

## Scottish Elections



### Where do the parties stand?

As the new 4 year session of the Scottish Parliament is about to begin the main parties have published their manifestos. SCSH has extracted some of the main issues relating to housing and homelessness.

All parties make mention of the importance of affordable housing. The Greens and Solidarity back the call for 30,000 new social rented homes in the next three years. The SSP advocates 100,000 new social rented homes in the next four years. The Lib Dems are committed to 27,000 affordable homes (for sale and rent). The SNP will assist the community rented sector to identify need and ensure the house building and improvement programme is appropriate to local needs, while Labour has an expectation that new developments will include affordable rented housing and seeks to unlock land supply.

Not all the manifestos mention homelessness and the 2012 target. Of those which do, the Greens and Lib Dems make specific mention of the 2012 target, Labour seeks to "continue to prioritise assistance for the most vulnerable groups of homeless people," and the use of bed and breakfast and continue to seek to get rid of hostels. The SSP backs the commitment that no-one needs to sleep rough and the hostel closure programme, and the SNP make a positive reference to the homelessness legislation.



On the Right to Buy the parties show very different approaches. Labour suggests no change and the Conservatives are 'proud' to advocate its continuation. The SNP will review the RTB to make it more responsive to local needs, while the Lib Dems want to give local authorities more flexibility, for example to exempt certain types or sizes of house, and investigate local autonomy in reducing the discount and for pressured area status to be less cumbersome to achieve. The Greens are opposed to the extension of RTB to housing associations. Both Solidarity and the SSP want an end to the RTB with tenants getting a graduated rent discount, so that, after 25 years as a tenant the tenant will live rent free.

On stock transfer, Solidarity believes RSL tenants should be given the right to vote to transfer to local authorities, the SSP is opposed to further stock transfer and advocates the reversal of the transfers which have already happened. The Greens advocate an even playing field for tenants, and the Conservatives are in favour of progressing with stock transfer 'area by area.'

Virtually all parties agree with ensuring that a significant proportion of all new housing developments should be reserved for affordable housing and virtually all support the Homestake scheme.

Each party has specific themes to their housing policy. Conservatives wish to

set up 'Affordable Homes Trusts' to encourage home ownership, the SNP propose £2000 first time buyer grants as well as loans from a Housing Support Fund, Labour wish to develop a Community Environment Standard, the Greens advocate specific funding to encourage small scale housing associations and co-ops, the Lib Dems seek to promote Community Land Trusts in rural areas to free up land for affordable housing while the SSP and Solidarity both wish to cancel all local authority housing debt.

### New Scottish Homelessness Prevention Research

On March 2nd 2007 the Scottish Executive held a seminar to launch new research into the Evaluation of Homelessness Prevention Activities in Scotland. The research, undertaken by Hal Pawson and colleagues from Heriot-Watt University, looks at a wide range of prevention activity currently being undertaken in Scotland and attempts to assess the effectiveness of different approaches. The full report can be downloaded from the Scottish Executive website. Also speaking at the seminar was Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit at SCSH. His presentation focused on the different stages of preventing youth homelessness.

A quick link to the research report and a download of Matt's presentation can be found at: [www.scsch.org.uk/prevention07](http://www.scsch.org.uk/prevention07)

# Young People and Their Parents: Attitude Problems

## Young People and Parents

A major study of the attitudes of young people and parents to running away and homelessness has just been published. The report, written by Joan Smith and Megan Ravenhill from the Cities Institute at London Metropolitan University focuses on England's capital, but the lessons of the research are relevant across the UK including Scotland. The report is important because by better understanding both parents and young people's attitudes to running away, leaving home and homelessness, we can better tailor work that aims to prevent homelessness amongst young people.

Parents surveyed were often surprised at the value that young people placed on home. Many of them believed their teenage children simply saw home as 'bed and breakfast', sometimes with a free 'taxi service' thrown in. By contrast young people consistently emphasised the emotional value of home. "[They] principally identified 'home' in relation to their feelings about home ... and whether a person was with their family or with people who behaved like family."

Not surprisingly, young people's understanding of home was very different from the legal definition. For example, most thought that if you were living with a friend or relative you could not be homeless. The report suggests that young people's "restricted definition of homelessness means that young people are unlikely to engage with services designed to intervene or prevent homelessness until they are a long way down the process of becoming homeless."

This research will be useful reading for anyone working on youth homelessness prevention. Of particular

value is the evidence presented for the importance of youth homelessness prevention work beginning at an early stage and a long time before the point at which a 16 year old might make a presentation to their local authority. For homelessness services this will mean refreshing or establishing alliances with those who come into contact with families before the point of crisis, such as school, community education, youth work, social work, and mediation.

A link to the report can be found at: [www.scsch.org.uk/prevention07](http://www.scsch.org.uk/prevention07)



## Young People's Attitudes to Helplines & Advice Services

New research from the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) "Cool with Change: young people and family change" has highlighted the need to improve access to information and advice services for young people, echoing similar concerns to those raised at an SCSH focus group in 2006.

The common perception among young people is that services such as helplines or school services are for people with 'real' problems who are 'desperate'. Socially isolated young people without informal support can benefit from these services, yet young people rarely recognise themselves as vulnerable and the stigma attached to accessing formal help presents a real barrier.

A lack of clear information on services, their confidentiality and safety provide more stumbling blocks. Young people often don't feel confident enough to approach services because they don't know who they are for:

*"You think sometimes the problem's too small... because they're not telling you what kinds of things they offer, you think you might be wasting their time."*

Confidentiality and safety continue to be a concern and many young people have a limited knowledge of the support and advice services available.

The SCSH focus group revealed that simple exercises can help improve confidence and awareness in accessing services. A group activity involving young people taking turns to call up a helpline advisor via speakerphone raised confidence and understanding of the kind of help on offer. Young people left feeling much more positive about using helplines.

The CRFR research and SCSH focus group recommended:

- ♦ improving the visibility of services aimed at young people and promoting a better understanding of what services have to offer
- ♦ the need for services to establish clear confidentiality policies
- ♦ the need to de-stigmatise services and open them up to all young people
- ♦ encouraging young people to try out helplines in a safe and supportive setting

*If you are interested or involved in work in this area SCSH would like to hear from you contact [ingrid@scsch.org.uk](mailto:ingrid@scsch.org.uk) or phone 0131 226 4382.*

## Benefit Entitlement for EU2 Migrants

Currently no guidance exists for Scottish local authorities on entitlements for homelessness and other forms of social assistance for nationals of Bulgaria and Romania (who joined the EU on the 1 January 2007).

SCSH, working closely with Mark Lazarowicz MP, has tabled questions at Westminster seeking guidance on these joint issues. Answers to these questions are expected shortly, and more information will become available in future editions of this newsletter.

## EU8 Migrants

New rules relating to homelessness assistance for EU8 migrants are expected in May. A Statutory Instrument is expected stating that only those EU8 nationals who are self employed or on the Worker Registration Scheme and in employment will qualify for homelessness assistance. Apart from that all EU8 nationals in their first 3 months in Scotland would be entitled to homelessness assistance.

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge said: "This will create two classes of homeless people in Scotland. I fear it could lead to increased rough sleeping and undermine the 2012 target that all unintentionally homeless people will have a right to a home."

### Web Links

Links to all documents referred to in this issue of *inhouse*, and to back copies, can be found at [www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk)

## Private Sector Leasing Is it under threat because of Housing Benefit Changes?

Private Sector Leasing Schemes (PSL) could be under threat from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit (HB) changes.

**DWP** Department for  
Work and Pensions

PSL schemes offer long term contracts to private landlords who own rented accommodation. Properties which are usually of a high quality are let by the local authority to people who are having difficulties finding a home or are homeless. While some LAs administer the schemes themselves others choose to work in partnership with 'property groups' who manage the scheme on the LAs behalf.

PSL schemes can have an important and sometimes essential role in the supply of housing to those who need it most; this is often in areas where social lets are scarce and where B&B accommodation is used often to temporarily house homeless people. Properties are generally of superior quality in terms of environment and internal condition than B&Bs and provide single occupancy accommodation for vulnerable families as opposed to the high risk, shared profile of B&Bs.

HB Circular (HB/CTB S1/2007) freezes non-HRA rent rebate thresholds and caps for Scottish LAs for 2007/08 at 2006/07 levels. As a result those operating PSL schemes may find themselves with a reduced subsidy where rents continue to rise. This is especially the case where properties leased to the LA are situated in stronger market rental areas.

SCSH has a general concern that these new rules may damage the progress of the Scottish Executives homeless legislation. Introduction of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order by the Scottish Executive in 2004 clearly demonstrated the Executive's concerns about quality in the provision of temporary accommodation. SCSH believes, the DWP should recognise the variability of the location and market area of PSL stock and the value of non B&B temporary accommodation in PSL schemes.

SCSH is keen to gauge members' views on this issue and is especially keen to hear from LAs who have specific concerns.

## Mobile Homes – More Protection for Occupiers

New provisions relating to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to protect occupiers and those letting mobile homes from a site operator come into force on 28 May 2007. In summary the provisions will –

- ◆ Require an owner to give an occupier a written statement before a letting can commence
- ◆ Ensure that it is an offence when a person harasses a mobile home occupier
- ◆ Ensure that condition is taken into account when deciding a mobile home is detrimental to a site
- ◆ Give Scottish Ministers power to amend the contractual terms implied by law in the Mobile Homes Act 1983

*To discuss any of the issues on this page in more detail please contact Daniel Coote, Policy Officer, on 0131 2264382 or [daniel@scsch.org.uk](mailto:daniel@scsch.org.uk)*



**Shelter Housing Scotland: Setting the Agenda 2007-2011**  
**Thursday 24th May, Edinburgh**  
The housing challenge in Scotland for the next parliamentary term and beyond. Details at: [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)



**Scottish Youth Housing Network Conference**  
**Friday 1st June, Stirling**  
Details at [www.syhn.org.uk](http://www.syhn.org.uk)

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**CIH Homelessness Case Law**  
**Monday 4th June**  
Details at: [www.cihscotland/training](http://www.cihscotland/training)

**Shelter Getting Repairs Done - New Solutions**  
**Thursday 14th June, Teacher Building, Glasgow**  
A look at the new repairing standard for the private rented sector. Details at: [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)



**Mediation and Homelessness**  
**Friday 15th June, Edinburgh**  
Details at [www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk)



**CIH Attitudes Towards Homelessness**  
**Tuesday 21st August**  
Details at: [www.cihscotland/training](http://www.cihscotland/training)



**Leaving Home and Housing Education Conference**  
**Friday 31st August**  
Second national conference on leaving home and housing education. Details soon at: [www.scsch.org.uk/youth](http://www.scsch.org.uk/youth)



**Scottish Housing & Support Conference**  
**Thursday 4 & Friday 5 October, Dunblane Hydro Hotel**

**SCSH National Homelessness Conference**  
**Thursday 8 & Friday 9 November, Apex, Edinburgh**  
Get the dates in your diary.

## Homelessness and Mediation

**Friday 15th June, Edinburgh**

This event will bring together existing mediation projects from across Scotland, national players such as Family Mediation Scotland and SACRO as well as homelessness specialists to share ideas about mediation and discuss its role in homelessness prevention. SCSH believes that mediation can play an important role in a broad based homelessness prevention strategy. Of course, it is central to the idea of mediation that it remains neutral about outcomes so, for example, it should not be seen simply as a means to coerce young people to stay at home. Rather, it should be seen as part of the holistic approach to tackling homelessness. If families can get on better, it is more likely that they can stay together. And for those who do not stay together, mediation may be able to help them support each other through the transition.

*The event is aimed at: officers commissioning homelessness services / developing homelessness strategy, mediation services and their workers, and anyone interested in a holistic approach to homelessness prevention. Places will be limited so book early. Details and booking form at: [www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk) or call 0131 226 4382.*

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

Full membership details are available on 0131 226 4382 or on our web site: [www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk)

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