to make a mess with the paint and it didn't matter. We got to know other kids too.'

**Girls (11 and 13), Newham**

Young people who have been trained as Peer Educators have learnt to modify their behaviour and language to be able to deliver education to other young people. They have taken on the position of being role models and they have understood that they represent Keys to the Future when they are delivering sessions. Those interviewed report that these activities have greatly increased their self-esteem.

The outcomes of such activities include:

- reduced social isolation of homeless children
- increased confidence
- improved behaviour in groups

- increased self-esteem
- increased ability to develop social networks.

These outcomes can be particularly important when it is not possible to improve the families' housing situations, at least in the short term.

Keys to the Future has also aimed to raise the aspirations of the children and young people the services work with. The Gloucestershire service has supported some Peer Educators to successfully move into employment. Newham has introduced children to role models, including volunteers from a city law firm, to help raise the aspirations of children in an inner city borough with high levels of deprivation and poor educational attainment. One seven-year-old boy said:

'It's changed what I dream about doing when I'm older – I want to be a scientist or a doctor.'

## **Improved housing and finances**

Keys to the Future services have helped young people and families to find better housing that is more appropriate to their needs, even if it is still temporary. Children in Bristol commented:

'Shelter helped us to find a new house and get carpets, plates etc. It's in a nicer area and closer to school. Before, we had to get up at 5.30am to go to school. They've been helping Mum and she's happier. My Dad and us don't have to get up so early. We feel safer where we are now, and we feel happier.'

**Sisters (11 and 13), Bristol**

Keys to the Future supported families to resolve immediate issues, such as inappropriate or poor housing and making benefit claims. The services have found that, often, they need to deal with these issues first and then work with parents to focus on the needs of their children. The quote below illustrates how benefit issues are interlinked with improving a family's housing situation.

'Until two weeks ago I didn't have a bank account, because I was made bankrupt. If you don't have a bank account, you can't get child benefit. If you don't get child benefit, you can't get income support. If you don't get income support, you can't get housing benefit. Shelter helped me focus on what I needed to do first, and helped me to get a bank account.'

**Parent, Bristol**



## Case study: Keys to the Future, Bristol Housing and family support

### Family profile

Zainab and her two children, aged 9 and one, were living with their in-laws in very overcrowded accommodation. Zainab was treated as a slave by her husband's family. Her movements were restricted. The family lived in one bedroom, sharing a double bed, and there were no toys in the house. Zainab had postnatal depression following the birth of her youngest daughter. This was compounded by ongoing domestic violence by her husband, who was physically and sexually abusive. The Keys to the Future worker described Zainab as being 'worn down' when they first met.

### Keys to the Future's interventions

Keys to the Future provided emotional and practical support. They helped the family to get rehoused in emergency accommodation, and then provided support through the whole process to enable Zainab to feel brave enough to live independently. Keys to the Future got social services to write a letter of support to the housing department, because Zainab had threatened to kill herself and her children. This helped them get a high enough priority to bid for permanent housing.

### Outcomes

The Homelessness Officer who dealt with the case acknowledged that Keys to the Future's involvement changed the outcome and led to the family being permanently rehoused:

'Zainab was not always able to fight her case. She wasn't aware of what she needed to do. KTTF acted as an advocate on her behalf – it wouldn't have been clear how vulnerable she was otherwise. Their involvement was really valuable – Zainab wasn't coping.'

The domestic violence worker involved with the family also felt Keys to the Future's support made a significant difference.

'I very much doubt that Zainab would have done it without Shelter. They found her somewhere to live, and took very quick steps to help Zainab improve it – it had no carpets and the wallpaper was peeling off. They also supported her in dealing with racist neighbours, and helped her to put in a complaint.'

### Freedom worker

The Common Assessment Framework process worked very effectively in co-ordinating multi-agency support for the family and has been recognised as an example of good practice in Bristol.

Zainab is effusive about the impact of the support she has received. Her confidence and self-esteem have increased dramatically, and the mental health of both children has improved. The family are now safe and the children are thriving. She is looking to the future and wants to work as a bookkeeper. She said: 'KTTF helped me to get out from my hell. Now I'm happy with my children and we are free.'



## Stakeholder perspectives

The perspectives of external stakeholders, not including those of beneficiaries, that are presented in case study material, help to highlight where Keys to the Future services are being successful and where they provide ‘added value’ to other services and professional structures.

### Advocacy

Some Keys to the Future services have supported children through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, often acting in the Lead Professional role (such as in Bristol). CAF partner agencies have welcomed Keys to the Future’s approach to the process, which has been to be inclusive of families and to keep the emphasis on multi-agency working with the child:

‘KTTF are very good at keeping the focus on how it might feel to be that child. They are good at being child-centred and service-user-led.’

**Barnardos worker, Bristol**

Partners in Scotland have recognised the ability of Keys to the Future workers to raise issues not considered by other agencies as added value, both in multi-agency working and when advocating directly on behalf of children with schools.

## **Bridging between services**

Keys to the Future services working with children and families are often acting as a link between other agencies supporting families, and between families and agencies. They bring specialist knowledge about homelessness and housing, but also a non-judgemental approach and a drive to get things done. Stakeholders have recognised this as a bridging role, as one commented:

‘We get good feedback from [the KTTF worker]. All the officers find working with her easy, she provides feedback about cases and they [the officers] are enthusiastic about the service... The feedback from KTTF is excellent and much better than from lots of other projects.’

**Stakeholder, Scotland**

## **Filling a gap**

Homelessness is a knowledge gap for other family support agencies, including Children’s Centres and schools. Stakeholders acknowledge that Keys to the Future has a role to play:

‘KTTF has got it right in terms of filling a gap. Education doesn’t always pick up on homelessness... part of the difficulty is confidentiality. There is no easy way to alert schools to homelessness and, if they don’t know, they can’t help.’

**Stakeholder, Scotland**

Schools that Keys to the Future has worked with in Newham are now more aware of the needs of children in temporary accommodation. As a result, they now ask about the family’s housing situation on their admission forms.

Stakeholders recognise that Keys to the Future has developed in a changing context for family support. While designed to operate at the more preventative end of family support, Keys to the Future services that work with children and families have been picking up cases with high levels of complex needs:

‘They [KTTF staff] are dealing with really difficult situations. It’s not about resolving one problem with an individual child, but trying to address a range of difficulties for the whole family. I’m sure that five, certainly 10, years ago, many of these [families] would have had statutory interventions. That is no longer the case. The bar to accessing those services is now set so high, so that it is groups like KTTF that are picking up on some very heavy cases and trying to intervene at an earlier stage – before crisis.’

**Stakeholder, England**

## Introducing innovative approaches

Teachers in Gloucestershire, who have observed Shelter's Peer Education Service, consider it to be an effective method of imparting 'life choice' messages to young people, and they would recommend peer education to their colleagues. One professional provided feedback directly to the Peer Education service that illustrates this point:

'[KTTF] have been a great service to the students. Homelessness and housing issues are a continuing problem for many young people and [KTTF] are able to educate and challenge stereotypes in a really positive way. Bringing Peer Educators, other young people who have experienced homelessness, in to share their experiences has allowed students to hear real-life examples of the problems and solutions they might face. I am confident that, now or in the future, a young person would be better able to plan their move or find the best help should they become homeless.'

**Student link worker, Gloucestershire**

## Influence

Partner agencies in Gloucestershire report that Shelter/Keys to the Future has maintained a strategic profile, evidenced by the fact that the Peer Education Service has been written into the updated Homelessness Strategies of all six districts of the county. Stakeholders have also welcomed Peer Educators' participation and influence on strategic planning for housing services for young people.

In Scotland, Keys to the Future has been involved in the production of two reports. The first highlights the experiences and impact of homelessness from children's perspectives, and has informed Scottish government guidance. The second uses quantitative data to identify the extent of homelessness across Scotland.<sup>3</sup> These have been used in national conference and workshop activity (such as the Shelter Children and Homelessness Conference and sessions with the Scottish Youth Parliament). Influencing work in Scotland has, therefore, a high profile with ongoing work with the Scottish Government, local authorities, and housing providers to develop and promote co-ordinated good practice in addressing the multiple needs of homeless children and families.

At a regional level, by connecting work with families on the ground to Keys to the Future's influencing work and the development of good practice guidance,<sup>4</sup> Keys to the Future has made a significant contribution to keeping the issues of housing and homelessness on the child poverty agenda 'at a point when [the agenda] was at risk of being totally dominated by worklessness and not addressing housing needs as fundamental', according to a Government Office representative in England.

Nationally, the Regional Children's Co-ordinators have undertaken audits of local authority practice, and worked intensively within one authority (Devon) to develop joint protocols between housing departments and statutory social services.

3 Shelter, *Acting in the best interests of homeless children: views of children and young people on where they live* 2009; Shelter, *The facts: bad housing and homelessness for children in Scotland*, 2009

4 Shelter, *Improving outcomes for children and young people in housing need: A benchmarking guide for joint working between services*, 2009



## Lessons learnt

Reflecting on practice and outcomes across the Keys to the Future interventions, some broad lessons can be identified.

### **A whole family approach**

Keys to the Future services, particularly those designed to support homeless children, found that to make a difference with a child they needed to work with the whole family. Supporting a child with homework, or helping a child change their behaviour outside the home was ineffective if the same practices and strategies were not being reinforced in the home. Engaging parents, carers, and siblings is more likely to lead to positive outcomes for the child and the family as a whole. Working intensively with parents to resolve their immediate issues enables them to refocus on the needs of their children. Evidence that this ‘whole family’ model is effective is important, as it goes against the current child-centred focus of family services and the emphasis placed on short-term interventions.

## Engagement

Experience across all Keys to the Future services providing face-to-face interventions shows that effective engagement with vulnerable children, families, and homeless young people requires:

- a non-judgemental approach that nurtures trust
- consistency of support
- flexibility to accommodate clients/volunteers changing circumstances and, consequently, fluctuations in their ability to engage
- responsiveness of services to clients' changing circumstances
- ability to address clients/volunteers practical needs, eg transport, school uniform.

## Complexity of need

Keys to the Future services designed to deliver relatively short interventions (up to six months) have found that families often need longer-term interventions to make sustainable changes. They often have chaotic lifestyles and complex social, emotional and financial needs, as well as housing needs.

In Scotland, Keys to the Future workers have realised that the challenges they face in engaging homeless children in education can be rooted in 'inter-generational patterns of homelessness and worklessness'. A child's immediately presenting issue might be lack of integration in school, because of frequent moves, but the underlying issue is a deep-seated indifference to education and a lack of aspiration in the family, which is harder to resolve.

## Working in partnership

Keys to the Future services have found that working in partnership with other agencies can both extend reach into different communities and create better outcomes for children and families, especially where Keys to the Future is performing its 'bridging' function to join up responses. Partnership working also offers opportunities to access more diverse sources of funding, such as in the case of funding raised in association with another local voluntary agency for a new worker to provide peer education on the risks of running away in Gloucestershire.

## Innovation

As a collection of pilot services, Keys to the Future has had the freedom to try different approaches and to adapt services in response to changing needs. Services have not been prescriptive. Workers have been able to use reflective practice to improve approaches as they have gone along, identifying what works and what is unrealistic, and taking various approaches to trial different ways of achieving each service's objectives.

## Volunteer involvement

Volunteers have played key roles in several Keys to the Future services, providing the core service in Gloucestershire and forming part of the support succession strategy in Scotland, among other roles. Services have found they need to have an infrastructure in place to enable workers to support volunteers effectively.

## Change takes time

Staff from Keys to the Future's local services highlighted the importance of the investment of time to develop trust with families (particularly with those that had negative experiences of other services in the past), and the need for longer-term interventions to promote and sustain positive change in families. At a regional and national level in both England and Scotland, Keys to the Future staff involved in influencing work noted that long-term processes of changing policy and practice, particularly in test cases and Parliamentary legislation, operated within time scales that were beyond their control.

# Appendix 1: Evaluation purpose and methods

Shelter commissioned the University of Birmingham to undertake an evaluation of Keys to the Future.

The aims of the evaluation are to:

- reflect on the processes and interventions adopted by the programme
- review the 'reach' of Keys to the Future to vulnerable children and families and harder to reach communities
- identify the impact of Keys to the Future on, and outcomes for, both children and families
- assess the lessons learnt from the pilot programme (what works?)
- analyse the extent to which Keys to the Future has influenced wider children's services in terms of policy, practice and legislation.

Keys to the Future is a multi-component and multi-level programme. It has developed in a changing economic and social climate, and involves multi-agency working. To better understand these complexities, the evaluation adopted a 'Theories of Change' framework for gathering and analysing data. 'Theories of Change' asks:

- what is the situation that needs to change?
- how are you going to bring about change?
- how do you know things are changing, or have changed?

The focus of this interim report is on outcomes achieved between April 2007 and August 2009. It builds on two previous reports, one outlining the starting points for Keys to the Future and the other presenting early lessons that could inform further development of the programme.

As a longitudinal study over four years, and operating in diverse sites and contexts, the evaluation has adopted a range of methodologies. The preparation of this report has involved:

- reviewing internal Shelter monitoring reports and related data, as well as the broader policy and practice literature on services for children and families
- (39) individual and (8) focus interviews with Keys to the Future staff, Shelter management, and (26) external stakeholders locally/regionally and nationally, at regular intervals
- individual interviews with children and parents accessing services to develop in-depth case studies, (11) group and (3) observation sessions at Keys to the Future events
- an online survey to 30 schools involved in the peer education initiative in Gloucestershire.

Focus groups/observations and case study interviews have been designed to gather feedback that adds breadth, depth and external validity to the findings. This summary programme report has been supplemented by six more detailed service level reports. Further research will be completed over 2010/11 as the programme, and the findings will be presented in a final summative evaluation report.

## Appendix 2: Approaches employed by Keys to the Future services to deliver interventions

Approaches	Bristol	Gloucestershire	Knowsley	Newham	Scotland	Advice Line	Legal Service
Advocacy for children and families	●		●	●	●		
BTEC training for volunteers		●					
Co-ordination and participation in multi-agency working	●		●	●	●		
Family relationship building activities	●		●	●	●		
Financial, in-kind support and charity applications	●			●	●		
Forum theatre and drama workshops		●		●			
General support activities	●		●	●	●		
Group work and user-involvement activities	●	●	●	●	●		
Homework clubs and homework support				●	●		
Housing advice	●			●		●	
Information and signposting	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Multimedia resources		●		●			
One-to-one placement with a volunteer	●			●	●		
One-to-one planned meetings with child	●		●	●	●		
Peer education by homeless young people		●					
Peer support		●					
Telephone advice for children's workers						●	
Housing training workshops						●	
Legal casework							●
Volunteer involvement	●	●		●	●		



# Appendix 3: Keys to the Future services' progress against targets

Area/dates	Key targets until end of service life	Key targets to end of August 2009	Actual to August 2009
<b>Keys to the Future, Newham</b> June 2007 to May 2010	450 children benefit from educational support	337 children	362 achieved
	120 children receive intensive tailored support	90 children	85 achieved
<b>Keys to the Future, Gloucestershire</b> June 2007 to May 2010	6,000 young people are educated on homelessness	4,500 young people	5,646 achieved
	120 young people receive peer support sessions <sup>6</sup>	90 young people	14 achieved
	20 Peer Educators recruited and achieve BTEC and V-Involve qualification	15 Peer Educators	27 Peer Educators recruited 9 achieved BTEC qualifications 5 achieved V-Involve awards
	Number of peer education and support sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of peer education sessions</li> <li>■ Number of peer support sessions</li> </ul>		197 achieved 2 achieved
<b>Keys to the Future, Bristol</b> July 2007 to June 2010	900 children receive a housing needs assessment	650 children	557 achieved
	600 children receive multi-agency support	433 children	474 achieved
	225 children received intensive tailored support	162 children	169 achieved
<b>Keys to the Future, Scotland</b> April 2008 to March 2011	526 children receive a needs assessment and support <sup>7</sup>	248 children	187 achieved
	212 children receive homework support	100 children	80 achieved
	90 children receive intensive tailored support <sup>8</sup>	42 children	8 achieved

6 The Gloucestershire Peer Education Service requested a change in model of peer support sessions to focus on more intensive preventative support. Due to the change in delivery style from one-to-one to small group, in November 2009 the output was increased to 200 children and young people to be achieved by the end of the life of the service. The Big Lottery Fund has approved this variance.

7 The Scottish Education Liaison service requested a reduction in outputs due to the loss of the Edinburgh Support Service, delay in recruiting the second Education Liaison Worker in Glasgow, and the loss of the Volunteer Co-ordinator in Glasgow. The Big Lottery Fund has approved this variance. The original targets were 560; 245; and 95 respectively.

8 The Scottish Education Liaison service requested a review of the third output relating to home care support, as they identified many children and young people required intensive support to increase school attendance, but didn't necessarily require home care support. The Big Lottery Fund approved an expansion of this third output to enable the Education Liaison Workers to provide an intensive tailored-support package to those children and young people most in need.

Area/dates	Key targets until end of service life	Key targets to end of August 2009	Actual to August 2009	
<b>Keys to the Future, Knowsley<sup>9</sup></b> December 2008 to November 2011	600 children receive a housing needs assessment	150 children	94 achieved	
	480 children receive multi-agency support	120 children	23 achieved	
	120 children receive intensive tailored support	30 children	15 achieved	
<b>Children's Legal Service</b> October 2007 to September 2010	450 cases This figure is comprised of a combination of direct and consultancy cases: ■ direct cases ■ consultancy cases	287 cases	263 achieved  142 121	
	Number of children supported through above casework		348 achieved	
	6 Successful test cases	4 test cases	1 achieved	
	24 articles for legal journals, magazines etc	16 articles	3 achieved	
	12 email briefings	7 email briefings	3 achieved	
	16 conferences participated in	10 conferences participated in	1 achieved	
	<b>Children's Service Advice Line</b> September 2007/April 2008 to March 2011 <sup>10</sup>	3,475 cases opened		810 achieved
		6,750 children supported		1,440 achieved
<b>Children's Centres casework</b> April 2007/April 2008 to March 2010/March 2011 <sup>11</sup>	3,475 cases opened		184 achieved	
	7,793 children supported		314 achieved	
<b>'Housing Information' workshops</b> September 2007/April 2008 to March 2011 <sup>12</sup>	Number of staff trained (nil target established)		645 achieved	

9 Full staff complement not reached until July 2009.

10 The Children's Service Advice Line was piloted in London and the South East, the South West and Teesside regions in September 2007. The service was launched nationally in April 2008, hence the staggered start dates.

11 The Children's Centres casework also has a staggered start date, with the North East Children's Centre caseworker starting in April 2007, followed by the London and South East and the South West regions starting in September 2007, with the remaining regions starting in April 2008.

12 The 'Housing Information' workshops also had the same staggered start dates, as did the Children's Centres casework start dates.

# Appendix 4: Children’s services outcome frameworks

In assessing the impact of Keys to the Future services at the local level, Shelter has adopted the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes framework in England and the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework in Scotland. These underpin the objectives and direction of children’s services across both nations and are summarised in the following table.

## Children’s services outcome frameworks

Every Child Matters (England)	Getting it Right for Every Child (Scotland)
Stay safe	Safe
Enjoy and achieve	Achieving Active Nurtured
Make a positive contribution	Respected Responsible
Be healthy	Healthy
Economic wellbeing	Included

There are subtle differences between the two frameworks, although the overarching goals are similar. In Scotland, where the Keys to the Future focus is on educational support, monitoring and case reviews measure school attendance, integration, homework and parental attitudes to education, bullying, exclusions and the home environment/routines. In England, Keys to the Future has worked to demonstrate progress against the broad outcomes identified in the table plus 14 relevant aims out of 25 from the Every Child Matters framework.

## Until there's a home for everyone

We are one of the richest countries in the world, and yet millions of people in Britain wake up every day in housing that is run-down, overcrowded, or dangerous. Many others have lost their home altogether. Bad housing robs us of security, health, and a fair chance in life.

Shelter helps more than 170,000 people a year fight for their rights, get back on their feet, and find and keep a home. We also tackle the root causes of bad housing by campaigning for new laws, policies, and solutions.

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