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## Housing (Scotland) Bill Reaches Stage 1

The Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Scottish Government on 13th January 2010. The Local Government and Communities Committee at the Scottish Parliament is now seeking written evidence on the general principles of the Bill, and is inviting all interested parties to submit views on the proposals and their likely impact.

The Bill's principal policy objectives are:

- to improve the value that social housing delivers for tenants and taxpayers
- to safeguard the supply of that housing for the benefit of future generations of tenants
- to improve conditions in private housing.

The Bill will do this by modernising the regime for regulating social landlords, reforming the Right to Buy for social housing, amending the law on registering private landlords, licensing homes in multiple occupation and

dealing with disrepair in private housing.

SCSH has two main areas of concern with the Bill proposals as they currently stand. While we agree with proposals to remove the RTB for new supply social housing and for new tenants entering the social rented sector, we disagree with a further proposal which may allow some tenants of housing associations to buy their house post 2012. SCSH believes this proposal is illogical, given the Bill aims to safeguard good quality social rented housing.

SCSH has further concerns with Bill proposals which are intended to replace cyclical inspections of social landlord housing management and homelessness services with self assessment and enquiries. We believe there should be regular inspections of housing and homelessness services, as previous inspections have shown that homelessness services have

consistently been assessed less favourably than those of housing management services.

In addition to submitting written evidence, SCSH will be giving oral evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee on the general principles of the Bill when it meets on the 21st April 2010.



## SCSH Responds to Housing Benefit Reform Consultation

SCSH has submitted its response to the DWP public consultation – Supporting people into work: the next stage of Housing Benefit Reform. Proposals outlined in the consultation are intended to ensure that Housing Benefit is better able to help people into work, is fairer, more efficiently delivered and better value for money for the taxpayer.

SCSH supports some of the principles that inform the consultation, principally improving access to employment among Housing Benefit claimants through the proposal to introduce Transition into Work Payments. SCSH believes it is important that vulnerable people can develop greater independence, confidence and security through employment.

One of the main barriers to uptake of employment and training among vulnerable people is the uncertainty and risk associated with losing HB. This proposal helps some way to removing this barrier by fixing HB entitlement for three months immediately before a person moves into work. However, any revision of HB procedures must take into account circumstances where a person is subject to a reduction in income. SCSH believes there should be a safeguard in place so that a reassessment can be requested in cases where a person would be significantly worse off.

SCSH raised concerns with regard to Broad Rental Market Areas which must reflect the sensitivities of local housing markets. Currently, we have concerns that some areas are unfavourable for those on low incomes because the average rent is higher than the Local Housing Allowance level for that area. SCSH also raised ongoing concerns with HB issues raised by our members which are not mentioned in the paper, including Shared Room Rate, the under 16 hours (training and education) rule and the 'double' HB issue.

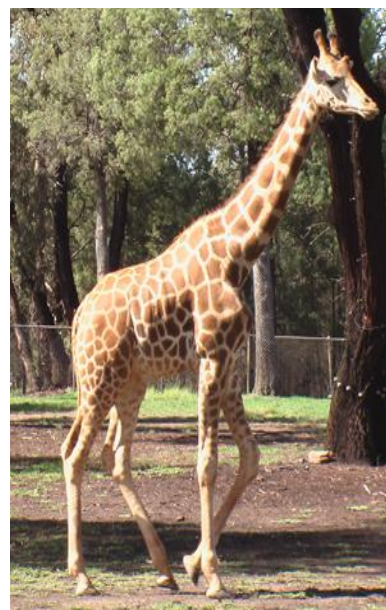
### SHEN Forum – Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March

A day out at Edinburgh Zoo and a visit to a farm? Has the Scottish Homelessness & Employability Network decided that veterinary qualifications are the way forward? Vet qualifications are great but unfortunately, for a lot of homeless people, the qualifications, level of funding and long haul to become a vet, are major barriers.

It's never a good idea to tell people what jobs or training they should do, as it's essential to find out what people are interested in, what they aspire to do in the future, what's stopping them from achieving their goals, and how we can help them.

The same logic has been applied to this year's SHEN Annual Forum (with the added benefits of live animals and lots of fresh air).

- The sector has seen an increase in social enterprise - the afternoon session at the Edinburgh Cyrenians Farm will provide an insight into setting up and running a social enterprise.
- The Forum is the ideal place to talk to others working in homelessness and employability about what your project or organisation has been doing, to share ideas and to gain inspiration and contacts for the future.
- Employability can be a complex business and with this in mind, there will be a workshop on how to engage with the business community.
- We'll also be learning how to overcome barriers of working with "hard to reach" clients and looking at the coming changes in Welfare Reform, and what these will mean for you and your clients.



This year's Forum is about building knowledge and networks in a practical, hands-on way. Come along and get your hands dirty and your energy for employability recharged! The Forum is free to SHEN subscribers (annual subscription is just £25), and there's a £30 charge for non-subscribers. Local transport and lunch are included.

Full details at [www.shen-scotland.org](http://www.shen-scotland.org) or contact [clare@scsh.org.uk](mailto:clare@scsh.org.uk)

## Running: Other Choices

Since 2004, Aberlour ROC, a Glasgow-based service for young runaways, has run Scotland's only dedicated refuge for young runaways. In partnership with local authorities, the police and other agencies, the service has offered safe accommodation and support to over 200 young runaways, offering immediate safe and accessible accommodation, and supporting them on moving on to more sustainable accommodation. Young people who run away, or are at risk of running away, can access refuge irrespective of where they originate, however they must be within commutable distance of Glasgow.

Young people under 16 who run away from home are more likely to become homeless when 16+ as a result of problematic experiences. It makes sense to provide safe accommodation to prevent further harm coming to them.

To compliment ROC Refuge, Aberlour has recently been successful in securing funding for a Young People's Worker. This will allow the development of an early intervention programme, targeting

over 1,000 S2 Glasgow pupils each year. This will help to raise awareness of the risks of running away and provide information about the services available. It will also allow Aberlour to expand their Outreach remit, working with more vulnerable young runaways and young people at risk of running away, in their own communities or alternative care settings, offering ongoing support, advocacy and advice.

New research into the accommodation needs of young runaways across the UK was published in November 2009 and can be accessed at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR181.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR181.pdf). In addition, the Railway Children have recently published 'Off The Radar' Children and Young People on the Streets in the UK. The executive summary can be downloaded at: [www.railwaychildren.org.uk/wcore/showdoc.asp?id=1168](http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/wcore/showdoc.asp?id=1168)

For further details see [www.aberlour.org.uk](http://www.aberlour.org.uk) or call Laura Irvine, Service Manager, on 0141 550 2398.

## Crisis Provide Grants

Crisis Changing Lives is a highly successful national grants scheme which helps homeless people achieve their educational and career goals by awarding grants of up to £2500.

Applicants need to be homeless or ex-homeless, free from drug and alcohol misuse for 6 months, and eligible to work in the UK. It is important for any applicants to have been working with a support worker for 6 months prior to the application, and for that support worker to be able to provide a reference in order to administer and monitor the grant.

Grants can be used for course fees, work clothes and tools, or to help set up a business. They can pay for necessary equipment for courses, including BAs and equivalents. Usually if there is a strong case that a course leads to specific employment and isn't covered by concessions, grants or student loans, Crisis will consider the application.

Applications are accepted between October and May, with a 3-5 week decision period. There is a special

deadline of 16<sup>th</sup> July for any funding needing to be paid out for courses starting between September and mid October.

Further details from the Changing Lives Team on 0207 426 3871 or [changing.lives@crisis.org.uk](mailto:changing.lives@crisis.org.uk)



Here are some dates for your diary



**CIH Annual Conference**  
16-18 March 2010  
SECC, Glasgow  
[www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)



**SHEN Annual Forum**  
24 March 2010  
Edinburgh Zoo and Cyrenians  
Farm  
[www.shen-scotland.org](http://www.shen-scotland.org)

mainliners

**Hepatitis C Briefing Events**  
Hamilton – 26 March  
Inverness – 29 March  
[www.hepccentre.org.uk](http://www.hepccentre.org.uk)



**SCSH National Homelessness  
Conference**  
4 and 5 November 2010  
Edinburgh  
[www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk)

## PRS Email Group – can you help?

SCSH has been made aware that in the near future the Scottish Government will be publishing a consultation on a new Housing Bill dealing specifically with the Private Rented Sector. In the meantime, SCSH has been participating in a short life Working Group set up by the Scottish Government which aims to look at some of the longer term issues that affect this sector.

In order to maximise our contribution to this Working Group, SCSH will shortly be setting up an e-mail reference group to discuss specific issues and areas of good practice. If you are interested in joining this reference group, please contact Robert Aldridge at [robert@scsch.org.uk](mailto:robert@scsch.org.uk)

## Free Legal Info

The Legal Services Agency has recently produced leaflets on a range of topics such as Homelessness and the Law, and Preventing Eviction for Rent Arrears. Both of these leaflets are of general relevance throughout Scotland, although they largely contain contacts in Glasgow and Inverclyde. The leaflets are free while stocks last. Contact the LSA if you would be interested in customised versions of leaflets for your area.

Further details from [celiahay@lsa.org.uk](mailto:celiahay@lsa.org.uk)



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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](http://www.scsch.org.uk)

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