

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Young People and Homelessness: Conference on Education as a Means to Prevention**

Friday 31st August 2007 – there is no embargo on this new release

Teachers, social workers and housing professional from across Scotland are gathering in Edinburgh on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August to learn about how education can be used to help young people avoid housing crisis when they do leave home and, critically, avoid the blight of homelessness.

Leaving home is a challenge that everyone faces at some point in their lives and something more and more young people in Scotland say they want to learn about in school. And with over 4000 sixteen and seventeen year olds in Scotland each year finding the challenge so hard that they end up applying to their local council as homeless, it's a pressing problem. Many schools are responding positively to the challenge as Hilary Hall a teacher from East Lothian's Housing Education Project explains:

"Schools are beginning to recognise that housing education is an important part of preparing young people to be confident capable citizens. Most young people don't know what they're in for when they leave home for the first time. Discussing the issues in the classroom and providing information on where to get help and support can help them prepare for the move and avoid housing crisis."

Young people are also taking up the challenge of helping others to avoid housing problems by going back into the classroom themselves. Young 'peer educators' from Linkliving's Smart Move group in Falkirk will be speaking to delegates about how they engage with young people on leaving home and homelessness as well as showcasing their new DVD resource for use in schools.

Lessons in school are not a stand-alone solution to homelessness prevention but play an important part alongside a range of services such as youth advice projects, family mediation, befriending, mentoring and supported housing.

"With well over 4000 sixteen and seventeen year olds going to their local council as homeless each year, it's vital that we do all we can and as early as we can to let young people know about the risks of housing crisis and how to avoid them. When young people leave in a hurry and unprepared things can quickly spiral out of control and lead to homelessness. Knowing a bit more about the realities, as well as the services that are out there to help, can make a huge difference." Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit, Scottish Council for Single Homeless.

The Scottish Council for Single Homeless encourages young people to understand the pros and cons of living at home before making any decisions about moving on. For sixteen and seventeen years olds in particular, SCSH endorse what one young home leaver told us at a recent consultation event: "If it's safe for you to stay at home, stay as long as you can. It's really tough trying to make it on your own."

### **Media Contacts**

1. Main media contact:  
Matt Elton, Head of Youth Unit, Scottish Council for Single Homeless  
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2. Contact for Link Living Smart Move (young people going back in the classroom to teach the next generation about leaving home and housing issues):  
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### **Notes**

- a. The website **[www.leavinghome.info](http://www.leavinghome.info)** is packed with accessible and youth-friendly information about the whole process of leaving home, housing and avoiding homelessness.
- b. Young people and anyone with concerns about housing or homelessness can get free impartial advice from Shelter by calling the free phone number 0808 800 4444.
- c. Over 4000 sixteen and seventeen year olds presenting as homeless... Figures from 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](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/25151544/0)
- d. Scottish Council for Single Homeless (SCSH) is the national membership organisation for individuals and organisations working with homeless people. [www.scsch.org.uk](http://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. This is the second national conference on Leaving Home and Housing Education.
- e. For all inquiries about the conference or to book a place contact Scottish Council for Single Homeless on 0131 226 4382 email [enquiries@scsch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scsch.org.uk) A booking form and programme can be downloaded from [www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk) or at [www.leavinghome.info](http://www.leavinghome.info) the online guide to leaving home and housing for young people in Scotland.