

## Ministerial statement Staying on Track



timetable for the implementation of the remaining parts of the Homelessness etc Scotland Act 2003 and to take account of the local impacts both in the next Spending Review and in its Strategic Housing Investment Framework. It also promises:

- ◆ the creation of an innovation fund to support prevention of homelessness;
- ◆ the production of practice guidance both on homelessness prevention and a housing options approach;
- ◆ a review of the operation of Section 5 referrals by June 2006;
- ◆ clarification of guidance on allocations and allocations research.

On the crucial question of how the abolition of priority need will be achieved, the Minister set local authorities the target of reducing the proportion of non priority need assessments by 50% by the year 2009. Overall in Scotland 75% of homeless households are found to be in priority need. However the proportion varies dramatically from 54% in some areas to 89% in others. The task therefore for some authorities will be greater than in others.

The Ministerial statement outlining how the Executive proposes to achieve the abolition of priority need by 2012 was made at the end of December. It includes a number of interim objectives and mechanisms to ensure that Scotland remains on track to meet the 2012 target.

The statement recognises the importance of a sufficient supply of affordable housing and the various types of support needed to ensure tenancies can be sustained. It also makes welcome reference to the role of other aspects, including health and employability, to meeting the ambitious target.

Specifically the statement commits the Executive to a

There is also a commitment to a further Ministerial Statement.

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge said: 'The statement, and the constructive response to it from CoSLA and others, is extremely encouraging. Without any potential sanctions it will be more important than ever to maintain the momentum towards 2012 in all local authorities through close monitoring and support. SCSH will continue to offer whatever help we can to authorities during the period.

Full details of the Ministerial statement are available on [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk).

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# First Homelessness Strategy Officer Meeting of the Year

On the 19<sup>th</sup> January 21 local authorities attended the first Homelessness Strategy Officer (HSO) Network Meeting of the New Year. The event held at SCSH, saw the Scottish Executive Homelessness Team and Development Department outline key points (and receive feedback) from the recent 2012 Ministerial Statement and the proposed changes for the HL1 homelessness data collection system.

The Scottish Executive advised that within a period of weeks information would be sent out to all local authorities announcing new Innovation Grants linked to preventative work along with details of how to apply and funding criteria.

The Scottish Executive, with recommendations from the Monitoring Group, would shortly be reaching a decision as to the future allocation of funds for Furniture Grants post 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. HSOs expressed views and anecdotal evidence that the grants are successful in promoting tenancy sustainment. Again, advice would be given in writing to Councils about funding in 2006/07. There was pressure to get this advice out ASAP.

There was a general discussion about prevention and means of assessing successful interventions. The Scottish Executive had highlighted the importance of prevention activity and the focus on this in the Ministerial Statement, and advised that some initial research is being scoped out. The Executive undertook to look at current requirements on councils to record preventative work, to discuss this with Communities Scotland (Regulation & Inspection) and to consider guidance to councils including on completing HL1 statistical data.

Consistent with previous HSO Network meetings the remainder of the session was given over to informal presentation and discussion on a number of topics. SCSH's Sharon Dickens (Youth Unit) outlined the value of the new 'My Space My Place' resource in helping young people maintain tenancies and avoiding homelessness. She highlighted that based on a 2003 Crisis Report the cost to a Council of tenancy failure was estimated at the time to be in the region of £12,000 - £20,000. Besides the resource itself which is available for purchase now, Councils, RSLs and others could also be offered training

to support use of the resource. Geraldine Wooley from the Scottish Homelessness Employability Network (SHEN) informed all there of the significance of the imminent transfer of funding of New Futures Fund (NFF) projects to Community Planning Partnerships and the implications of the also imminent Scottish Employability Framework to local authority homelessness strategies.

Cathy King, Head of Care Housing from City of Edinburgh Council comprehensively outlined the consequences of the 'no' vote for the councils housing transfer ballot and described ways in which the council will have to work to achieve the 2012 homelessness targets and the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) by 2015. The final speakers were Bobby Duffy and Lyn Doherty from the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) who gave a very thorough presentation on the innovative Connect Service in Glasgow which aims to help hard to reach homeless service users and prevent repeat homelessness.

For further information on the HSO Network, hosted by SCSH, please contact Daniel Coote, Policy Officer.

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## My Space My Place - Training Now Available

Since its launch at the SCSH conference in November 2005, well over 2000 My Space My Place Tenancy Sustainment Guides have been sold. The guides are intended to help young people make the best possible start in their tenancies and,

so far, 21 out of the 32 Scottish local authorities have put in an order.

My Space My Place is supported by training for those supporting young people and helping them sustain their tenancies. The first course was commissioned by Myra MacDonald (Argyll and Bute), who writes:

"Everyone really enjoyed the presentation, exercises and games and went away completely enthused about the pack and how useful and user-friendly it is.

"Oh, and afterwards everyone made sure their own tellies and gadgets weren't left on stand-by when they realised how much it cost!"

"Sharon and Ingrid came along to give all of our homeless staff some training about the newly developed packs, as part of our Service Review day in December. Their spot was immediately after lunch – usually the "yawning" slot – but there was no dozing off on that day!

For more details about the guide, including some sample pages and an order form, check the SCSH website [scsh.org.uk](http://scsh.org.uk). If you'd like to commission a training session, contact Sharon Dickens on 0131 226 4382 or [sharon@scsh.org.uk](mailto:sharon@scsh.org.uk).



# A European alliance against homelessness?

The European network of organisations working with homeless people (FEANTSA) is set to enter a new phase in its development. At its recent General Assembly FEANTSA agreed to develop a broad alliance of all interests to combat homelessness across Europe.

The alliance will involve a number of networks to be developed over the next few years. Initially FEANTSA hopes to bring together civil servants from EU member states who are working in the field of homelessness to exchange information and experience. A

second strand will be to involve local authorities across Europe in a similar network of progressive councils tackling homelessness. Other strands are likely to include thematic networks around areas such as housing, health, employment and data collection.

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge, who was elected President of FEANTSA at its General Assembly, welcomed the new direction for FEANTSA. He said: 'As part of this development FEANTSA is holding an international conference on homelessness in Dundee in

March. Amongst those speaking are advisers to President Bush and President Chirac on housing and homelessness, as well as senior contributors from Belgium, Germany, Denmark and Hungary and Ireland'.

The conference precedes a meeting of FEANTSA's research 'observatory' on homelessness which includes academics from 22 out of the 25 EU member states.

FEANTSA runs a very informative website which can be contacted on [www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)



## SCSH to Survey Homeless Migrant Worker Problem

SCSH has been aware for some time now of the difficulties faced by local authorities in 'accommodating' homeless migrant workers from the new EU member states. SCSH have already discussed with local authorities what the survey needs to pick up on and what information can feasibly be collected. The survey aims to :-

- Assess the extent of the problem
- Establish the reasons for homelessness
- Establish the profile of homeless households
- Establish the living conditions prior to the homeless application
- Survey how local authorities are trying to address the issue

By the end of January it is hoped that the survey will be circulated via the Homeless Strategy Officer (HSO) Network to all local authorities across Scotland.

For more information on the survey please contact Robert Aldridge or Daniel Coote on 0131 2264382 or by email at [daniel@scsh.org.uk](mailto:daniel@scsh.org.uk)

## Incapacity Benefit Reform 'Green Paper' Published

On Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006 The Government launched a Green Paper "A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work". Currently about 2.7m people claim incapacity benefit, resulting in an annual bill of £12.5bn. From 2008 it will be renamed the Employment and Support Allowance. The overall aims are to :-

- Reduce incapacity benefit claimants by one million within a decade
- Get 300,000 lone parents back into work
- Increase by one million the number of older people (aged over 50) in employment

The document can be downloaded at <http://>

[www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/)

SCSH is keen to seek comments from our members on the paper and would be interested in setting up a reference group if there is enough demand for it. For more information, and to note your interest, please contact Robert Aldridge on 0131 2264382 or by email at [robert@scsh.org.uk](mailto:robert@scsh.org.uk)



**1<sup>st</sup> February, “Welfare Benefits – maximising tenant income”,** Glasgow.

Organised by Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

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**1<sup>st</sup> February, “Healthy Care Conference & launch of The Scottish Healthy Care Network”,** Perth. details from [www.sircc.strath.ac.uk](http://www.sircc.strath.ac.uk) or 0141 950 3683

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**9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> February, “Certificated Public Sector Housing Law Course”,** Glasgow

Organised by Legal Services Agency - [seminars@lsa.org.uk](mailto:seminars@lsa.org.uk) or 0141 353 3354

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**23<sup>rd</sup> February, “Young People and Mental Health”,** Edinburgh  
Organised by Scottish Youth Housing Network

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**24<sup>th</sup> February, “Homelessness”,** Glasgow

Organised by Legal Services Agency - [seminars@lsa.org.uk](mailto:seminars@lsa.org.uk) or 0141 353 3354

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**27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> February, “Housing Management Conference”,** St Andrews. Organised by Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

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**6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> March, “CIH Annual Conference & Exhibition”**

Aberdeen. Venue Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre. Organised by Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland.

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**15<sup>th</sup> March, “Working with young people who use alcohol”,** Glasgow

Organised by Scottish Youth Housing Network

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**23<sup>rd</sup> March “Intervention Strategies on Social Exclusion and Homelessness in Europe”,**

Dundee. A Joint Centre for Scottish Housing Research & FEANTSA European Observatory on Homelessness Conference. Speakers include: Mr Phillip Mangano, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, York University Centre for Housing Policy. Conference Fee £85.00. For further information or queries contact [w.m.edgar@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:w.m.edgar@dundee.ac.uk)

## SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR SINGLE HOMELESS

Scottish Council for Single Homeless (SCSH) is the membership body for organisations and individuals working to tackle homelessness in Scotland.

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☎ 0131 473 7190

🌐 [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) in Scotland.

☎ 0131 225 4544

📧 [scotland.training@cih.org](mailto:scotland.training@cih.org)

Scottish Youth Housing Network

☎ 0131 226 4382

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Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA)

☎ 0141 332 8113

🌐 [www.sfha.co.uk](http://www.sfha.co.uk)

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