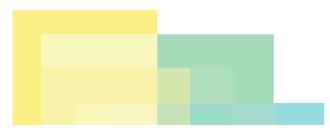


Queens Cross Housing Association: Stories of Housing First for Young People.





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What we do

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Glasgow to create
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The Wedge, Office 7, 1066 Barrhead Rd,
Glasgow G53 5AB.





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Client: Queens Cross Housing Association

Queens Cross Housing Association: Stories of Housing First for Young People.

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Welcome to the Queens Cross Housing Association...

Queens Cross Housing Association are one of Glasgow's 68 Registered Social Landlords and community-based housing associations. They manage and provide almost 4,500 homes, stretching from Glasgow City Centre, along either side of the Forth and Clyde Canal. Their housing stock consists of flats, deck access properties and traditional Glasgow tenements. They provide transitional housing for young people aged between 16-25 by providing transitional housing, providing support for 13 young people as well as offering transitional support to 40 people living in permanent tenancies through the use of the housing first model.

Housing First was developed in New York by Pathways to housing in 1992. The practice gives people who are experiencing homelessness a roof over their heads, whilst providing holistic social support. This model has since travelled overseas reaching Glasgow and Queens Cross Housing Association in the early 2010's. Queens Cross have taken the outline of housing first and tweaked it to suit themselves but more importantly those using the service. This has helped the team to build up a reputation as an organisation with first class staff who pay attention to the needs of individuals.

Queens Cross understand that the model of housing first should be tailored to the individual rather than vice versa. Aid and support should be centred around the person, entering the stage of housing first that is right for them. The model aims to enhance protective factors and build resilience so the young people can develop the support provided and live more independently.

QCHA also provide their Housing First service for people over sixty as well supporting people experiencing or recovering from mental health issues. These three strands have combined to form one service - Queens Cross Wellbeing, to ensure the organisation continue to provide the best service they possibly can for each one of their services users. Here we will look closely at the service provided to young people who have taken on the services Housing First tenancies who told us their story, explaining the support they have received from Queens cross and how they have thrived through their new-found independence. We also spoke to the staff members who provide the support to the young people in the tenancies and in the residential housing.





Members of the Queens Cross Housing Association Team

Finding comfort through creativity

Michael's story

It's a warm July afternoon and after a busy day of rehearsals Michael heads upstairs to join me for our chat. "Sorry I'm late, I've been dancing today". Michael is a transgender writer/performer, who is easily inspired with the world around him. "I take down everything I see and put it onto paper." Michael first discovered his creative spark when he grew up living with his grandparents. "My gran is a published writer and was always giving me little bits of advice. She still helps me now and gives me constructive criticism, which has helped me to develop and hopefully can take me to the next level."

However, it hasn't always been easy for Michael to express himself. After moving in with his mum, her partner and little sister, things started to change, Michael clashed constantly with his mother and at nineteen, Michael was kicked out of the family home. Through engaging with a social worker, he found himself in the QCHA residential house.

Although this intervention happened swiftly and helped Michael avoid the streets, he clashed with others in the residential housing as well as ending up in an abusive relationship. It also had an effect on his ability to write, finding it difficult to concentrate while others were around. These incredibly difficult circumstances were made easier with the support received while living in the Queens Cross building through support from the staff. "The staff have always been very approachable and listen to my problems. Living there helped me to come out as trans because I felt like I could talk to them and they actually listened."

As well as coming out as trans, the QCHA team helped build up Michael's confidence to live independently through helping with housework and money management "When I joined Queens Cross they wanted to see if I was capable of having my own place but I really wasn't. The longer I lived there the more Queens Cross showed me I could be independent and together we started looking for a property that suited." Michael has now been living independently for three years with his two cats Archie and Misty, however the three of them will be on the move shortly as Michael is planning to move in with his best friend.

QCHA were also very supportive of Michael, helping him to re-embrace his creativity through listening to his work and even arranging transport for other residents to attend gigs and shows. "Moving into my own place has really helped me with my material. Being creative and expressing myself is a huge part of me and without it I'd be lost."

With the end of the pandemic in sight Michael is extremely excited to be able to perform again as well as being inspired to write and as venues across the city open up, he has set lofty ambitions. "It's my dream to have one of my plays performed at a theatre in Glasgow. It's something I've extremely passionate about. It would be such an amazing feeling to see my own material come to life and watch it happen."

Since speaking to Michael, his gran has sadly passed away. Michael was incredibly inspired by his gran and now that she's gone, she will continue in his memory and continue to be the motivation behind his work. Michael recently performed at this year's hugely important COP26 event this November and with the support of Queens Cross Housing Association and finding comfort in creativity he has an exciting future ahead of him.

“ The staff have always been very approachable and listen to my problems. Living there helped me to come out as trans because I felt like I could talk to them and they actually listened.”

Michael,
Queens Cross Housing Association.





Finding inspiration from homelessness

Bronwyn's story

Bronwyn Wyper or "Bronny" is a community board member at the Queens Cross Housing Association, offering support to those using the service and young people all over Scotland. However, if you rewind to 2015 Bronny's was in a very different situation. After falling out with her mum and step dad she subsequently left home with the objective of eventually living independently.

After a co-worker at Shelter offered a short time solution, Bronny sought refuge at the St Mungo's foundation, until September 2015 when Bronny joined the Queen's Cross Housing Association residential building for young people. On first assessment the team at QCHA found that although Bronny was capable of living independently in some ways, she wasn't in others. "I already had a lot of life experience from looking after my auntie and my nana, but I also suffer from anxiety and depression which can leave me feeling overwhelmed a lot, but the staff at QCHA helped me to feel comfortable with emotional support."

Despite sorting things out with her mum and step dad, Bronny was determined to make it on her own and didn't want to risk extinguishing their relationship altogether. So, after working with the team at QCHA in the residential house for around seven months, Bronny was ready to live independently and with support from a member of staff, started looking for a property. Together they went to view a spacious flat and despite some initial hesitation due to the size, Bronny had her own "Safe Space" that she could call home.

Bronny wasn't just given the keys and left to her own devices by the Queens Cross Housing Association. The team are determined to continue their support and continue the service users journey to independence. "It's like having an older brother or sister to help you out." Working together Bronny and QCHA applied for grants to furnish her home and when she feels overwhelmed with house work or has a big shopping trip to do, a member of staff will always be there to help her.

In recent years the support given by QCHA has been reciprocated by Bronny. While studying 'Working in Communities' at college in 2018, Bronny became the youngest

ever board member at Queens Cross to celebrate year of the young people. Since then she has attended board meetings, giving her perspective as a service user as well as attending conferences and networking opportunities. She has also been volunteering with the Care Inspectorate, which has allowed her to go into services and speaks to all different kinds of carers which helps to influence policies and procedures throughout the organisations.

The achievements have continued to flow for Bronny, having achieved an A in her college course and reaching level 6 of her community achievement award, Bronny quickly got to work to on her level 7. This has made her even more determined to achieve her ambition of helping young people evade rough sleeping across Glasgow. "I want to use my experience to help others and let them know that they aren't suffering alone." Working together Bronny and QCHA are a force to be reckoned with and with such a clear objective, the sky is the limit.

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Bronwyn,
Queens Cross Housing Association.

Finding freedom and family

Ally's story

Having stayed in a number of different hostels and homeless shelters from the age of 13, Ally had had enough of living in a group environment and was looking for a serious lifestyle change. "When you live in a group environment you involuntarily take on other people's problems. You always want to help your friends but sometimes you can't and it's to the detriment of yourself." Despite all the support Ally received in each of his previous residencies, it was always the final piece that he was climbing for but couldn't reach. Living independently.

At 18 Ally was fit and healthy living in Govan and receiving support from a local homeless hostel, he volunteered at a local organisation and had his life heading in the right direction. Despite this, Ally was still nowhere near getting his own property and after some time ended up heading down the wrong path. Ally started taking legal highs and stopped volunteering. "There was no way of escaping this way of living." Ally was caught in a cycle of getting better and then relapsing back into these bad habits. Despite being ready for a property a month earlier, he wasn't able to take this step as it was the last stage of becoming independent.

After speaking to his social worker, Ally discovered that that QCHA might be able to support him to get his own place. He spoke to Tommy, a member of the QCHA team and after explaining his situation, the team were determined to find Ally a place he could call his own. "It was an incredibly quick turnaround between me joining the service and getting my own property."

Ally was surprised at how smooth the transition was from residential housing or youth hostels, to having his first flat. Having initially worried that some problems from the past could follow him. "Having your own front door is brilliant but it's no use if all your problems from the past know where it is." However, Ally was fully determined for this to be the start of a successful chapter in his life. "Having my own place gave me a clean slate and a lot of responsibility, but I was more than ready for it."

Since then Ally has been able to take on the responsibility he was searching for himself, but also taking responsibility as he starts his own family. "Since having my first property I've moved a couple of times. I said to my partner who was having issues with her hostel that she should sign up for Queens Cross as well. Between us we've had a few moves but we now live together with our wee boy." Ally's son was born during the first lockdown and despite the difficulties of raising a child in the pandemic it hasn't put the couple off as they are now expecting a second child.

By gaining freedom, Ally has been able to move in with his partner and take care of their newly born son. he's been so grateful that he embarked on a charity bike ride with Keith, one of the community workers to help raise funds for the organisation, so they can continue to support individuals like Ally and families such as the exciting to take their exciting next steps together.

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Ally,
Queens Cross Housing Association.

View as a support worker

Frances story

I'd worked with older clients in the past who were made homeless through trauma, for some turned to alcohol and drug dependency. While working through my degree at university I joined an agency. I was asked by agency if I would consider a three-month nightshift at Housing First for Young People. I wanted to learn more about homelessness and gain experience working with younger people. I found while key working older individual's they lacked self-esteem and for many would speak about the need for people to listen to them. This made me think about planting a seed with young people, and if it would be different? I got an opportunity to become a permanent member of team and I am now a Wellbeing Worker.

The team I work with are an excellent established team, for some have been at Queens Cross for years. I felt listened within the team and could ask for guidance and advice when needed. The team have all different strengths and use these strengths on a daily basis.

I have enjoyed seeing young people move into their own tenancy for the first time. I enjoy being a keyworker, and tailoring the support I give them so that they get out of the support what they need and want. I love all the activities that we have as it really helps establish positive relationships with young people in an informal environment as well as being lots of fun.

There are many aspects to the role of Wellbeing Worker. These consist of being a counsellor, listener, and caring for their overall health and wellbeing of young people. Other roles can include supporting young people into further education, GP appointments, family meditation, housing benefit's and building self-esteem and confidence to help young people deal with life on a daily basis.

I have learned that reflection has a big part to play in our everyday role at the project and helps us make a difference to young people. It's become such a part of what I do that at the end of my shift, I will reflect on my day and look at if I could have changed something or made it better for a young person.

The role comes with challenge's too like dealing with young people's behaviours as all individuals are different and deal with their health and situations differently. Past trauma, deprivation, homelessness and addiction can bring lots of challenges for young people and their mental health. Building on trust, being authentic and letting young people know we care is a start.

Every day is different and every day is a new learning day as we are continuing learning from our young people, and they are learning from us.



View from the nightshift

Jennifer's story

What I love about my job is that there are never two shifts the same. There are some tough shifts from time to time but this is to be expected considering we are supporting some of the most vulnerable young people, but shifts can often be really good fun. My shifts never drag in and there is always plenty to do.

Housing First for Young People (HFYP) is an environment where management and staff don't just offer practical support to young people, they nurture young people, encourage and promote them and care about them.

There is no such thing as a typical shift. There are always certain tasks that have to be undertaken on a nightly basis but it's very much about having contact with and offering support to young people whether it be practical or emotional support or facilitating an activity. Since I've been here I've dressed up for Halloween, played prize bingo, held cooking activities and hosted pamper nights. You can't really complain when you come to work and get to pamper yourself for a couple of hours!

The team are amazing. The staff and management are so supportive. Everyone comes from different backgrounds and brings their own experiences, skills and knowledge making this team dynamic and unique. Staff and management are always available to listen, offer advice and give reassurance. HFYP doesn't just feel like a workplace, it feels like a family.

We also have the back up of a fabulous organisation with close working relationships with many departments.

I walked into HFYP as an Agency Worker immediately feeling a connection. I was over the moon to receive a phone call one day to advise I had been successful in my interview and that I was being offered a permanent position.

I love working Nightshift in the service. I feel we are truly privileged on nightshift as I believe that is when we truly get to know the young people who call Wilton Street their home.

Young people know the door is always open and are encouraged to come and sit for while, have a cup of tea and chew the fat, it feels more homely. It's important for them to know that they do not live in my place of work, I work where they live.

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Jennifer,
Queens Cross Housing Association.

View as a sessional worker

Jolene's story

The term housing support is such a broad topic covering everything from support to appointments to support in appointments and everything in between. Since starting with HFYP I have worked with so many tenants with varying levels of support needs, some identifiable almost immediately whilst others become more apparent as you build a relationship with the tenant and see areas they may be struggling in or require a little extra support with.

When I come on shift I get a handover from staff before I check the diary for any appointments I have scheduled as well as appointments that I have been slotted in for. This doesn't have to be with my own tenants, we all try and help each other out in making sure all the tenants are supported when they need it. This also helps me get to know other tenants I may not usually work with and I am also able to plan my day ahead to make sure I have time for everything. I must check my emails at least once in the shift and answer the phone on average about seven thousand times! We also have mobiles that I check to see if there are any messages from tenants and use to have chats with young people. Somewhere in between all of this I may have several cups of coffee and try and not eat various bits of chocolate around the office or stashed in my handbag.

All in all, it's been the most rewarding job I've been in from the relationships we've built with the service users, external agencies and other support services, as well as within the staff team itself.

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Jolene,
Queens Cross Housing Association.

View as a new member of the team

Regan's story

I have always had an interest in working with young people and coming from a big family and always being around children. This is what sparked my interest in wanting to peruse a career in working with young people. As well as wanting to make a difference in young people's lives and support them to achieve their goals. I have always had a desire to work in an environment where support for people is key.

My recruitment process was very straight forward. WSM Sharon was in contact with me frequently providing me with progress updates on my application, interview, and start date. The part of my interview that I was most nervous about was when young people interviewed me. There questions were excellent and I wanted them to see what a good support worker I could be.

I have really enjoyed working in a staff team that is so supportive to each other, especially in a role like this, it is vital that you look after your own wellbeing as well as the young people you are supporting. I have also loved building relationships with the young people. I think the main thing I have learned is how to communicate in a respectful way with the individual who is relying on my support and building positive relationships with them. By meeting them at their level and showing an interest in what is important to them.

I have always worked in people-based roles, which has given me experience in how to deal with difficult situations. However, I have always wanted to work in a more challenging role. However the challenge I now face, is that I have never worked in a role like this before or with young people.

What I am looking forward to the most, is continuing to build strong positive relationships with the young people and continue to support them to achieve their goals. As well as, continuing to learn new skills from a range of professionals. I also look forward to starting my SVQ 3, which will give me a better understanding of Social Care, which I will be able to put into practice.

“ As well as wanting to make a difference in young people’s lives and support them to achieve their goals. I have always had a desire to work in an environment where support for people is key.”

Regan,
Queens Cross Housing Association.

View as a long serving member of the team

Sheena's story

I started working at Council for Homeless Young People (CHYP) in 1999 and have never looked back. I have had different roles but have always been providing support to young people.

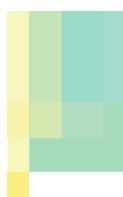
There has been many changes to the service since I started. Over the years the project has firstly become part of Queens Cross Housing Association, and then joined with the Fire Station Project to becoming the Wellbeing Service for Young People. Through all these changes the ethos of the project has remained the same and the commitment to support and empower the young adults we work with hasn't changed.

I love working here and have never thought about moving on to another job or organisation. I enjoy the challenge of working with our client group and seeing them develop and grow as individuals and ultimately move on from the service having created a home, started a family, got a job all with confidence and focus.

The staff team has always been committed and supportive of each other and it has been great working with colleagues who have the same drive and commitment to working with the client group that I do. One of my favourite parts of the job is when young people we supported in the past get in contact, sometimes years later, and tell us how well they are doing and how their memories of the project are happy and positive.

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Sheena,
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The Wedge, Office 7
1066 Barrhead Rd
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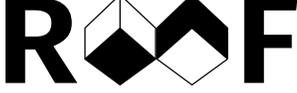
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This project has been supported by the ROOF Network a partnership of 9 European Cities who are collaborating to help combat homelessness through housing led models, gathering accurate data and using storytelling for change. It is an URBACT project, running from 2019 to 2022, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.



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