



Project First Step is a partnership initiative set up to tackle homelessness in young people aged between 16 and 25.

Dudley Council

CHADD, Churches Housing Association of Dudley

Dudley Citizens Advice Bureau

Heantun Group (Housing Association)

Black Country Housing Association

In the Dudley borough there is an increasing number of young people who perceive themselves to be homeless.

There are a number of services that are available to these people, and the success rate in terms of preventing homelessness is very good.

In 2008/2009, there were 928 homeless enquiries, which in this day and age is a very large number. The systems that are in place prevented 64 from being homeless, 100 were statutory homeless, and the other 761 were not homeless but clearly thought of themselves as homeless.

In addition people who are aged under 25 who take a first tenancy with Dudley Council without any support have a prevalence to fail with their tenancies within the first 18 months. The main reason for these failed tenancies is "moved to lodgings", the second is arrears or anti-social behaviour eviction.

Moved to lodgings means moving to situations of precarious tenure including "sofa surfing". The most important reason is financial. Young people may be on low income and benefits that is likely to be barely enough to live. Young people in this situation often fall back on candles for light and warmth; rather than turn the heating on to incur more costs. Other reasons may include:

- Friends taking advantage of the home owner
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Isolation
- Inappropriate ways of coping with conflict, which conform to gender stereotypes.

With all this in mind, the council and its partners has developed this site to create a tool that can be used by all young people, with or without support, to assess their readiness for independent living and create a personal plan. This tool shows the working practices of the council and other services that provide and support young people seeking housing.