

NEWS RELEASE

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Independent Living Guide for Young People Scoops UK Housing Award

My Space My Place¹ - an innovative guide for young tenants – won a prestigious UK Housing Award for **Outstanding achievement in social housing in Scotland**² earlier this month. **My Space My Place** was created by the Scottish Council for Single Homeless (SCSH)³ with the help of young tenants⁴ to help other young people who leave home at an early age. With as many as one in three tenancies failing in the first year⁵ **My Space My Place** is designed to prevent homelessness and housing crisis by giving young people the information they need to make a success of their tenancy.

"For young people a traditional tenants' handbook doesn't really work," said Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit at SCSH. "**My Space My Place** talks to them in a language they can understand. It includes lots of stories of the pitfalls that can face the young tenant and it offers lots of encouragement. The young people also liked the idea of cartoon strips, agony pages and manga style illustrations. So we put all that in too."

Last year more than 4300 young people between 16 and 17 went for help to their local council⁶ because they had nowhere safe and secure to stay. And once you add in the 18 to 24 year olds that figure rises to over 19,000 or 35% of all homelessness applications across Scotland.⁷ Many of the young people who experience housing crisis lack the kind of family support that many of us take for granted when setting up in a new home. SCSH worked with Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association, Argyll & Bute Council and North Lanarkshire Council, all providers of tenancies to young people, to create the resource. Together they believe this resource will help these young people and the workers who support them during a challenging period of transition.⁸

"An eviction from a failed tenancy can cost us more than £22,000 per person," says Julie Hunter, Senior Strategy Officer, North Lanarkshire Council. "When you compare this with the cost of the **My Space My Place** guide at £12.50 each⁹, you're looking at outstanding value for money. We've had a phenomenally positive response to the resource from our staff."

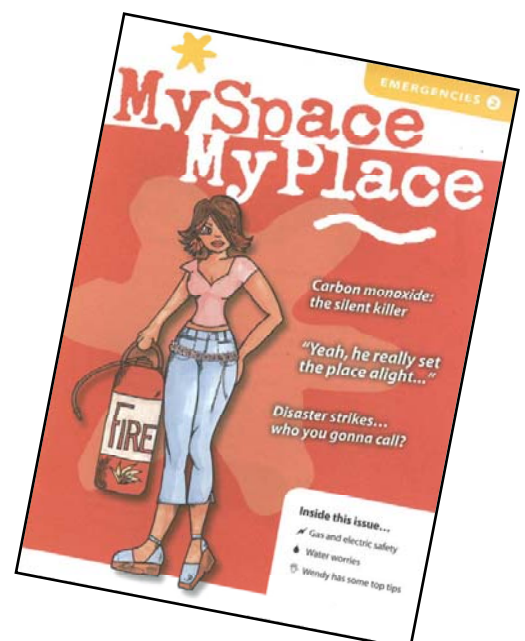
Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit at SCSH adds: "Tackling housing crisis and homelessness does require a good supply of decent housing. But there's more to it than that. People need to know about the realities of leaving home¹⁰ so that they can plan effectively. And if they do have to move on at a young age, they need all the support they can get. Really good quality information can help young people avoid housing crisis in the first place and, where it does occur, can help them get back on track."

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Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit at SCSH receives the award from Angiolina Foster, Chief Executive, Communities Scotland



Independent Living Guide for Young People Scoops UK Housing Award: Notes

¹ An on-line preview of the pack, including sample pages, can be found at: www.scsch.org.uk/Youth/TSR.htm
Further photos and images available on request. The creation resource was made possible by financial support from Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association, Argyll and Bute Council and North Lanarkshire Council. SCSH receives financial support from the Scottish Executive.

² The UK Housing Awards are awarded annually by the Chartered Institute of Housing and Inside Housing magazine. www.cih.org/ukha/ The award was made at London's Hilton Hotel on November 9th 2006.

³ **Scottish Council for Single Homeless** (SCSH) is the national membership organisation for individuals and organisations working with homeless people. www.scsch.org.uk

⁴ In 2004 SCSH, alongside the Scottish Youth Housing Network ran two major consultation events with young people on the theme of Tenancy Sustainment. Their views were documented in the **My Space My Place** report, published in November 2004. One of the key recommendations of that report was that a youth friendly and youth relevant tenancy sustainment guide should be developed and made widely available to young people starting out in their tenancies. SCSH began this task in November 2004. At every stage during the development of the guide young people were consulted: they helped to shape every aspect of the guide: the format, the style of writing, the graphics, the colour schemes, etc. The result is the **My Space My Place: Young Persons Guide**, launched in November 2005 and with **My Space My Place: Workers Toolkit** following in May 2006. As of November 2006, nearly 4000 guides have been sold. On November 9th 2006, **My Space My Place** was awarded **Outstanding Achievement in Social Housing in Scotland** at the UK Housing Awards.

⁵ Research Presentation, Thursday 4th May, The Big Step, Glasgow. *Investigating Tenancy Sustainment in Glasgow*, Heriot-Watt University and Mandy Littlewood.

⁶ Under recent legislation the council has extensive duties to help young people resolve their housing crisis. See SCSH briefing on the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 at: www.scsch.org.uk/briefings/b12.htm

⁷ Statistical Bulletin: Housing Series: HSG/2006/6: Operation of the Homeless Persons legislation in Scotland: national and local authority analyses 2005-2006
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/25151544/0

⁸ **My Space My Place** covers a wide range of themes such as tenant rights, dealing with emergencies, feeling safe at home and in the neighbourhood, health and well-being, etc. There is also practical advice, such as eating healthily on a budget, managing money and how to move ahead with education and training. The guide can be used by a young person on their own, but ideally will form part of tenancy support package. A special supplement to the guide is available for workers including a CD-ROM with many extras, such as video clips of young people talking about the experience in managing their own place.

⁹ **My Space My Place: Young Persons Guide** is sold directly to housing providers and support services. Each pack costs £12.50 but will be provided free to young people starting out in a new tenancy. The **My Space My Place: Workers Toolkit** costs £30 and includes video clips of young people describing their experiences of managing their own tenancy. Review copies available for media on request.

¹⁰ SCSH's **home smart** campaign aims, which is running during Autumn 2006, aims to ensure that every S4 pupil knows the facts about homelessness and how to avoid it. Timed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the TV play *Cathy Come Home*, **home smart** teacher packs have been sent to all Scottish secondary schools. More details on the campaign and free lesson plan downloads can be found at: www.leavinghome.info/homesmart