

SmartMove Newsletter

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Westminster SmartMove launched

In July 2008, Threshold Housing Advice launched a new SmartMove scheme in Westminster, London.

The organisation already delivers two other London SmartMove schemes, in Wandsworth and Barnet, as well as running a SmartSkills programme from their Barnet office.

Funded through Crisis by the Dolphin Square Foundation, Westminster SmartMove established a strong partnership with a local hostel, St Louise. They have also made contact with a number of agencies that have been identified as working with the appropriate client group in the borough. Contact has been made with these agencies in order to share service details, outline the project and clarify the referral criteria and process.

There are many hostels in the Westminster area and this scheme will hopefully provide a great move-on opportunity for those otherwise unable to access move-on. As identified in research by Homeless Link (*No room to move, 2004*) almost half of all those people currently in hostel accommodation are waiting to move-on to other, often unsupported accommodation.

Westminster SmartMove is still in negotiations over use of external agencies' premises to hold an outreach surgery within Westminster itself. As a short-term measure, interviews will be held on Threshold Housing Advice's premises in the neighbouring borough of Wandsworth.

Although still very much in the early stage of operation, Westminster SmartMove has already seen its first few clients, primarily referred by St

Louise hostel. This ability to start delivering the service so quickly was no doubt enhanced by their experience delivering schemes in London, but should still be commended.

They have also developed a really effective promotional poster, which advertises the service and details the aims of the project, including:

- Assist individuals that are ready to live independently obtain a month's rent in advance and/or a damage deposit
- Equip individuals with the necessary tools so they are able to live independently
- Utilise their partnerships and knowledge of the welfare benefit system to ensure the fast tracking of Housing Benefit and other welfare benefit entitlements
- Manage, promote and extend their extensive landlord register to match tenants to landlords
- Supply tenancy agreements and ensure the completion of paperwork for tenants to be signed up
- Complete a detailed inventory and video or photograph the property
- Provide tenancy support for both tenants and landlords through a dedicated housing advisor or support officer
- Deliver advice sessions at outreach venues/locations throughout Westminster and London
- Deliver the highest quality housing advice and services as part of their Community Services Commission accreditation.

Dear all

Welcome to the August edition of the SmartMove newsletter.

As is becoming a feature of the newsletter, this edition sees some hellos and goodbyes. Goodbye to Ronika Cunningham from Calderdale SmartMove, Victoria Haigh from the SmartMove scheme in Great Yarmouth and Aileen Fox at King's Lynn. SmartMove West Lothian welcomes new project assistant Mary Rohan and SmartMove Edinburgh will be saying goodbye to housing officer Aisha Khan, but current project assistant Claire Thomson will be moving into the housing officer role on a temporary basis. We also say hello to Beth Braden, who is working with Karen Lewis at Bridgend Bond Board and to Emma Cox who joins the Crisis Connect team in the role of Development Officer. All the very best to those who have left the SmartMove network and a very warm welcome to those who have joined us.

As I'm sure you're aware from our recent email, Dave Hewitt is due to go on a three-month sabbatical from 22 September – 17 December 2008. Dave is planning on travelling around South America, and is leaving Bridget to hold the fort while he's away. There will be a temporary Project Co-ordinator in post during this time to assist Bridget, but please continue to get in touch about anything you need.

I hope you enjoy the edition, and look forward to seeing you all at the SmartMove conference in London on 21 October 2008.

Kind regards,



Bridget Young



Dave Hewitt

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Project news

Calderdale SmartSkills learners participate in staff recruitment

In July 2008 interviews were held for candidates applying for the position of SmartSkills worker. Both SmartMove clients and SmartSkills learners were invited to participate in this process and on the day one SmartMove client and four SmartSkills learners attended.

The candidates applying for the position had been asked to create a 20-minute workshop based on healthy eating that they would then present to the learners. The learners would provide feedback on each candidate on a feedback sheet, which was ready prepared.

During the workshops the learners seemed very interested in becoming involved, asking and answering questions. During the first workshop the learners did not participate as much but as the day went on their confidence seemed to build and they participated more and more.

At the end of every workshop the learners had a group discussion about who they felt would be best for the position and why. Coincidentally that matched the views of the panel who interviewed the candidates after the workshop.

Once all of the candidates had been interviewed and all of the feedback had been given Calderdale SmartMove staff discussed with the learners whether or not they had enjoyed the day or found it useful. Some of the comments received were as follows:

"I enjoyed the day and I found it useful and it gave me the confidence to speak to people that I would not usually speak to."

"I enjoyed the day and it gave me the opportunity to meet new people."

"I really enjoyed myself today and it was good to get pampered" (as all the learners were provided with dinner).

Once the panel had finished interviewing the candidates, they had a discussion with the learners who were very co-operative and provided useful feedback (written earlier) to the panel, who listened and wrote down what the learners had to say.

Vicki Barton
Calderdale SmartMove

Developments at Edinburgh Cyrenians

Edinburgh Cyrenians currently delivers SmartMove deposit guarantee schemes in Edinburgh, West Lothian and Falkirk. The Falkirk scheme only launched on the 1st April 2008, and they have already had 109 referrals and created 12 tenancies. They have also managed to register 29 landlords with the scheme. Congratulations to Falkirk on an auspicious start.

Along with these services, and many others, Edinburgh Cyrenians also delivers Safe Space, which was launched in April 2006. Safe Space is a support project currently funded through Supporting People. The project is a deposit

guarantee scheme and uses the same model as SmartMove in terms of the guarantee, sign up and saving agreement. However the client group accessing the accommodation is specifically persons with experience of drugs misuse who have been through a period of rehabilitation and are recovering.

For more information on Falkirk SmartMove or the Safe Space project, contact Becky Evans, Private Rented Sector Manager at Edinburgh Cyrenians, at BeckyEvans@cyrenians.org.uk

Bridgend SmartSkills going potty

Bridgend Bond Board's SmartSkills Worker, Jan Balsdon, recently attended training with a charitable organisation called 'Growing Cultivations'. They work with vulnerable people who are either homeless, have mental health, drug and alcohol issues, or a combination of these.

The organisation uses gardening and caring for the environment as a way to build confidence

and learn new skills. Jan is currently looking into the possibility of getting a small allotment for the SmartSkills programme.

At last communique, Jan was potting plants with clients for Bridgend Bond Board's new premises. For more information contact Jan Balsdon at janet.balsdon@thewallich.net

Good Practice: 5 tips on Local Housing Allowance

Some helpful tips from Exeter SmartMove on dealing with Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

1. Get hold of a payment calendar from Housing Benefit. This is absolutely key in working out when a claimant is paid to set up a standing order to pay the landlord.

2. Do not use direct debit as it can be taken anytime throughout the month. Advise tenants to set up a completely separate account for their rent and then set up a monthly standing order. Monthly works because the claimant will be paid fortnightly so if the claim is suspended or changed the tenant has time to resolve the difficulties and prevent bank charges for an unpaid standing order.

3. If the landlord believes his tenant has abandoned the tenancy, suspend the Housing Benefit claim. The tenant will either get in touch or if you have confirmation that the tenant has abandoned the property, the final cheque can be forwarded to the landlord to prevent a bond payout.

4. Exeter SmartMove has found so far that abandonments happen not at the start of a tenancy but about two months into it. It may be that the tenant has started to sort out a settled life and has overcome the initial problems, and when a nice large cheque comes along it is too tempting.

5. Housing Benefit Liaison Meetings are key to enable positive working relationships. Most Housing Benefits departments will have a Landlord Liaison or LHA Officer. Link in with them. Exeter SmartMove has agreed with Housing Benefit that their claims get fast tracked, which is a good selling point to landlords. They also have enhanced consent from clients which helps to resolve difficulties expediently. The Housing Benefit department has contributed towards the cost of a landlord network event Exeter SmartMove is planning. This will enable landlords to meet the numerous parties that have been involved in all the new legislation over the last three years.

Opportunities for Volunteering applications

Under the Opportunities for Volunteering (OFV) scheme, the Department of Health makes funds available for grants to voluntary organisations in order to increase the range and quality of volunteering opportunities for people in England in the fields of health and social care.

Crisis manages a portion of these grants, and five SmartMove partners were previously awarded contracts to deliver this work over three years. The next round of funding will soon be open for applications, and more information will be sent to the SmartMove network within the next few weeks.

Crisis news

Private Access, Public Gain

Crisis and the London Housing Foundation (LHF) have been working together on a programme of research into the real benefits of using Private Rented Sector (PRS) access schemes, such as deposit schemes, to house single homeless and vulnerable people.

On 16 July 2008, a report entitled 'Private Access, Public Gain' was launched, and represents the culmination of this programme of

research. It identifies and evidences the business, strategic and economic case for Local Authorities and commissioning bodies investing in PRS access schemes.

To download a copy of the report, or the presentation by the independent researcher Jane Luby, go to <http://www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/advisoryservice.html>

Crisis Changing Lives

Crisis Changing Lives provides funding for homeless people to pursue a vocational goal. Crisis offers grants of up to £2,500 which can be spent on education and training course fees, equipment needed for courses, items needed for setting up a business or tools needed to get back to work.

The most recent Changing Lives round closed on 11 July 2008 and saw 83 applicants and

£70,000 worth of awards issued. Of the recipients, there are two potential pest control officers, artists, plumbers and forklift truck drivers. The next Changing Lives award round opens on 22 September 2008 and closes on 31 October 2008.

For more information go to <http://www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/changinglivesawards.html>

Crisis Volunteer of the Year 2008



On Saturday, 16 August 2008 Crisis held its annual Volunteer Boat Party. The fantastic evening on the Thames allows Crisis to say thank you to volunteers who have been involved over the past year. This year the thanks went further when Crisis announced the first ever Crisis Volunteer of the Year award. This year's winner was Donald Waugh, who continues to overcome his own difficulties to volunteer in London Skylight's Learning Zone.

Veena Torchia, Senior Tutor in the Learning Zone and Donald's supervisor, had this to say: *"Donald began volunteering with ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) learners and has been a co-founder of the English Club. He has inspired, empowered and motivated learners with his innovative classes, boundless energy and steadfast dedication. He has transformed shy and unconfident asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers into people who can now speak out for themselves and interact with confidence. Not only has he managed to powerfully engage some of the hardest to reach learners – with linguistic barriers, mental health issues and drug and alcohol addictions – but he has become the spearhead of positivity and dogged determination"*

External news

Judgement delivered on Rent Service

The House of Lords gave its judgment in the case of R (on the application of Heffernan) v. The Rent Service on 30th July 2008.

In broad terms, the House of Lords has provided concise guidance in relation to the number of neighbourhoods that may properly be included in a locality. As a result of the judgment, The

Rent Service will take this opportunity to review the guidance that it gives its rent officers in the setting of localities and Broad Rental Market Areas.

For more information go to <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldjudgmt/jd080730/heffer-1.htm>

Short film showing the positives of the private rented sector

The London Housing Foundation has produced a 13-minute film aimed at hostel workers and residents. It explores the subject of moving out of a hostel and into the PRS, from the perspective of someone who has made the transition. The film does not aim to be a balanced and unbiased analysis of the PRS as a move-one option. Given the commonplace (though not universal) resistance to the PRS, it

instead focusses on the positives, and encourages individuals ready to move on from supported housing to see the PRS as a viable option.

You can see the film online at http://www.privaterentedsector.org.uk/PRS_film.aspx. A DVD can also be ordered free of charge for agencies who intend showing it to hostel workers and residents.

Debate encouraged on eco-towns

Shelter is encouraging local people to make their voices heard in the debate about the proposed Pennbury eco-town, south-east of Leicester.

The proposal to build a series of eco-towns is part of the Government's strategy to achieve the target of delivering three million homes by 2020. Eco-towns offer the potential to develop sustainable housing and mixed communities that respond to the challenges of climate change and

high utility bills. For these towns to achieve their potential, it is essential that serious social and environmental concerns are addressed.

Shelter has produced an interesting information booklet on this subject, which can be downloaded at http://england.shelter.org.uk/news/july_2008/have_your_say_on_eco-towns

Funding review demanded

The government should consider dropping sheltered housing from the Supporting People programme, two major older people's charities have claimed. Help the Aged and Age Concern England said the government needed to carry

out an 'urgent review' of how sheltered housing was funded. For more information go to http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/story.aspx?story_code=6500838

Training & Events

Crisis Conference

18 November 2008, London

This year's conference, which encompasses the whole organisation rather than just the SmartMove network, was rescheduled from July and is entitled 'The Reform Agenda'.

The recent Green Paper on Welfare Reform, the imminent Green Paper on Housing Reform and the consultation on a new rough sleeping strategy have put the issues of how we best tackle housing need and worklessness at the top of the political agenda. The Government has

committed to building 3 million new homes, to achieving an 80% employment rate and to improving opportunities for education, training and employment for former rough sleepers.

This conference will discuss how best these ends can be achieved and how reform of the housing, welfare to work and benefits systems could deliver genuine solutions for those who are homeless and in housing need, acting as a springboard into appropriate housing and employment, and not further marginalising them.

Shelter training: Security of Tenure - Advanced

London, Bristol & York, 16 September onwards

This course will increase delegates' knowledge of the law relating to occupation of residential accommodation, through an examination of the

more intricate issues concerning security of tenure.

For more information or to book, go to <http://england.shelter.org.uk>

Crisis Connect training

November, London & Manchester

Crisis Connect is currently putting together a short programme of training events to be held in London and Manchester in November – dates still to be confirmed.

The training will cover Pre-tenancy workshops and Accessing grants, loans or financial support for clients.

For more information email Emma Cox at emma.cox@crisis.org.uk

Housing Allocations & Homelessness Conference 2008

1 October 2008, London

Essential training equipping housing professionals to tackle the very latest developments in housing allocation and homelessness practice.

You will receive guidance on policy and practice in homelessness and housing allocation; the latest legal developments; housing allocation case law; and what the future holds.

For more information go to <http://www.jordan-training.co.uk>

Crisis statement

Crisis Skylight Café and Jamie Oliver's Fifteen

In July and August 2008, one of the Skylight café's London trainees, Elliot Roche, went through a series of five difficult interviews for the chance to be part of the Jamie Oliver team at 'Fifteen'. Only 20 lucky candidates get accepted on the apprentice programme. They work alongside some of the best Michelin star chefs in the UK, train and learn in a real working kitchen, and even get the chance to rub shoulders with Jamie himself.

In August 2008 Elliot did us all proud and was accepted as one of the 20 apprentices starting this year. This is an especially remarkable achievement considering there were over 400 applicants.

Elliot came to the café in May 2008 with no real experience in a kitchen except for his own determination and passion for food. He is now on the pathway to great success, and is a wonderful example to the rest of the trainees.

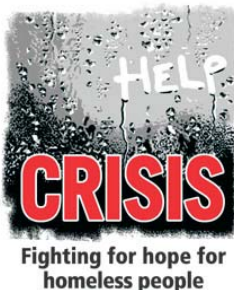
Crisis Skylight Café is an inspiring, working café and art space in east London and Newcastle. Open to the public, the café provides a route into work for homeless people. Under the guidance of an experienced Café manager,

trainees receive individually structured training leading to recognised qualifications in food hygiene, customer care and health and safety, as well as more specialised skills in food preparation.

In 2002, Jamie Oliver combined two ambitions: to open a top class restaurant and to give disadvantaged youngsters the chance to gain professional training that would set them up for an independent, inspired and productive life. Six years on, Fifteen is still achieving both, improving and expanding all the time.

This social enterprise has entertained hundreds of thousands of people who have loved their fantastic food; their custom and support has directly helped transform the lives of our apprentices. They've grown a lot too, now running Fifteen restaurants (each with their own foundation and apprenticeship schemes) in London, Cornwall, Amsterdam and Melbourne.

For more information on the Skylight Café go to <http://www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/skylightcafe.html> and for more information on Fifteen visit <http://www.fifteen.net/Pages/default.aspx>



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