

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

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Open Door Fife receive an award from Homepoint to recognise the quality of their housing advice. From left to right are: Carola Donald ODF, Judi Reid, Homepoint, Communities Scotland, Aileen Christie and Liane Horder ODF. [Full story page 3](#)

Action taken on behaviour

In just over two years since the main thrust of the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 came into force the Scottish Executive has recorded that:

- 12 dispersal orders have been used across Scotland;
- 21 closure orders were implemented;
- 1,908 neighbours had warnings issued, with 118 fixed penalty notices handed down in the worst situations;
- 170 boy-racers had their vehicles seized and more than 1,900 were warned about their actions;
- More than 3,000 fines were handed out in Tayside (to March 06) during a pilot of fixed penalty notices.

ASBOs

The use of antisocial behaviour orders, which originally came into effect through the Crime and Disorder Act, has also increased, with 200 issued in 2004-5, up by over 60 per cent on the previous year. ▶

Recognising young people's learning

A survey devised by Scottish Council for Single Homeless has been looking into ways that housing support projects recognise young people's learning and skills.

The study will be produced as a report, and will also contain a directory of different methods of recognising skills in young people.

These will range from award programmes such as Duke of Edinburgh, Youth Achievement and the Millennium Volunteer Awards, ASDAN, SVQ, SQA and City and Guilds and other project-related awards, to less formal methods also being used by projects working with

young people across Scotland.

A mix of case studies from Scottish projects, and the pros and cons of different approaches and their suitability for different organisations will be covered in the report.

An online survey was used to find out how many projects are using methods for recognising learning and skills, and which are most commonly used.

Feedback

Feedback was also being sought from agencies on how the young people involved react to the methods being used in projects, and how the methods benefit the young people.

So whether it is working

towards national qualifications or simply implementing project specific certificates, the report, which is due to be published in June, should help projects working with young people to identify new opportunities for recognising their learning and skills.

For further information or to order a copy of *Rewards for Learning: Nurturing Success in Young People with Housing Issues*, please contact Wendy Devall at SCSH by email: wendy@scsh.org.uk or by phone: 0131 226 4382.

■ Wendy will also be running a workshop on the survey's findings at this year's annual *Homing In* Conference on 1 June in Stirling Management Centre. ▶

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City's accreditation scheme for private landlords

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Capital landlord scheme

An initiative by the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Association of Landlords – The Edinburgh Accreditation Scheme for Private Renting – has been set up to help tenants find private landlords who have well-managed good-quality accommodation.

Landlords are offered help and training to improve standards and tenants are encouraged to adopt responsible behaviour towards their neighbours.

The Edinburgh scheme is based on the National Core Standards produced by Communities Scotland and Scottish Executive following consultation with landlords and consumer groups.

Membership is voluntary. Private landlords or their letting agents join the Accreditation Scheme by completing a registration form and agreeing to comply with the Scheme's Code of Standards. Landlords who use letting agents with an accredited management service will be "passported" into the Scheme, as will those who manage licensed HMO properties.

It is up to the Scheme to give approval. It can inspect properties and tenancy agreements and interview tenants to ensure that landlords are compiling with the Code. Anyone refused registration has a right of appeal to a tribunal. When accredited, landlords are registered and receive a certificate, a model short assured tenancy agreement and a tenants' pack.

Complaints that the Code has been breached must be in writing, setting out the problem and the timescale. The complainant is expected to have used any existing complaints

Council and owners get together

procedures first of all. The landlord/agent is then informed and has 7 working days to respond. Following an investigation, the landlord/letting agent must comply with any reasonable recommendations.

Recommendations could include asking the member to apologise in writing for their conduct, action or omission; caution them against any repetition; recommend a refund of all or part of fees or charges made; or recommend a change of procedures or documentation.

Appeal

They may suggest more appropriate ways to resolve the complaint such as mediation; to reprimand or severely reprimand, suspend or remove the landlord/letting agent from the Accreditation Scheme; or any combination of these or any other reasonable action which the scheme feels appropriate to support high standards within the industry and its membership.

There is a right of appeal if the landlord or letting agent considers any complaint to be incorrect. A tribunal or review panel will investigate complaints that can't be resolved by the Accreditation Scheme staff. The landlord/letting agent can attend and put their

case. The panel ultimately has the power to rescind membership of the Scheme.

Breaches of the Code fall into two categories: persistent minor management problems or minor breaches of physical standards, such as failure to repair a broken door, or properties not ready at the start of the tenancy. Where the landlord/letting agent has consistently failed to comply with the Code, they will be given 7-28 days to fix the problem, depending on its seriousness.

With serious problems such as harassment, assault, illegal eviction; failure to deal with problems within 24 hours where there is imminent risk to health; or failure to register with the Landlord Registration Scheme, then a response from the landlord/letting agent will be required within 7 days. The scheme may also decide to pass the complaint on to other authorities.

Compliance with the Code of Standards is a condition of qualifying for the scheme, and a landlord/letting agent can be disqualified if they don't deal with complaints or recommendations in a reasonable and satisfactory way, or if their actions are unlawful.

To be reinstated, the landlord/letting agent must show they have taken remedial action and are capable of meeting the Scheme's requirements again.

Further details from Edinburgh Landlord Accreditation Private Housing Services, City of Edinburgh Council, 23 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh EH1 3BH, 0131 529 7278 or visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/ela,

• *Scheme details abridged from the City of Edinburgh Council's publicity materials.* ▶

New core standards for the private sector

Most private sector landlords must register with the local authority as a "fit and proper person" to let property, under the Anti-social Behaviour etc. (Sc) Act 04. It is an offence to let any house without being registered, with fines of up to £5,000 if in breach.

The Housing (Sc) Act 06 gives private tenants the right to basic standards of accommodation and a right of appeal if repairs aren't done. The landlord must meet the Repairing Standard and before letting, must inspect the house and notify the tenant of any work needed.

The tenant must be given information about the Repairing Standard, ie the landlord's responsibility to keep the place wind and watertight; maintain the structure and exterior; the water, gas and electric installations; the fixtures and fittings; furnishings; and fire safety.

To help landlords and tenants the Executive has now launched the Scottish National Core Standards and Good Practice Guide for Private Landlords. These voluntary Standards contain a mix of legislation and good management practice. They can be used to develop Local Volun-

tary Accreditation Schemes such as the Edinburgh one described above.

The Core Standards cover:

- Communication with the tenant
- Equality issues, complaints and disputes
- Management of the tenancy
- Minimum property conditions
- Repairing standard
- Repairs and maintenance
- Facilities and fittings
- Heating, insulation and energy efficiency
- Health, safety and home security features. ▶

Fife advice project hits the heights

Housing advice being delivered within the Home4Good Centres across Fife is now of a consistently high standard throughout the area.

Open Door Fife and Levenmouth Homelessness Trust, who also operate under the banner of CHAT – Community Housing Advice Team – are two out of only fifteen organisations across Scotland who have been accredited with Homepoint Quality Standards for Housing Information and Advice Services.

Although Levenmouth Homelessness Trust were accredited some time ago, Open Door Fife were officially presented with the award at a ceremony held in Dunfermline at the end of January. Judi Reid from Communities Scotland, presenting the award, described it as “a very rigorous and difficult process”. The advantage for the people of Fife is that anyone with a housing difficulty

Anyone with a housing difficulty in the area can now get the best advice, advocacy and representation available

can now get the best advice, advocacy and representation that is available.

Across Fife, there are three Home4Good centres with a fourth due to open early this year. These centres accommodate both Fife Council and voluntary services, and provide ease of access to different services under one roof.

Both Open Door Fife and Levenmouth Homelessness Trust are planning a merger this year and housing advice is an important strand of the services

currently delivered by both organisations.

Having a high standard, independent housing advice service which is integrated within the Home4Good network is obviously a plus for Fife.

Many people can get into difficulty due to a number of factors such as unemployment, ill health, problems with their landlord, or getting into debt, and as a result can be at risk of losing their homes.

Facing up to this can be a daunting task for anyone. But speaking to a member of the specialist CHAT service will help individuals to understand the options that are available to them. It can also help to put their situation into perspective and can be the first step towards finding a resolution.

For further information on the service contact Carole Simpson, Operations Manager, Open Door Fife, tel 01383 314330. ▶

Tap into open access

Trainers and learners will be able to tap into hours of Open University resources as the organisation launches a free open access Internet service.

Under the £5.65m OpenLearn project, the OU aims to make 5,000 hours' worth of material available by April 2008, not only for learners, but for educators to adapt and use for their own purposes. Backed by a US charitable foundation, the website will initially have 900 hours of study in a variety of topics using what is called the Moodle virtual learning environment.

Free

The OU says it is the first British higher education institution to make such resources freely available online on this scale, although there are other similar projects in the US and Japan.

Professor David Vincent, the Open University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor said the philosophy of open access and knowledge sharing matched the founding principles of the OU. “We want to lead the learning revolution... OpenLearn is a huge step towards this aim.”

Professor Andy Lane, Director of OpenLearn, said: “We are encouraging learners to become self-reliant but also to use online communities to support their learning. We are making it possible for educators to download and adapt our materials for their own purposes. All this will teach us a huge amount about how people can learn and teach online.” ▶

Homepoint: setting the standards

Homepoint is part of Communities Scotland, and is responsible for the Scottish National Standards for Housing Information and Advice.

The Standards are designed for providers and funders in the voluntary, private and statutory sectors with an interest in developing effective information and advice services.

People access information and advice from a range of agencies. These agencies range from those that deliver a service specialising in specific topics of advice, for example, housing or money or welfare rights, income maximisation and generalist advice services offering their services to all

members of the public, to agencies where information and advice form only a small part of their work.

Homepoint has identified three grades of service, referred to as Types I, II and III. The Quality Standards are backed up by a system of accreditation.

You can find further information about Homepoint, the National Standards for housing Information and Advice and the requirements, at www.communitiesscotland.org.uk. Click on Homepoint, from where you can download the full Manual. ▶



The **Network** and **Homing In** provide the ideal forum for news of youth housing initiatives, problems and events in your area. *All ideas and feedback welcome.*

Contact the **SYHN** c/o SCSH, 5th floor, Wellgate House, 200 Cowgate, Edinburgh EH1 1NQ, tel 0131-226 4382 fax 0131-225 4382.



getting on the network is easy!

Age bias call

AGE discrimination in employment is illegal. The Employers Forum on Age is campaigning against the 18 to 21-year minimum wage banding, saying it discriminates on the grounds of age as 18 to 21-year-olds are paid less simply because of their age and irrespective of their capabilities or responsibilities. They have called on the government to equalise all minimum wage standards for those over 18.

SYHN website

THE website address for the Scottish Youth Housing Network is www.syhn.org.uk. You will find information about the Network, how to join, training information, course availability and booking forms, briefings and the programme for this year's *Homing In* Conference, which will be held on Friday 1 June in Stirling.

Training details

SYHN training courses for 2007-2008 are currently being

noticeboard

Homing In Conference 2007

Book early for this year's Homing In Conference at Stirling Management Centre, University Campus, Stirling on Friday 1 June. Cost is £105 to subscribers or £165 to non-subscribers. It's easy to subscribe and costs only £45 or £55 depending on type of organisation.

There is a downloadable conference programme and booking form at www.syhn.org.uk.

For conference bookings and membership enquiries contact 0131 226 4382.

organised. Again, there will be a mix of core skills and some new topics too. The programme will be mailed out in early summer and posted on the website.

Conference dates

■ The National Health and Homelessness Conference 2007 will take place this June. For further details contact Robert@scsh.org.uk.

■ The Scottish Housing and Support Conference 2007 will

take place on 4 and 5 October in Dunblane Hydro Hotel.

CIH guide

THE CHARTERED Institute of Housing in Scotland has published a useful Guide to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006. It costs £20 incl p&p. To order phone 024 7685 1752.

Moving pictures

BY 2009 a state of the art travelling cinema which can take up to 100 people will visit areas of

the Borders and Dumfries & Galloway with little or no cinema provision. The Screen Machine joins the two existing mobile cinemas operating in the Highlands and Islands.

Apprentice scheme

ON THE heels of announcing plans to raise the school leaving age to 18 within 5 years, a new Young Apprentice scheme is also being considered by the First Minister.

In the report, *Doing Something Special for Scotland*, it is proposed that pupils aged 14 or over would be able to take part-time jobs to develop their skills. An overhaul of the Education Maintenance Allowance to include part time workers would also be looked at.

Family benefits up

CHILD Benefit for the first child will be increased to £20 by April 2010. And April 2008 will see an increase in Child Tax Credits by £150 a year more than earnings indexation, to £2,080 a year. ▶

Homelessness prevention

Evaluation of Homelessness Prevention Activities in Scotland is the title of useful new research by Heriot-Watt University for the Scottish Executive. It can be downloaded from www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/03/26095144/0.

The research analyses the homelessness prevention activities of local authorities (LAs) and agency partners, to help authorities assess the usefulness of different approaches and establish the basis for monitoring these activities. Here are some of the key findings about young people.

Many homelessness strategies are targeted on groups with a high risk of homelessness, acknowledging the need to address possible homelessness of tenants threatened with eviction, and individuals being discharged from institutions, eg care leavers.

Two sorts of measures have been widely developed: early warning procedures so that homelessness staff are aware of cases early enough to act before loss of accommodation; and policies and practices to prevent eviction or arrange planned rehousing.

special briefing

At least half of LAs have protocols to warn staff about the impending discharge of prisoners, long-stay hospital patients and young people in council care, and a few LAs routinely offer outreach housing advice services in prison settings.

Most strategies covered youth homelessness, using family mediation and support/independent living skills projects. Some young people in the survey who had been "helped to return to the parental home" negatively viewed the council's action in facilitating this, as denying them access to social housing whilst providing little mediation or ongoing support.

Some said they had been advised by staff that the alternative of institutional accommodation would expose

them to unpalatable behaviour from other residents and could put them at risk of being drawn into undesirable lifestyles.

Outreach support provided to young people to promote sustainability of council tenancies was generally viewed very positively and the recipients were optimistic about their ability to retain such tenancies.

Most LAs run schemes to provide furniture to homeless people taking on social tenancies, and operate rent deposit guarantee schemes to help homeless people obtain private tenancies. But the prime limitation on helping 18-25 year olds was the Single Room Rent restriction on Housing Benefit payments.

Where private rents are above the level usually met by Housing Benefit, LAs can make Discretionary Housing Payments to bridge the gap. The researchers found that despite widespread awareness that HB limits constrain the potential scale of RDG schemes, some authorities substantially underspend their DHP allocations. ▶