

Spending Review Disappointing for Homelessness

The Strategic Spending Review announcement on 14th November poses some serious challenges for the 2012 homelessness target. Not only is the housing budget cut in real terms next year, but the ring fence on Supporting People funds is to be removed.

In a joint response to the announcement SCSH, Shelter Scotland, Scottish Churches Housing Action, The Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland and ALACHO (Scotland's Chief Housing Officers) said the new Scottish budget will fail to provide the 30,000 affordable

rented homes Scotland needs in the next three years. On initial analysis the funding may only provide two thirds of that.

The housing groups point out that next year's housing budget has been cut by 6% in real terms. Although in the subsequent two years it does rise, they say: 'The funding is barely enough to keep pace with land costs – far less fund a programme of 30,000 homes for rent by 2011. The announcement is a severe disappointment and a setback for Scotland's ambitious plans to lead the world in tackling homelessness and in housing the thousands of households currently on waiting lists or in temporary accommodation up and down the country.'

The housing groups are also concerned at the removal of ring fencing from a significant part of the housing budget. They fear that some local authorities may divert money initially intended to tackle housing and homelessness into other hard pressed areas of their budgets.

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge said: 'The Scottish Government has consistently restated its commitment to meeting the 2012 homelessness target, which we welcome. However, the budget figures present real challenges.

'The removal of the ring fence on Supporting People funding is a serious concern. I fear that funding may be diverted towards hard

pressed social work priority groups such as learning disability and older people. And this will be at the expense of low level and floating support related to homelessness.

'I am concerned that without close monitoring the momentum towards 2012 may slip. SCSH has consistently stated that housing supply and support are crucial to the success of 2012. SCSH will use our network of contacts in homelessness services across Scotland to provide a reality check on progress and seek to sustain the pressure to meet the 2012 target.'

English Knowledge Base on Preventing Youth Homelessness

A compendium of advice, case studies and downloadable documents relating to all aspects of preventing and tackling youth homelessness has been launched as a web-based resource. It's primarily intended for English local authorities and their partners, but any of the ideas will be applicable in the Scottish context.

For further information email Johanna Holmes, Centrepont at jholmes@centrepont.org or Jo Gunner, YMCA England at jo.gunner@england.ymca.org.uk

Check out the site at: www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness



What's New?

Allocations Practice Research Published

Research into tensions between allocations policy and practice has been published by the Scottish Government. It identified three main areas of tension: 'prioritising individual need', promoting balanced communities and allocations linked to wider agendas. Social rented sector landlords generally believed that the issues arose due to an insufficient supply of housing in the sector.

On prioritising individual need they were unclear about what constituted 'reasonable' in their legal duty to give reasonable preference to a range of groups, and the relationship between that and their more specific legal duties towards homeless people.

On balanced communities, it was unclear who should define a balanced community and how to balance the needs of individuals against those of the community. Landlords were not clear when it was legitimate not to house someone with high needs in pursuit of a balanced community.

On wider agendas they identified a tension between guidance on housing those with greatest need and other housing objectives linked to debt management and tenancy management, and identified gaps in support and skills to support people with care and support needs.

The report underlines the need for greater clarity about the role of allocations in local housing systems.

The report 'Tensions between allocations policy and practice' is available on the publications pages of the Scottish Government website: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/10/17154243/0

SCSH Guide for Parents Launched



The National Homelessness Conference on 8th - 9th November saw the launch of SCSH's newest resource 'Stay or go? Young people living at home and leaving home: a guide for parents'. A copy was presented to Nicola Sturgeon, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing.

The guide is the latest SCSH publication aimed at preventing housing crisis and homelessness in young people. It was developed in close consultation with parents, young people and the professionals who work with them.

Living with young people who are making a bid for independence can be a challenging time for families. Yet many parents don't know about the modern realities of leaving home or where to go for help and support. The guide will help parents and teenagers decide when is the right time to make the move, how to prepare, how to cope after they have left home and what to do if things go wrong.

North Lanarkshire and Argyll & Bute Councils were key partners in the development of the guide and have their own local versions, as does the City of Edinburgh. Production was sponsored by LinkLiving.

For more info contact Ingrid Fitzsimons at ingrid@scsh.org.uk or 0131 2264382

Mixed Scottish Views on Homelessness

Results from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey show Scottish people have a range of attitudes towards homeless people. Most people (61%) wrongly believe that most homeless people sleep rough at some time. Around the same proportion believe that some homeless people are more deserving than others.

Around half (48%) believe that homeless people have 'just been unlucky in their lives', with only 28% disagreeing. Only around 20% believed that people become homeless simply because they drink too much or use hard drugs, with around half disagreeing.

Only 11% believe that homeless people cause problems in their local area, with 52% disagreeing that this is the case.

However 35% believe many people say they are homeless to get a house from the council, while 29% disagree.

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge said: 'It is very encouraging to know that the Scottish people are broadly in sympathy with those who find themselves homeless. There is clearly more work to be done to build on the positives and broaden understanding. It shows a good base for public acceptance of the homelessness framework.'

Minister for Communities and Sport Stewart Maxwell restated the Government's commitment to 2012. He added: 'We must continue to work as hard as possible to make sure the population at large sees the reasoning behind, and the value of, what we are working towards.'

The full report can be found at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13153139/0

SCSH National Conference Success

SCSH's 2 day national conference on homelessness saw over 150 delegates from a wide variety of disciplines come together to tackle homelessness issues.

Addressing the conference, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Minister for Health and Wellbeing Nicola Sturgeon restated the Scottish Government's commitment to the 2012 target.

Nicola Sturgeon also stressed the importance of the linked issues of health, justice, employability and social networks to the success of sustainable pathways out of homelessness.

SCSH Director Robert Aldridge cautioned about an over-reliance on the Private Rented Sector to assist with homelessness. He said: 'It has a part to play, but we must be clear about security of tenure, affordability, cross references to welfare reforms and take a clear strategic approach to who we believe it can and should house.'

Mary Taylor from the University of Stirling outlined initial findings from SCSH's research on homelessness after stock transfer, while Chris Price from Wales presented the Welsh approach to homelessness prevention.

Joan Smith outlined her research into the attitudes of young people and their parents to running away from home and homelessness.

One of the highlights was a presentation of new research by Scottish Women's Aid on the effects of domestic abuse on children. The

lively presentation was done jointly by the main researcher and two of the young people.

Eoin O'Sullivan from Trinity College Dublin gave an insight into how Ireland makes use of the private rented sector and regulates quality and rents, giving a timely input into discussions around the private rented sector and homelessness in Scotland, while Michael Cameron from Communities Scotland spoke about the new approach to Regulation and Inspection.

Presentations are available on the SCSH website.



SCSH Concerns on New Scottish Government Homelessness Statistics

On 30th October the Scottish Executive published the latest information on applications and assessments to Local Authorities (LAs) under Scotland's Homeless Persons legislation. While the number of homeless applications and assessments has dropped from last year, SCSH has concerns about LAs' progress towards meeting the 2009 interim target and the increasing number of households living in temporary accommodation.

The actual number of homelessness applications dropped by just over 2% from 60,436 in 2005/06 to 59,096 in 2006/07. Although the number of applications assessed as homeless dropped from 43,265 in 2005/06 to 41,123 in 2006/07 there were 2,102 applications which had not been

assessed by LAs at the end of the recording period.

The statistics show in broad terms that LAs are making progress towards meeting the 2009 interim target. In 2006/07 77% of applications were assessed as homeless and in priority need (75% in 2005/06). However, there is a wide variation across LA areas; for example, nine LAs recorded greater than 80% while seven LAs recorded 67% or less.

There has been a steady rise in the number of households living in temporary accommodation. On the 31 March 2007, 9,164 households were in temporary accommodation, representing a 10% increase compared to figures

for 31 March 2006. Of the 9,164 households placed in temporary accommodation, over a third were placed in B&B and hostel accommodation.

This Scottish Executive statistical release is available at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/10/30092316/0

Alternatively, for more information on homelessness statistics please contact Daniel Coote, Policy Officer, on 0131 2264382 or by email at daniel@scsh.org.uk

Web Links

Links to all documents referred to in this issue of *inhouse*, and to back copies,



SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR
SiNGLE HOMELESS

SCSH Practical Steps Training Extra Date

Tuesday 4th December 2007, Edinburgh

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



Working with Young Drug Users Training

Thursday 24th January 2008, Edinburgh

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



Young People and Mental Health Training

Thursday 7th February 2008, Edinburgh

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



Working with Survivors of Sexual Abuse - Level 2

Thursday 14th February 2008, Edinburgh

Details and a booking form at www.syhn.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 2254544

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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New Date for Practical Steps Training

Tuesday 4th December 2007 - Edinburgh

Morning session - Leaving home and housing education/ Streets Ahead

This training session looks at leaving home and housing issues for young people, including the facts and figures on youth homelessness in Scotland and practical exercises to help delegates get the most out of the Streets Ahead guide. Training includes a free copy of the updated Streets Ahead Guide for 2007 and features lesson plans and home smart materials.

This training is suitable for a wide range of housing and homelessness staff as well as teachers and youth workers.

Afternoon session - Practical steps to tenancy sustainment/My Space My Place

This training looks at the key steps to tenancy sustainment, incorporating the personal views and experiences of young people and best practice from professionals. Training includes practical exercises that can be used in tenancy sustainment work with young people as well as the award winning My Space My Place Young Persons Guide.

This training is ideal for anyone supporting a young person in a tenancy.

'The training was great and between the handouts and the resources I received a lot to keep me going.'

Lorraine Cowan-Brown, Churches Action for the Homeless

For further information or to book contact Ashleigh Graham at ashleigh@scsch.org.uk or 0131 2264382. Booking forms are downloadable from www.scsch.org.uk.

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