

A Shared Commitment to Improve Pathways and Interventions for Homeless Young People

The HSCB with colleagues from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Supporting People (SP) co-hosted a regional seminar on youth homelessness on 31 July 2013.

Anna Whalen and Andy Gale, two leading specialist advisers on homelessness, housing and vulnerable young people shared their extensive experience of working across Local Authorities in England and Wales to develop effective models of intervention with homeless young people.

A compelling argument was made for preventive programmes and earlier interventions to be embedded into practice approaches and models of service delivery. Emphasis was placed on the importance of averting crisis, providing better support to young people and their families from an earlier stage and thereby focusing efforts in the first instance on preventing family breakdown which is a major predisposing factor leading to homelessness among young people.

The facilitators drew attention to the importance of early identification of predictor factors that lead to some young people becoming homeless, such as, anti-social behaviour, disrupted education, dysfunctional family relationships, substance misuse, and domestic violence.

In citing examples of effective models of intervention from Local Authorities in England the facilitators described some key features such as early educative and awareness raising work targeted at vulnerable groups; intensive edge of care support services for adolescents; and integrated multi agency models of service delivery providing jointly delivered one front door into services.

The strong partnership working and shared commitment already embedded between the NIHE, SP and Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland was deemed to be an excellent foundation for taking next steps in designing and developing a continuum of service

responses that strongly incorporates prevention, early detection and planned intervention approaches.

To support this progression Anna and Andy will be undertaking developmental work across the region in conjunction with NIHE, SP and HSC Trusts to formulate local Action Plan. These plans will be aimed at translating the service continuum into a working and effective practice model of intervention that will achieve best outcomes for vulnerable young people who present with housing needs.