

# The Impact of Welfare Reform on Young People

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# Introduction

- In –House Welfare Officer
- Funded by The Big Lottery’s Support & Connect Fund
- 3 Goals: Prevention, Support & Connection
- Varied role & tasks: guidance and advice, training of staff, networking, forums, policy input, etc...

# North Lanarkshire Youth Housing Support Service

- Provides housing support to young people aged 16 to 25.
- Provide a 365 days a year service to young people who are experiencing or threatened with homelessness
- Voluntary service – no obligation to engage
- Currently only available to young people living in North Lanarkshire
- Young people have a support plan and a named key worker
- Work on outcomes identified by young person
- Focus on both present and future

# Our Young People

- Aged 16 to 25
- Live in North Lanarkshire area
- Have been assessed for housing support by North Lanarkshire Council
- Number of reason for referrals: family breakdown, leaving care, anti-social behaviour, vulnerabilities, etc
- Housing issues include: poor door control, poor household management, poor living conditions, poor budgeting, no health involvement, arrears, etc

# Impacts of Welfare Reform

- Sanctions
- Mandatory Reconsideration
- Under-occupancy Charges (aka “Bedroom Tax”)
- Implementation of Scottish Welfare Fund
- Universal Credit

# Sanctions

- Popular benefit amongst our young people
- Biggest reported issue is lack of communication
- Literacy issues present
- Acceptance of circumstances

# Mandatory Reconsideration

- Not enough challenges of decisions
- Mandatory Reconsiderations often takes some time to be decided
- Mandatory Reconsideration can sometimes be a barrier
- Things have gotten better...but there are still issues

# Under-Occupancy Charges

- Now largely resolved but there are still some issues
- Young people often unaware that they have to apply for these
- Application process can be lengthy



# Implementation of The Scottish Welfare Fund

- Good and useful working relationships with our local Scottish Welfare Fund
- Young people often receive a very good service
- Lack of Scottish Welfare Fund resources are now affecting our young people
- Community Care Grant awards now only awarding very basic grants
- Standard of Living is being compromised

# Universal Credit

- Universal Credit has now launched in North Lanarkshire
- Still very few cases of Universal Credit but increasing as more young people meet Gateway conditions
- Long initial period of time without payment
- Greater responsibilities upon the young person
- Rent arrears and other debts
- Full impacts are yet to be seen

# Outcomes So Far...

- 66% reduction in occurrences of sanctions since January 2014
- 100% of young people in the service are offered financial advice
- 100% of young people in the service have access to crisis support
- 62% reduction in the need of crisis intervention since January 2014
- 97% of our young people report a better connection with local advice agencies
- Over £15,000 recovered for our young people in lost income
- Almost £4,000 worth of rent arrears recovered for North Lanarkshire Council
- An 87% success rate for Mandatory Reconsiderations
- Seats at 3 local forums
- 3 Welfare Reform Training sessions for staff
- 2 evidence sessions at the Scottish Parliament

# Thank You for Listening



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