

inhouse

scottish council for single homeless

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homesmart is the innovative SCSH programme to teach all Scotland's young people the facts about homelessness and how to avoid it. Full details are available from www.leavinghome.info

Parliament debates homesmart and housing education

On Thursday 18 January the Scottish Parliament debated leaving home education in a members debate sponsored by Linda Fabiani [SNP]. Highlighting the contribution being made by SCSH and the **homesmart** resource, Linda spoke of her 'belief in the absolute necessity of tackling homelessness and seeking to eliminate it as far as is humanly possible.' and that 'A major part of the task must also be helping people to avoid homelessness. That is the main thrust of the **homesmart** campaign, which seeks to ensure that every fourth year pupil in our schools knows that help and advice is available.'

In the debate Dave Petrie [Conservative] said 'With such a high level of young people finding themselves homeless, it is important to make clear what living away from home will mean. Education is the clearest way to



improve society and help to send children on a better way.'

Ewen Matthew, Head of Balnacraig School, receives a cheque for £200 from Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit

Tricia Marwick [SNP] recalled the earlier SCSH information pack - I'm offski! - and noted that 'Advice ... which is provided by the **homesmart** campaign is just the sort of information that young people need so that they can avoid the pitfall of becoming homeless.'

Donald Gorrie [LibDem] added 'For many years I have had a high regard for SCSH. The work that it is doing, including the **homesmart** campaign, is important. We should support it and try to get it spread throughout the country.'

In responding to the debate, Des McNulty [Deputy Minister for Communities] welcomed the **homesmart** initiative saying 'The principle of early intervention suggests that it is best to equip people who are setting out on their adult life with the information and skills they need to avoid future homelessness.'

Full transcript at www.scsch.org.uk

In schools across Scotland young people have been learning the facts about homelessness and how to avoid it. Every year over four thousand 16 and 17 year olds turn to their local authority for assistance as they have nowhere safe and secure to stay.

As part of **homesmart**, SCSH asked schools to register their leaving home and housing education activities.

The prize draw for registered schools was won by Balnacraig School in Perth. Teacher Jo Workman said 'This issue is so important for the young people at our school. We are delighted with the **homesmart** resource and have found it works really well in the classroom.'

The school received a cheque for £200 to go towards books and sports equipment, courtesy of the campaign sponsor, the affordable house builder Lovell.

Consultations

Local Connection - consultation response

In its response to the consultation SCSH fully supports the Scottish Executive's arrangements to remove the local connection test. SCSH agrees with the general approach outlined in the consultation to monitor such arrangements. It agrees with the Executive that the modification of the local connection provisions should be implemented at the same time as the significantly revised HLI homeless monitoring system becomes operational in April of 2007.

Although difficult to quantify, SCSH also believes that the provisions will not have a major impact on the numbers presenting as homeless to councils, or create significant resource pressures. SCSH has a slight concern that the proposals may result in a small distortion of the local connection results by 'migration' of homeless individuals from LA area to another. This could occur due to differing LA policies on the widening of priority need, until priority need is abolished in 2012.

SCSH believes the proposals will help homeless households resettle more successfully and increase their likelihood of sustaining a tenancy through living in an area of their own choice.

Overall SCSH believes that the removal of the local connection test is a further step to ensuring homeless people have equal rights and access to housing as those on the waiting list.

Full response available at SCSH web site

Homelessness etc Act - Section 11

In the Ministerial Statement on Abolition of Priority Need by 2012 the Executive gave a commitment to introduce section 11 of the 2003 Act, together with statutory guidance.

Section 11 requires all landlords, other than local authorities, and creditors to notify the relevant local authority when they raise repossession proceedings or serve certain other notices. Prevention of homelessness is a crucial factor in preparation for the right of all unintentionally homeless people to access permanent accommodation by 2012. This new duty is intended to assist LAs in this.

The requirement on landlords, both social and private, and creditors to inform LAs of any repossession proceedings and the service of certain other notices, means that LAs will be alerted to households at risk of homelessness. This means that they may be able to respond to prevent homelessness either on an individual basis or by reassessing their strategic approach.

Statutory guidance to LAs and non-statutory guidance for landlords and creditors has been drafted and the Executive has now issued these for consultation. The purpose of the non-statutory guidance is to help landlords and creditors understand the purpose of the legislation and their role in preventing homelessness

Responses should be submitted to the Executive by 30 March 2007.

Publications

Scottish Churches Housing Action have published a guide to developing affordable housing from redundant and under used church property. ***Make it Happen*** is part of the organisation's property and housing programme launched in November 2006.

The programme has already identified 50 examples of church property or land that has been developed for affordable housing, contributing around 350 new homes. The handbook is designed to help those responsible for church property through the process of identifying opportunities for the development of affordable housing.

Details from www.churches-housing.org

The **Dogs Trust Hope Project** has published information for projects who wish to consider accepting clients with dogs. ***Welcoming Dogs*** sets out the benefits to clients and projects of accepting dogs and provides practical advice on dealing with dogs within projects including health & safety, hygiene & behaviour and veterinary support, together with a model policy document.

Further details from www.dogstrusthopeproject.org.uk

The **Open University in Scotland** has published a guide to its courses and qualifications for people working in health and social care. The guide sets out how these can help staff and employers meet registration requirements.

Details from www.open.ac.uk



SCSH Annual Report 2005/06

The report is now available. To read or download a copy visit the SCSH website - www.scsch.org.uk.

Links to all documents referred to in this issue of *inhouse*, and to back copies, can be found at www.scsch.org.uk

Bramley Report examines Scottish affordable housing need

The Bramley report, published in December 2006, updates a model first used in 2003 and provides estimates of affordable housing need across Scotland.

Commissioned by Communities Scotland and the Scottish Executive, the report reveals a mixed pattern of shortages and surpluses of affordable housing (both social rented and low-cost housing for ownership) across the country. However, 'headline' findings from the report suggest that over 8,000 extra units of affordable housing were required in 2005 and that there is a net national surplus of over 1200 units. Unlike the 2003 findings, the update suggests the total need across affected local authorities is now significantly greater than the excess stock in surplus local authorities.

The report also presents findings from analysis at the former district council area level (smaller areas than current local authority area level) which helps to recognise local housing need in more remote parts of some larger rural local authorities. In this situation, the overall net housing need rises to an overall requirement for around 9,500 homes each year.

Whilst SCSH are pleased to see a more detailed analysis of affordable housing at a more local area level and an overall acknowledgment for the need for

more affordable housing, we have concerns that the model did not incorporate data on regeneration, housing condition, housing suitability and house size and type requirements.

The Executive is currently funding around 7,000 affordable homes across the country and this figure will increase to an estimated 8,000 homes next year - as part of a three-year target to create 21,500 new and improved affordable homes by March 2008. The Bramley Report concludes there is a need in old district council areas of 9,500 units. This ignores regeneration house building in areas with a crude surplus of housing. SCSH therefore has concerns that the numbers of affordable new homes being built, and more importantly social rented housing provision, are not sufficient to meet the Executive's homelessness targets.

As long ago as 2004, SCSH published research findings in a joint report with the Chartered Institute of Housing - *Is Anyone Home?* - which outlined that more like 12,000 new affordable rented homes were required each year so to help deliver the aims of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.

For more information on the Bramley report or to discuss affordable housing issues please contact Daniel Coote, Policy Officer - daniel@scsh.org.uk

Tackling worklessness and poverty

John Hutton MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and Jack McConnell MSP, First Minister, held a seminar to discuss key issues and future challenges for tackling poverty and worklessness in Scotland on 26 January 2007. Jack McConnell emphasized how close co-operation between the Scottish Executive and the DWP will build on achievements in encouraging economic growth and challenging poverty in Scotland. While recognising the transformation in unemployment figures in the Scottish labour market, John Hutton also stressed the need to challenge the problem of worklessness amongst Incapacity Benefits claimants in Scotland. Both Ministers acknowledged the role of the voluntary sector in the successful delivery of welfare and employability policies.

New pilot to speed up benefit payments

A new scheme that will speed up benefit payments to Scotland's most vulnerable people was launched on 15 January.

The pilot will allow GPs to send information relating to Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance claims electronically. If successful consideration will be given to extending the process to other benefits. Welcoming the collaborative project between DWP and NHS Scotland, Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, said 'Strengthening partnership working in this way should lead to a reduction in the length of time it takes to process applications. As DLA and AA are paid to some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland I think it is right that we look to see what methods we can introduce to speed up the processing and payment of benefits.'

Prevention seminar

The Scottish Executive are planning a seminar to look at the prevention of homelessness. This will take place on **Friday 2 March 2007**. Further details will be posted on our web site - www.scsh.org.uk - as they become available.

Advance notice

The Scottish Council for Single Homeless Annual Conference 2007 will take place on Thursday 8 and Friday 9 November at the APEX International Hotel, Edinburgh. Details will be posted on our web site.

Diary 2007

Practical Steps - the 2007 tour

Edinburgh - Thursday 22 February 2007
Glasgow - Wednesday 28 February 2007

Delivered by the SCSH Youth Unit, this training is designed to help you equip young people with the practical skills they need to sustain their tenancies and avoid homelessness. It is based around the successful publications *Streets Ahead* and *My Space My Place*. Full details are available from Wendy - 0131 226 4382 / wendy@scsh.org.uk - or from our web site - www.scsh.org.uk

Working with young people who use alcohol

Glasgow - Thursday 15 March 2007

Delivered by SYHN, this new course will look at the use of alcohol amongst young people and identify some of the key issues for young homeless people affected by alcohol issues. It is suitable for all those working with young people. Details from www.syhn.org.uk or call 0131 226 4382.

SYHN aims to improve housing provision for young people by creating and supporting links between individuals and agencies. Full details of membership - including discounts on training - are available from 0131 226 4382 or www.syhn.org.uk

Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland

The 2007 CIH in Scotland Annual Conference & Exhibition will take place in Aberdeen at the Exhibition & Conference Centre from Monday 12 - Thursday 15 March. Details of the programme, accommodation options and how to book delegate and exhibition spaces can be found at www.cih.org.uk/scotland.

Community Recycling Network for Scotland

The 2007 CRNS Annual Conference will take place on Wednesday 14 March at Perth Concert Hall. Full details from www.crns.org.uk

Scottish Housing & Support Conference

This year's conference will be held on Thursday 4 & Friday 5 October at the Dunblane Hydro Hotel.

SCSH is the membership body for organisations and individuals working to tackle homelessness in Scotland.

Full membership details are available from 0131 226 4382 or on our web site.

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SCSH has a centrally located meeting room available for hire at its offices in Edinburgh. Charges range from £12 (£10 for members) per hour to £90 (£60 for members) for a full day. For full details please contact 0131 226 4382.