

New impetus for Health and Homelessness



At the Health and Homelessness Conference held at the end of September by SCSH, with support from Health Scotland, the Minister Stewart Maxwell MSP made a strong commitment to delivery of the homelessness agenda and the role of health and homelessness in achieving the 2012 target.

The Minister for Communities and Sport said: 'We are committed to delivering on the homelessness legislation already put in place.' He added: 'It is vital that local authorities, health boards and the voluntary sector continue to work together to deliver local health and homelessness action plans.'

'We need to continue to embed health and homelessness planning needs in the (Health) Boards' corporate thinking.'

Stewart Maxwell drew attention to a major consultation on health inequalities *Better Health, Better Care*

and to a Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities which is being headed up by Shona Robison MSP. He said 'It (the task force) must make sure it meets the needs of disadvantaged groups such as homeless people.'

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge said the conference was timely because

the health and homelessness agenda appeared to have 'gone off the boil.' He called for the Scottish Government to consider appointing someone with a specific focus on health and homelessness leading up to 2012.

The conference heard a lively intervention from Tom Wood, Chairman of the Scottish Association of Alcohol and Drug Action Teams, stressing the importance of partnerships being meaningful. Workshops covered a wide range of issues, including how health and homelessness fits with the community planning agenda, whether the health and homelessness standards need revision, co-ordinating addiction and homelessness services, attitudes to homeless people, and various practice initiatives.

Details of presentations will be published on the SCSH website www.scsh.org.uk and action points will be passed on to the Scottish Government health department.



What's New?

The Scottish Youth Housing Network Consults Young Parents

The Scottish Youth Housing Network held a consultation event on the 26th September at The Shore in Dundee to find out about young parents experiences of housing and support services across Scotland. The young parents who took part were able to leave their children in the crèche provided while they took part in a series of interactive workshops. Some fun activities were available over lunch such as parent and child photography, hand and head massage, information stalls and a video diary room. Workers were also able to take part in a workers workshop and the video diary room. The day came to a close with a healthy living demo where staff and young people at

The Shore took part in a Ready Steady Cook style competition with a video link up from the kitchen to the main hall. The young parents were able to watch the competition and sample the finished dishes at the end.



A report will be produced on the findings from the event. For more information go to www.syhn.org.uk



Supporting People Update

At the beginning of the year the Supporting People Enabling Unit commissioned research to look into how providers of housing support have experienced Supporting People funding changes. The survey questionnaire involved 41 service providers and sought to find out how funding and service costs have been affected from the beginning of Supporting People in 2003/04 to 2007/08.

Most services reported a funding gap from 2003/04 which has increased nine-fold between 2004/05 and 2007/08. In the last funding round providers either gained additional funding, received no additional funding, or received funding cuts. For those who received additional funding their funding gap actually grew larger than gaps in areas where SP funding remained the same or reduced.

Accommodation-linked services have experienced the largest

sustained funding gap. Despite this, they report only a small reduction in delivered places and even a slight increase in client numbers. While they have been unable to attract non-SP funding they have reduced their costs by reviewing administrative overheads. Accommodation-linked services have maintained their function by using organisational reserves to fund operating deficits. Clearly, this is not sustainable in the long term.

Floating support services have also been unable to attract non-SP funding and have experienced a moderate increase in their funding gap (this has had a knock on consequence of reduced activity levels despite widespread reported cost saving activity). Evidence suggests that the drop in activity appears to be in line with funding changes that have taken place.

Combined services have experienced a fairly steady funding gap which



now sits between that of the other two service types despite being able to attract non-SP funding. These types of services have managed to implement cost reductions and have used the widest range of approaches possible. Even though the majority of combined services have seen a funding gap, it is surprising to learn that activity has increased to a greater extent than for other type of service.

The Scottish Government is aware of the research and it will be used as part of the submission to the Minister later this year as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. The full report can be viewed at: www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/info/pdf/report_on_providers.pdf

For more info on this articles contact Daniel Coote, Policy Officer, on 0131 2264382 or daniel@scsh.org.uk

DWP Welfare Reform Consultation Update

On the 1st October SCSH and SHEN held a half day members consultation event for the DWP Green Paper, *In work, better off: next steps to full employment*. With a wide range of organisations represented, the event was a great success with detailed comments being received on all relevant sections of the paper.

The Government aims to reduce the numbers of working age people dependent on benefits, close the employment gaps between different groups and raise the employment rate to 80 per cent. SCSH/SHEN support the DWP view that employment can offer individuals opportunities to progress, develop and participate in society and that people in jobs are more likely to be more fulfilled and healthier. We also support the aspect of the proposals which seeks to encourage (through necessary support) people with few skills to find suitable appropriate employment.

However, SCSH/SHEN have a number of concerns about the current proposals. SCSH/SHEN are unclear whether the proposals will make employment a sustainable route out of poverty, especially for individuals

that have few job skills, have chaotic lifestyles and who may also be at risk of homelessness. We believe the DWP should recognise that there are many factors which can affect employment take-up of those at a distance from the job market e.g. lack of appropriate and supported accommodation, the benefits trap, transport availability/costs or lack of partnership working between agencies and local government departments.

SCSH/SHEN believe the lessons from the New Futures Fund Initiative should underpin the process of creating successful routes out of poverty. In addition, there needs to be a clear link with Workforce Plus.

We also have concerns about the availability of suitable fulfilling jobs. SCSH/SHEN have concerns that the quantity of jobs available will not be sufficient. With regard to the Jobs Pledge, SCSH/SHEN believes an opportunity has been missed to offer employers a range of incentives to encourage them to employ longer-term benefit claimants. As it stands only the largest employers appear to be part of the 'pledge'. Few incentives exist for employers and the opportunities

for smaller businesses (SMEs) to become successfully involved remain 'thin'.

Benefit Sanctions are to be introduced for individuals who do not actively seek or take up work. Combined with existing rules such as the current housing benefit taper this will could place individuals in high rent accommodation in a very difficult position. The Green Paper envisages that 20% of potential workers will remain workless. The 20% are not defined, but it is important that they are not forgotten or excluded even further.

SCSH/SHEN will ensure the above comments (and more detailed ones) made on the day will be considered for integration into the final response. The SCSH Executive Committee will then discuss the additional comments before agreeing to a final response. Consultation responses for the Green Paper are required by 31st October 2007. Download the full document at: www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/in-work-better-off/

To discuss this article contact Daniel Coote, on 0131 2264382 or daniel@scsh.org.uk

FEANTSA 'complaint' against France

A FEANTSA delegation, led by SCSH Director and FEANTSA President Robert Aldridge made a formal 'collective complaint' that France has breached Article 31 of the Council of Europe's Social Charter. The Article relates to the right to housing for vulnerable groups. The formal complaint which was held in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is aimed at improving the position of homeless people in France and setting a benchmark



for other countries in Europe.

France has adopted legislation this year on homelessness similar to the Scottish legislation, but the complaint relates to the effects



of policies in place prior to that. A decision on the complaint is expected within four months.



**SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR
SINGLE HOMELESS**

SCSH National Homelessness Conference

Thursday 8th & Friday 9th November, Apex, Edinburgh

Details and a booking form at www.scsch.org.uk

Shelter

But Why Here? Community Engagement Seminar

Tuesday 20th November, 9.30am - 1.00pm, Edinburgh

For more information visit scotland.shelter.org.uk



SHEN Annual Forum - Really Better Off?

The impact of welfare to work on homelessness

Tuesday 27th November 2007, Perth

More details at www.shen-scotland.org



Annual Conference and AGM

Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum

Wednesday 28th & Thursday 29th November 2007, Crieff

More details at www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk



CIH Annual Conference & Exhibition

Monday 10th - Thursday 13th March 2008

To get a better view of what's going on in housing visit
www.cih.org or telephone 0131 225 4544

SCSH National Homelessness Conference

Last chance to book!

The SCSH national homelessness conference is taking place on 8th and 9th November in the Apex International Hotel in Edinburgh. The conference which features a keynote speech by Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister, will also see the launch of two important pieces of research. SCSH commissioned research into homelessness services in stock transfer authorities will be launched on day one, and research relating to children in families experiencing domestic abuse by Scottish Women's Aid will feature on the second day.

A broad range of workshops covering policy and practice cover both days, and there are speakers from outside Scotland, talking about homelessness prevention in Wales and developments in the private rented sector in Ireland.

Booking forms downloadable from www.scsch.org.uk or from SCSH 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

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