

Slight Rise in Homelessness But More in Priority Need



On the 17 March the most recent Scottish Government homelessness statistics bulletin was published. The release contains the latest information on applications and assessments to Local Authorities (LAs) under Scotland's Homeless Persons legislation for the quarters ending 30 June and 30 September 2008. The publication also gives information on numbers in temporary accommodation up to the end of 2008.

During the period April – September 2008 the number of homelessness applications rose by 2% to 29,361 from 28,681 for the same period in 2007. The number of cases assessed as homeless also rose in this period from 20,632 in 2007 to 21,013 in 2008 (again a 2% rise). While the number of homeless applications and assessments have remained

broadly similar to that of the same period last year, SCSH have concerns on the ever increasing number of households living in temporary accommodation and that not all LAs were able to progress on assessing more applicants as 'priority'.

By 31 March 2009 LAs should ensure they are half-way to the abolition of priority need by assessing 50% more applications in priority than in non-priority (determined from statistics used within the December 2005 Ministerial Statement). By 2012, the removal of priority need 'barrier' will mean that all unintentionally homeless applicants will be seen as having a 'priority' status and entitled to settled accommodation. A total of 17,477 cases (83%) were assessed as homeless and in priority need in Scotland, which overall represents

an increase of 4% compared with the same period in 2007. However, there is a wide variation across LA areas; with four councils assessing over 90% of applications in priority need, but 13 councils assessing less than 80% of applications as priority (of which three assessed less than 70% as priority).

There has been a steady rise in the number of households living in temporary accommodation. On the 31 December 2008, 9,536 households were in temporary accommodation, representing a 7% increase compared to figures for 31 December 2007. Of the households placed in temporary accommodation, over a third were placed in B&B, hostel and private rented accommodation.

Relatively few homeless applications (6% - 1,634) stated that the reason for applying was due to termination of tenancy/mortgage due to rent arrears or a default of payments. This figure represents a 0.2% increase over the same period in 2007.

This Scottish Government statistical release can be accessed at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/264197/0079185.pdf>

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

Call to Revitalise Health and Homelessness

Speaking at a Health and Homelessness conference organised by the Scottish Health Council, SCSH Chief Exec Robert Aldridge called for the health and homelessness agenda to be revitalised.

'We have in Scotland an excellent

framework for action, with national health and homelessness standards in place. However the good initial work seems to have gone off the boil.'

'What is needed is more chances for people working in the field to

exchange good practice and keep the momentum going. Meeting the health needs of homeless people is a crucial factor in meeting the 2012 homelessness target.'

For more information please contact Robert Aldridge, by email at robert@scsh.org.uk

What's New?

Telling it Like it is

A recently published report from the Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland (CHNI) provides for the first time a comprehensive picture of the accommodation and support needs of homeless young people in Northern Ireland.



The research titled 'Young People Telling it Like it is' highlights the complexity of the issues to be addressed. Family disputes, for example, are often the trigger for homelessness - an issue which in itself is extremely difficult to deal with. However, the study reveals that this situation is often compounded by a combination of specialist needs, with many younger people with no accommodation of their own having experienced mental health issues, experienced abuse in their childhood or with a history of drug / alcohol abuse.

The research also highlights much that is positive in the current situation - particularly in the attitudes of the younger people themselves in the face of adversity, but also the dedication of the staff who currently work in the temporary accommodation schemes and the support services.

Among others, recommendations focus on: young people's journeys into homelessness and early intervention, support needs, addressing barriers to work, education and training and sustaining a tenancy.

The full research report can be downloaded at: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/chni_youth_research_draft_final_report.pdf

For more information please contact Nick Bell, Youth Manager, on 0131 2264382 or by email at nick@scsh.org.uk

Prevention Plans for Premium Prepayment Prices!



Many people have pay as you go phones, but ask those who have them how often they have no credit, and especially for those who are on low incomes, the answer will be significant. Unfortunately this can be the same when looking at 'pay as you go' electricity. However, there are two huge differences with the two:

Necessity & Cost: Lets face it, having no phone credit can be annoying, and can be a challenge for those who already have problems keeping a social circle as it is, without their main means of communication coming to a halt too. However, when this is compared to having no electricity, and therefore (more often than not) no cooking facilities and no heat, as well as no lighting, no television and no washing machine - it becomes a no brainer. Most would agree that the odd power cut can be quite exciting for the first ten minutes, but if it lasts any longer than that, life becomes difficult, and uncomfortable; electricity is vital. So, why is it then that those on a lower income than average have to go without, and are paying up to five times more for their electricity?! Overall, the average Prepayment Meter (PPM) customer is paying £215 more a year, than those with standard meters.

Compare this to the Pay as You Go phone deals versus the contract, and there is often very little difference

between the two. Consumers are also more inclined to look at the deal available to them with mobile phones, and speak to others about the offers they are using; this is not the case with electricity.

What's more, a staggering 50% of prepayment meter users believe that they are using the cheapest payment method; when they are not.

This becomes an even greater problem for youths moving into their own tenancies, as they are even less likely to have a knowledge on different tariffs systems and direct debit / internet offers available to them, or have any banking already in place; a requirement for most of the lower rate tariff deals.

But don't worry, help is about to be at hand! This is where the SCSH Youth Team will be stepping in, in the format of a project named 'High Voltage'.

We are of the belief that we need to be educating people, and those who help set up tenancies, about what options are available, and how to gain access to this information. As well as giving young people the tools to shop around, and not just accepting the first tariff offered to them; knowledge is key! And in this case the key will prevent young people's monies being spent where they needn't be; essentially giving an important step towards a tenancy being a success.

If this is a topic that is of interest to you watch the website for the 'High Voltage' works coming to fruition.

For more information on this article please contact Jules Oldham, on 0131 2264382 or by email at jules@scsh.org.uk

What's New?

The Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment Network



The Scottish Government has funded Glasgow Homelessness Network (GHN) to develop and manage the new national network, SHIEN, which aims to build nationally on local experiences, expertise and learning to create a culture of innovation, peer support and continuous improvement around service user involvement across the country.

The network is targeted at all those within the homelessness sector, and related, at all levels and within all services that recognize the value of involving and empowering the

people who use homelessness services.

SHIEN will be administered electronically through a website, a newsletter and an email group, and thematic meetings held twice a year with thematic reports following up.

This Network will share experience of effective perception, prejudice and awareness raising through a national 'Resource Exchange' of materials, opportunities and guidance developed as a direct result of service user involvement activity.

A new and innovative toolkit created in consultation with service users and providers for the involvement and empowerment of service users was launched by GHN in December 2008. The toolkit provides

good practice guidelines which can assist any organisation with a stake in homelessness to understand, adopt and implement the most appropriate methods of involvement and participation which will benefit both the service users and the service. GHN will also be offering training to support the toolkit.

In February, the SHIEN Advisory Group met for the first time. The groups remit is to provide an advisory role to the Scottish Government on Service User Involvement Policy and Practice for people affected by exclusion or multiple exclusion.

Stephanie Plotnikoff is coordinating SHIEN, and can be contacted at GHN on 0141 2764825 for any further information.

Help for Housing

Over the next twelve months £644 million will be invested in homes for rent or low cost ownership across the country.

Housing and Communities Minister Alex Neil, said the investment will support the approval of at least 6,500 new and improved properties. He also announced that the

provision of affordable housing for rent in the current economic downturn would be his number one ministerial priority.

However, SCSH believes the projected number of approvals falls short of the required 10,000 affordable rented houses that need to be built every year to meet identi-

fied housing needs, which consider household projections, demolitions, homelessness duties, and projected Right to Buy sales.

This announcement follows on from the recently introduced Mortgage to Shared Equity and the modified Mortgage to Rent scheme.

For more information please contact Daniel Coote, by email at daniel@scsh.org.uk

SHEN/SCSH 'Celtic Nations' Forum



Different infrastructures and policy frameworks in the "Celtic nations" mean that the impacts of UK level policies on welfare reform and employability can be uncertain. Our concerns are shared by voluntary sector organisations in the other "nations" of the UK.

In February we brought the DWP together with organisations from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the first meeting of the "Celtic Nations Forum" with an aim to consider the impact of DWP policy on claimants facing challenges of homelessness, substance and/or alcohol abuse, and ex-offenders.

We've started an effective dialogue which explored how DWP strategies will "match up" with devolved legislation, how DWP regulations interact with other legislation, and how good

practice from the Celtic nations can be integrated into welfare reform and employability policies. The forum will help us to exchange information, examine practice and reach mutual understandings of the welfare reform process.

Through this forum we will explore the impact of welfare reform and the commissioning process on the most excluded clients in the devolved administrations. Our next meeting will be held in June.

For further information contact Geraldine Wooley, on 0131 2264382 or by email at geraldine@scsh.org.uk

Diary



Private Rented Sector Conference Wednesday 29 April 2009, Edinburgh

Details at www.cih.org/scotland/conferences

Shelter

RSLs and Homelessness

Wednesday 29 April 2009, Glasgow

Details at <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>



Affordable Housing Conference

Wednesday 20 May 2009, Edinburgh

Details at www.cih.org/scotland/conferences



Migrants – contribution, integration, destitution?

Thursday 21 May 2009, London

Details at www.homeless.org.uk/events



Role of the Housing Regulator / Future of the Regulator

Wednesday 27 May 2009, Glasgow

Details at www.sfha.co.uk/index.php?pg=4

SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR SINGLE HOMELESS

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

For full membership details phone 0131 226 4382 or visit www.scsch.org.uk

Staff information

Robert Aldridge
Chief Executive

Chris Campbell
Deputy Chief Executive

Nick Bell
Manager Youth Homelessness

Daniel Coote
Policy Officer

Jules Oldham
Development Officer (Youth)

Geraldine Wooley
SHEN co-ordinator

Bence Solymár
Finance/Administration Officer

Ashleigh Graham
Mary Kenneway
Administrative Secretaries

Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Wellgate House
200 Cowgate
Edinburgh
EH1 1NQ

T: 0131 226 4382
F: 0131 225 4382

W: www.scsch.org.uk
W: www.leavinghome.info

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SCSH Survey on Rough Sleeping



In the near future SCSH will conduct a survey to determine the extent of rough sleeping across Scotland. It will form an evidence base to determine whether full scale rough sleeping research is required.

It is intended that the survey's reach will be as widespread as practically possible; both local authority homelessness/housing/social work teams and frontline homelessness service providers will be asked to participate.

Why is a survey needed?

There are a number of reasons. SCSH has been aware of anecdotal evidence of increasing levels of rough sleeping particularly in

urban areas. Local authority HL1 homeless monitoring systems ask some limited questions on rough sleeping but we have been made aware (again, anecdotally) that not all cases of it are necessarily picked up.

We also believe the research is timely given it has now been 10 years since the introduction of the original 1999 Rough Sleepers Initiative target to end rough sleeping by 2003.

Want to help?

SCSH is keen to hear from you as an individual or as part of an organisation to help us shape the research.

Please contact SCSH Chief Executive, Robert Aldridge, on 0131 2264382 or by email robert@scsch.org.uk if you would like to take part – or if you feel the research should consider specific issues and topics.

Back Copies

Back copies of previous newsletters can be found at our website www.scsch.org.uk