



press release

Students have a go at independent living

14th July 2011

Year 10 students from Bucklers Mead School have been given a chance to experience what it's like to live away from home as part of a new life skills project organised for them. Twelve young people were taken from the comfort of home into empty flats to find out first-hand what it is really like to take care of themselves for a week.

They experienced the formalities of booking their accommodation, paying a deposit and understanding what their tenancy agreement meant. Then followed the challenge to furnish the flats, provided for them by Yarlington Housing Group, and also the process of planning their budget, covering everything from cleaning products, food, utility bills and toiletries, giving a real taste of independent living.

The students worked in small groups to develop vital life skills, including learning to cook and live within their daily budget, while working through a whole host of challenges simulated by staff, who played out the role of neighbours, landlords, utility companies and public services.

The project was designed and delivered by REACH, providers of educational solutions for young people in Somerset, using accommodation from a former sheltered housing scheme provided by Yarlington Housing Group. Staff from the housing group were actively involved in the planning and running of the event, together with staff from Bucklers Mead School in Yeovil.

Local residents from West Coker were invited to afternoon tea, put on by the students in the communal lounge, to give them all a chance to understand each other better and to enjoy the benefits of valuable intergenerational time.

A student involved in the initiative said “I thought that the stay at Burrells House was a good experience because it was fun and educational in the fact that I learnt to live by myself. Before we went there I was nervous but now that I have been there I have gained confidence”

Rachel Crossland, Aspire coordinator from Bucklers Mead School said “This project was a real challenge for this group of young people. They were launched into a real-life independent living simulation during which realistic challenges had to be overcome. From disputes with landlords and fraudulent criminal activity to the basics of salaries, direct debits and rent - the youngsters had to become truly self-sufficient for the duration of the project. It was an incredibly steep learning curve for all involved and in my experience, by far the most effective method to impart those crucial life-skills that so many young people currently lack. It was a real stepping stone to independence and an example of hands-on teaching and learning at its best”.

“It was a real eye-opener to work directly with these students, and gave us an insight into some of the challenges faced by younger people when signing up to a tenancy, and the difficulties they face as they enter into binding contracts and agreements” said Community Involvement Manager for Yarlington Housing Group Karen Davy. “These students were wonderful to work with, and it gave us the opportunity to demonstrate that we are totally committed to building communities. It is an example of how, by working in partnership, we can provide the necessary resources to make worthwhile projects like this one happen.”

It is hoped that this project will run again next year to equip groups of students with the skills they need in the next steps of their lives.

Ends.

Pictured:

Notes to Editors

Yarlington Housing Group is one of the leading affordable housing providers in Somerset with over 8000 properties covering South Somerset. It has a proven track record in Development, Property Services and Property Management. Working with communities and by forging strong partnerships Yarlington Housing Group has a commitment to continue to develop affordable, quality homes over the next decade. By being accountable and efficient, using innovation and open dialogue Yarlington Housing Group is rapidly enhancing its reputation as the partner of choice. All new homes are built to exceptionally high standards and provide much needed additional affordable homes for local people.

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