



Bethany
Christian
Trust



Passing the Baton

Pilot Study Report - 2006

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1 INTRODUCTION

Bethany Christian Trust is a charity that aims to relieve the suffering and meet the long term needs of homeless and vulnerable people in Scotland. The organisation has grown consistently from its small beginnings 23 years ago and currently seeks to offer support across a range of services. These services support people from the despair of rough sleeping through to sustainable independent living in the community.

It is the mission of Bethany's Passing the Baton pilot project to raise a greater awareness within community groups, the church and other agencies of the need to support people who are moving out of homelessness and vulnerable people at risk of homelessness in the community.

By relating to such community groups, service users will integrate within society and experience how supportive relationships can eliminate the risk and effects of homelessness in vulnerable communities. This report provides information on how successful the pilot project has been since it began in March 2005.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explains what Passing the Baton is and how it works. The Passing the Baton approach recognises that one of the key reasons for repeat homelessness is that individuals feel lonely and isolated and that they have no-one in their close circle of relationships. The pilot project tackled this issue and has been successful. The success of the pilot shows a clear link between tackling loneliness and isolation and empowering an individual to sustain their tenancy over a long period of time.

Of the 16 Bethany ex-service users who have taken part in the pilot, all have been successfully resettled. Seven of the 16 have been in their accommodation for up to 6 months, 3 of the 16 have been in their accommodation between 6 and 12 months while 6 have been in a sustained tenancy for over 1 year. There have been no resettlement breakdowns to date.

Appendix 1 gives anecdotal evidence telling the story from an individual's perspective.

3 WHAT IS PASSING THE BATON?

Passing the Baton seeks to prevent resettlement from breaking down by introducing people who are survivors of homelessness and who have used Bethany's services to supportive communities with the help of churches and other local community groups.

3.1 Why Passing the Baton is Needed

At present it costs the local authority housing departments around £25,000 to rehouse each individual who becomes homeless. Levels of repeat homelessness in Scotland stand at 20% or 11,400 people per annum. Clearly, there is a considerable cost to society and to the taxpayer when people are unable to resettle in new accommodation. A number of factors are associated with resettlement breakdown. One of the most commonly cited is isolation and loneliness. Poor availability and standards of housing, lack of access to education, employment or training, not having the means to furnish a new home and debt and budgeting issues all have an impact.

- 57,020 households presented as homeless in 04/05
- 58% cited relationship breakdown as the primary reason for their homelessness

Bethany Christian Trust believes loneliness and isolation to be the single biggest cause of repeat homelessness in Scotland. Almost every major piece of research into the subject mentions isolation and loneliness as a factor. The importance of tackling social isolation was recognized by the Scottish Executive's Task Force on homelessness, which recommended in its final report that:-

'The strength of a homeless person's social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement. All projects serving homeless people should pursue strategies to promote and support opportunities for positive social interaction.'

Homelessness Task Force Data (2003-2004)

Key reason for homelessness	Parents/Family or friends unable/unwilling to accommodate	Relationship Breakdown	Loss of rented social tenancy	Loss of private sector tenancy
Single person households	41%	18%	3%	5%
One parent families	21%	42%	4%	9%
Couples with children	22%	4%	7%	17%
Couples no children	41%	3%	4%	9%

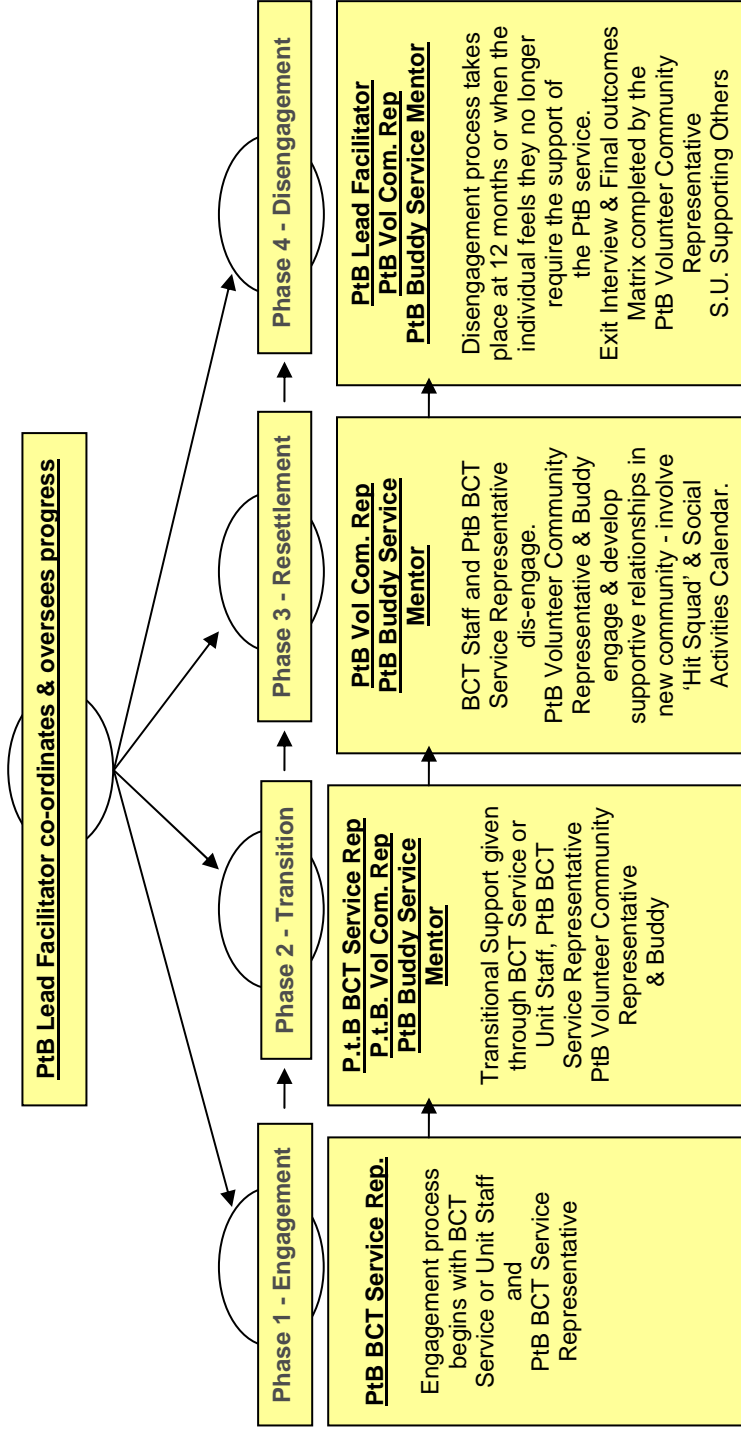
The Task Force report further recommended that 'a national co-ordination role should be created to build and co-ordinate local mediation, befriending and mentoring services for homeless people across Scotland.' For many people who are homeless or have survived incidents of homelessness such services provide an important lifeline. However they can be limited in their ability to alleviate isolation and loneliness. Interaction may only take place within narrow

parameters rather than leading people into existing community social networks. If services are not professionally co-ordinated there is a risk that the support provided may cease at any time. In interviews, users of such services often emphasised the need for support to continue for the long term.

The vision for Passing the Baton is that ‘through building supportive relationships in communities, survivors of homelessness will be empowered to live interdependently within society and the risk to vulnerable people of becoming homeless will be eliminated’.

3.2 How It Works

Employers, voluntary agencies and churches each have the potential to address the issues that prevent resettlement. Social interaction naturally arises in the community, a church or workplace where individuals are able to interact with a range of people rather than being restricted to a few. The feeling of community experienced can last a long time, sometimes indefinitely. The church has particular potential because of the size of congregations and the ease with which relationships can develop.



BCT – Bethany Christian Trust

PtB – Passing the Baton

SU - Service User

Bethany Christian Trust's Passing the Baton Project seeks to prevent resettlement from breaking down by introducing survivors of homelessness to supportive communities with the help of churches and other local community groups. As existing service users prepare to leave Bethany residential services they are offered the opportunity to engage with the Passing the Baton project. If they take up the opportunity, the Passing the Baton team will support the service user through the transition and resettlement process. The team will then work with the individual, supporting them to build new relationships and link into any existing supportive networks in the communities. If users do not want to be involved with a church, Bethany seeks to involve other community projects, employers and advice services to reach out to the individual to play an active part in his or her resettlement.

People who have experienced homelessness face discrimination in the job market and older people in particular may find it difficult to get jobs even if they have considerable experience and qualifications. Therefore Bethany Christian Trust and its partners have, in Passing the Baton, attempted to create employment opportunities and explore voluntary work. Staff and service users both emphasise that unpaid work should not be viewed as inferior. It is important for individuals to feel they are engaged in meaningful activity and contributing to their community. Clearly however financial pressures can arise when not in paid employment. Even with paid employment, low wages and reduced entitlement to benefits can lead to a shortage of money. Passing the Baton has sought to involve organisations which provide advice on debt and budgeting issues. A link has been made with Christians Against Poverty and the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide such advice.

One of the churches partnering Bethany in Passing the Baton formed a 'hit squad' to paint and decorate the homes of those who moved into unfurnished council flats. This is a practical example of how a support network works.

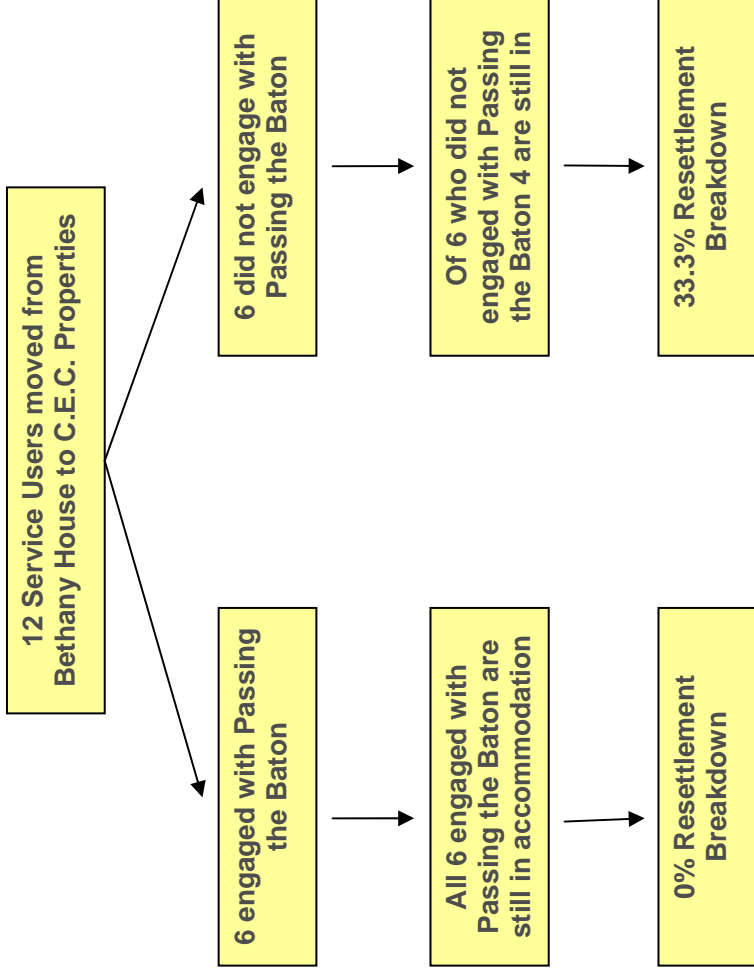
4 OUTCOMES

4.1 Service Users

None of those who have taken part in the pilot to date report continued feelings of isolation and loneliness. In fact, they report the opposite and many are involving themselves in helping others out of loneliness and isolation.

There is evidence of job/employment training/volunteering for the majority of those who have taken part. This is very significant. By engaging in this way, the users of Passing the Baton are finding their own ways to combat loneliness and isolation and are beginning to create a network of people close to them.

Data from ECHO, the City of Edinburgh data base which tracks homelessness outcomes was combined with Bethany's own information in a comparative study over 18 months from 1st March 2005 to 31st August 2006. Some of the service users involved in the pilot have moved into accommodation leased from the private sector and that is why their information has not been used in the comparison.



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It has become clear that those involved in the pilot are creating their own social network and supporting each other. This is an indicator of success for the project. This is evidenced by the communication between the service users and the manager at Bethany House. If anyone is experiencing any kind of issue in their lives, he is told about it by someone in the network of Passing the Baton service users very quickly and is therefore able to put support measures in place as a matter of priority.

A key feature of Passing the Baton is its ability to adapt and expand as new service users enter a community, potentially resulting in a continuous stream of support. The project is designed such that can be operated in any area of Scotland. If adequately funded, the number of formerly homeless people Passing the Baton could support is limitless.

4.2 Local Community

There is evidence that the survivors of homelessness in the pilot are becoming valued members of their local community and are investing time and energy in helping others. Passing the Baton participants have volunteered to help others who are from similar backgrounds or are new to the pilot. This demonstrates that the Passing the Baton model of social support networks can be self-sustaining.

The local community benefits from having new long-term members and from a reduced number of houses and flats lying empty, potentially being vandalised or used as squats.

In addition, all of the new tenants will be inputting financially to the community helping to sustain the local economy in some small way.

4.3 Success Rates

To sustain a tenancy for anything over 6 months is a success, building the self-esteem and confidence of those involved.

To date 16 people have participated in Passing the Baton after staying in Bethany House, one of Bethany's residential services. All have sustained their new tenancies, some for close to a year and in six cases for over a year. This represents a 100% success rate.

Research conducted by Scottish Homes shows that the majority of people who present as homeless on a second or further occasion do so within 6 months of being rehoused. In view of this, the 9 of the 16 people who have participated can be viewed as permanently resettled. The remaining 7 are on target to be so.

5 ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF ROLLOUT

If it costs £25,000 every time a tenancy fails, and if around a third of tenancies are unsustainable then this project could have saved the local authority £75,000 since the commencement of the pilot project (this figure is taken from the 9 who have sustained their accommodation for 6 months or more). If all the tenancies would otherwise have failed the saving would rise to £225,000.

The Passing the Baton pilot project demonstrates real success and makes financial sense. Bethany would like to roll out the concept beyond the 16 existing service users and have a significant impact on tackling repeat homelessness in other geographical areas. The Passing the Baton concept can play a significant role in the development of Homelessness Strategies across Scotland.

In addition to sustaining tenancies, service users are making a positive contribution to the local economy, through employment or volunteering, by moving away from state benefits or by helping to fulfil a need in society at no cost.

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

6.1 To Improve the Project

Passing the Baton aims to support every user of the project to build supportive relationships and fully integrate into their new community within 12 months. Passing the Baton staff will regularly monitor progress both formally through an outcomes monitoring matrix and informally at a relationship level.

At the point where a service user and the Passing the Baton team feel community integration has been accomplished a formal disengagement process will begin. If the service user should find him/herself in a crisis or in need of support they can re-engage with Passing the Baton at anytime.

This approach is aimed at securing long-term sustainability. Feedback from users to date suggests that just knowing there is a point of contact and support is often enough to give security and peace of mind. To enable this to happen and take the project to its full potential funding must be secured.

A Development Co-ordinator is required to take the lead on this and give the project sustainability, strategic direction and ensure that growth and roll out happen in a planned way. This is one of the main reasons for seeking external funding.

Bethany plan to formalise the service offered by community groups and churches by recruiting Passing the Baton Representatives in local communities and “Buddies”, thus guaranteeing the support provided.

Representatives will take lead responsibility for service users within their area, attempting to lead them into social networks rather than forming their only point of contact. They will report to Bethany on the progress of individuals who have been rehoused, and Bethany, in turn, will train and monitor the performance of the representatives. Buddies will help individuals settle in their new surroundings, introducing them to amenities and inviting them to socialise.

6.2 Funding Sources and Strategy

Further research will be conducted to investigate future sources of funding. In order for Bethany to expand this service, a full time Development Co-ordinator is required to develop the service and build on the networks already established. Funding is required to recruit the Co-ordinator and provide an adequate budget for them to fulfil their role.

6.3 Influencing Homelessness Strategy in Scotland

The Passing the Baton pilot project has shown success in Niddrie, Edinburgh. Bethany Christian Trust will seek to demonstrate the potential of the model for ending repeat homelessness and contributing to the Scottish Executive's objective of ending homelessness in Scotland by 2012. A national roll-out of Passing the Baton will contribute greatly to meeting that objective.

The Scottish Parliament, Scottish Executive and Local Authorities will be made aware of the work that has been done to date and the success story that Passing the Baton has become.

7 CONCLUSION

This project demonstrates success on many different levels:-

- Sustained tenancy
- Job/Volunteering outcomes
- Improved self-confidence/self-esteem
- Improved local economy
- Real cost reduction for the local authority

It makes sense for this work to be taken forward into new communities to build on the success experienced to date.

8 APPENDIX 1 – ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

The following accounts help to bring Passing the Baton to life. The accounts cover the period from when an existing resident of Bethany house is introduced to the pilot project through to what makes the difference to sustaining a tenancy for a significant period.

'E' is a current Bethany House resident. His involvement in Passing the Baton pilot is that he was approached with a view to helping him move to a sustained tenancy when he leaves Bethany House.

'E' was initially apprehensive about the prospect of being housed in an area such as Niddrie, but became more interested in the move as a result of the study visit arranged for him by the manager of Bethany House. As part of the move on from Bethany House, 'E' has also been introduced to the local church at Niddrie which has helped him with his feelings of concern. He was introduced during one of these start up visits to other former residents of Bethany and has been encouraged by their success in sustaining their tenancies.

'D' enjoys living in Niddrie and volunteering at Bethany House as a handyman. He has a well-furnished home, good relationships with his neighbours and says he will be happy to continue living in the same area when he is rehoused after regeneration. He is trained as an engineer and hopes soon to be given paid employment.

'D' benefits from having a number of contacts in a range of settings. "When you've got people you know around you, that's what makes it work", he says. 'D' is a member of London Road church and he is involved with their Boys' Brigade which helps him to strengthen his network.

'I', who worked as a cook when living at Bethany House, is now putting his skills to use at Niddrie Community Café, an outreach project run by Niddrie Community Church. When 'E' was on his induction visit, he met some of the key people involved at the Community Café and so was able to witness the impact that being part of the project has had on 'I's life and ability to sustain his tenancy. When 'I' was ill, his peer group made sure that Bethany was told almost immediately and this allowed them to ensure that the minister at Niddrie community church was able to visit 'I' at home and ensured that get well cards were sent to 'I'. Most of us would take these things for granted in our family lives but is a great example of Passing the Baton in action.

'C' was involved in the Passing the Baton project as a tenant. St Paul's and St George's (P's and G's) church contacted Bethany and offered to decorate flats for participants of Passing the Baton. Bethany arranged a meeting at 'C's flat with a member of P's and G's and they asked 'C' what he work he wanted done to his flat. Four volunteers from P's and G's painted 'C's flat all day – 'C' joined in and they had a fun day with lots of chat. He then asked if he could join in when the hit squad did their next project which was at Edinburgh Cyrenians Farm (a small residential community for homeless young men). 'C' enjoyed helping at the Farm and has offered to help on more hit squad tasks in the future – he would also like to go to P's and 'G's to keep in touch with those he met while working with the hit squad. 'C' attends the Baptist Church on Madeira Street in Leith and has done for some time.

The above anecdotal evidence shows that the person centred approach is successful and that when feelings of loneliness and isolation are tackled head on, the impact on an individual's ability to function in a positive way is transformational.

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