

NEWS RELEASE



facts about homelessness & how to avoid it

Scotland's Kids Get Home Smart

Thursday 18th January 2007

In schools across Scotland young people have been learning the facts about homelessness and how to avoid it.

Every year over 4000 young people between 16 and 17 turn to their local authority because they have nowhere safe and secure to stay.¹ The Scottish Council for Single Homeless (SCSH)² has developed the **home smart** pack³ to help young people learn the facts about leaving home, housing and homelessness.⁴

Today at Holyrood MSPs will debate a motion proposed by Linda Fabiani MSP welcoming the **home smart** initiative and calling for more to be done to prevent young people becoming homeless.

Linda Fabiani said:

"SCSH is doing a great job helping make sure that school leavers understand the issues surrounding homelessness and how to avoid it. I'm delighted so many schools in my area, and across Scotland, are participating in this campaign."

A prize draw for all schools registered with the campaign was won today by Balnacraig School⁵ in Perth. Teacher Jo Workman commented:

*"This issue is so important for the young people at our school. We are delighted with the **home smart** resource and have found it works really well in the class room."*

The school received a cheque for £200 to go towards books and sports equipment, courtesy of the campaign's sponsor, the affordable house builder Lovell.⁶

Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit at SCSH, commented:

*"The **home smart** lesson plans help young people understand the reality of leaving home and how, if you leave before you're ready, it's all too easy to end up homeless. They also let young people know about the wealth of advice and support that is available for them if things are difficult at home and they are starting to think moving on is the solution."*

For further information on **home smart** and SCSH's work in tackling homelessness across Scotland contact Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit (0131 226 4382 matt@scsh.org.uk) or Steven Morton, Events & Communications Manager (0131 226 4382 steven@scsh.org.uk)

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Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit at SCSH presents a cheque for £200 to Ewen Matthew, Head of Balnacraig School in Perth

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Notes

¹ 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

² **Scottish Council for Single Homeless** (SCSH) is the national membership organisation for individuals and organisations working with homeless people. www.scsch.org.uk SCSH's Housing Education Project has been providing resources for leaving home and housing education to Scottish schools for over ten years, including the award winning *I'm Offski!* video and lesson plans and *Streets Ahead*: the national guide to leaving home and housing for young people in Scotland.

³ SCSH produced and distributed the **home smart** lesson plan packs to secondary schools across Scotland to link in with last year's 40th anniversary of the BBC TV Play *Cathy Come Home* – a groundbreaking drama that put the issue of homelessness firmly on the map. Although homelessness services have vastly improved since then, with Scotland have one of the most progressive homelessness legislation in Europe, it remains a serious problem, affecting up to 60,000 household every year. Prevention, including education work in schools, is a key part of tackling the problem.

The materials in the lesson plan pack can be downloaded from: <http://www.leavinghome.info/homesmart/>

⁴ Young people can get advice and help on issues to do with difficulties at home, leaving home, housing and homelessness from: (i) www.leavinghome.info; (ii) their local council; (iii) Shelter's free housing advice helpline 0808 800 444. If possible, please publicise these contact points in your news story.

⁵ Balnacraig School, based in Perth, works secondary school age boys and girls from across Scotland who have a range of individual needs which cannot, at any particular time, be met within a mainstream school setting in their own community. All schools registering with **home smart** were entered into a prize draw to win £200 to be put towards books and/or sports equipment for the school.

⁶ Lovell (www.lovell.co.uk) are an affordable house builder who work across Scotland and the UK.