

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 40 May 2002

Task force backed

All 59 recommendations from the Homelessness Task Force have been fully endorsed by the Scottish Executive. Speaking at the launch of the final report, former Social Justice Minister, Iain Gray, pledged that the Parliament would now take these findings forward.

The recommendations include expanding the definition of priority need as services and accommodation are provided. "By 2012, the priority need distinction should be abolished by extending the relevant duties to all those assessed as homeless."

A phased approach is needed. As a first step, priority need should include all those assessed as homeless and under 18, or have experienced domestic abuse, or otherwise vulnerable under the code of guidance.

Next, it should include others deemed vulnerable, and those assessed as homeless under a set age – it suggests 25. Its target is 2007/8 if councils can cope with the expansion. ▶

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Young people from HELP join staff in receiving Investors in People status. See page 2

A transforming time in Dundee

Young people in Dundee have been giving their local service providers a truly "transforming" experience!

Transformer Training is a course for service providers in Dundee who have contact with young people. The training is delivered by Transformers – young people aged between 17 and 21 who have been trained and employed by the The Corner Young People's Health and Information Project.

Service providers gain a greater understanding of the needs of young people using their service and begin to identify where they could change the service to meet those needs more effectively.

Facilitated by two Transformers with support from Corner staff, the course is highly participative. It does

not aim to "teach" service providers how to work with young people. Instead, it provides opportunities for each to share views and experiences, and to suggest possible ways forward to improve communication between them.

Suitability

Transformer Training is suitable for anyone in contact with young people in their daily work, from those who work mostly with young people – teachers, youth workers – to those who provide a public service, for example housing officers, benefits agency staff, healthcare workers.

Since the training was launched last year sessions have been delivered to multi-agency staff groups attending a Health Issues in the Community course; participants at last

year's Homing In conference; local healthcare workers; and Dundee libraries staff.

Evaluation of the sessions indicates that participants gain a lot from the experience as well as enjoying this unique approach to training: "It was good to be active in a session. It was not at all threatening – young people do not bite!"

"Provided by young people – essential if we are to provide useful, friendly services."

"Young people do have issues to address and do want to be involved – so listen!"

"I think it's great to involve young people as they are the best source of information about themselves." To sum it up in one word "Transforming!"

If you work in Dundee please contact Sharon Bushnell or Fiona Bryson at The Corner on 01382 206060. ▶

Tenancy success for Dunoon HELP

Dunoon HELP Project targets young people between 16 and 25 years of age who have been accepted as homeless, or are moving into their first tenancy, or are in their first tenancy but struggling to cope. It works within the rural area of Cowal and Bute and provides housing, employment and life skills support. To date it has worked with over 80 young people. In this time, no young person has lost their tenancy.

The result of a successful bid to the Scottish Executive backed by Argyll and Bute Council, HELP began in 1999. Recognising that no support service existed for young homeless people or for first-time tenants, the proposal was drawn up after consultation with relevant agencies and young people. Run by an inter-agency management committee it employs a part time co-ordinator and three sessional staff.

Targets

In partnership with Housing and Social Work the project has also entered into an agreement to provide four supported-accommodation flats. These flats are located within the Dunoon area and are fully furnished. The flats will be used to support young people towards their first tenancy and will provide a much needed "third" option.

At present young people who become homeless are put into bed and breakfast accommodation and then straight into their first tenancy. The flats will create a transition period where the issues around taking on a tenancy will be tackled.

Social inclusion

HELP is also an intensive gateway provider of New Deal. It targets the Social Inclusion areas of

- Ardenslate
- Milton
- The Glebe

In addition to the work the project undertakes with young people, HELP is also committed to providing its staff with personal development support and training. Despite limited resources, of key importance is the development of the skills of

its team to the mutual benefit of individuals and of the project.

Investors in People

HELP is delighted that it has recently been accredited with Investors in People status, and is determined to continue to make a visible commitment to its team and to promote good practice within the service.

With this in mind the project holds regular training workshops on various subjects including benefits and "changing rooms" workshops where young people can learn how to decorate and improve their new homes on a low budget. It has joined the Scottish Youth Housing Network and regularly sends staff to Network training days. The project has also held a joint training day with Paisley Threads, a similar project working in the Paisley SIP area.

Positive outcomes

The project are pleased with the positive outcomes they have so far managed to achieve:

- No young person has lost their tenancy since the project began.
- Partnership links have been made with all agencies working with young people, which has without doubt created an open door policy for young people working with the project.
- HELP is involved with the benefits agency as a One stakeholder and a member of the Benefits Customer Panel, which meets in Greenock.
- It is also linked to the local school as a member of the DGS Health Committee. The Co-ordinator regularly goes along to speak to the fifth year Social Education classes.

HELP recognises the positive opportunities which arise from the Social Inclusion Partnership to provide and pilot new and innovative ways of working with young people, and that good links with all agencies are the key to its success.

For more information contact Janet LaManque, Project Co-ordinator, Dunoon HELP Project, c/o Housing Services, Manse Avenue, Dunoon, tel: 01369 703735. ▶

Housing hopes of disabled youth

The aspirations of young disabled people living with their families or in a care environment are being explored in research which has been commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The research is Scotland-wide and focuses on the aspirations of young people aged between 18 and 30 who have either a physical or a learning disability.

Key questions are:

- What kinds of housing do young disabled people want to live in;
- what helps them to achieve their aspirations;
- what are the barriers to them achieving their aspirations?

The views of parents and carers will also be explored.

Although there is considerable research literature on the transition of young people to independent living this has not typically considered the particular needs of disabled young people.

Initiatives

If you have information or experience that would be of value to the research, Jo Dean of the University of Glasgow would like to hear from you.

In particular, Jo is looking for details of specific initiatives which relate to disabled young people and housing. Her email is j.dean@socsci.gla.ac.uk or you can phone her on 0141 330 26004.

■ You will find a wealth of research publications and other housing-related information on the web site of the University's Department of Urban Studies at www.gla.ac.uk/urbanstudies. ▶

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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.

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getting on the network is easy!

■ SPECIAL FEATURE

One-stop shop for Fife



Fife's unique one stop shop offers council and housing association properties

The alleviation of homelessness and poverty throughout Fife is the ambitious aim that the Lomonds Trust has set itself. A church-based organisation, it was founded in 1993. Since then, with the involvement of other service providers in the area, it has set up and manages the services which are described below.

Cairn Centre

The newest initiative to be developed by the trust, the Cairn Centre houses a new one-stop shop – the Housing Advisory Service. It also has a Charity Shop and the Nu 2 U Service delivering donated furniture and goods within the Fife area to those referred from voluntary and statutory agencies.

Housing Advisory Service

The Housing Advisory Service has an open door policy where clients can drop in for advice on housing benefit, debts, re-allocations and other housing enquiries.

Fife Council Homefinders and Kingdom Housing Association are using this service to advertise vacancies in their stock, offering clients a potentially quicker route into permanent accommodation. Vacant proper-

ties are displayed in the window and basic but useful information, application forms and lists of properties on offer are freely available, providing a one-stop shop for anyone who needs any of these services.

This scheme is not only unique to Fife, it is unique to Scotland as a whole. Servite Housing Association, Hillcrest Housing Association and Canmore Housing Association also make use of the project's services.

Oasis Project

Operated in partnership with Fife Council, the Oasis Project is a purpose built residential hostel in Kirkcaldy with sixteen bedrooms equipped to provide short and long-term supported accommodation, and staffed by professionally qualified workers 24 hours a day, 52 weeks a year.

The Oasis Project now has a number of scatter flats in and around Fife which are supported by fully qualified support workers, helping tenants to move into mainstream properties and sustain their own tenancies. Additionally there are now eight mainstream housing properties, enabling social inclusion as an extension of the Oasis Project.

Fife Keyfund

Private sector landlords often ask for a cash deposit in case of damage or a month's rent in advance as security before they will agree to let a property. In response the Lomonds Trust has set up the Fife Keyfund, a rent deposit guarantee scheme open to non-priority homeless or those on a low income.

The Keyfund helps by providing the landlord with a deposit/guarantee or rent advance. If there is damage at the end of the tenancy the landlord can claim against the guarantee, up to an agreed amount.

Young people can apply if they are: 18 years of age or over; on a low wage and/or benefits; homeless or threatened with homelessness; and where the Council has no statutory duty to offer housing.

The Keyfund will contact the landlord to explain the situation and check if they are willing to accept the guarantee. Next, the Keyfund development worker will visit the property to take an inventory or check the existing inventory, and check to ensure standards are of an acceptable quality to meet the individual housing needs.

At the end of the tenancy the development worker will check the condition of the property and whether the landlord has a claim against the guarantee. If not, the young person may be eligible for a further guarantee on their current accommodation or a new property.

The Keyfund also helps with budgeting, resources and benefits.

Locations

Central Fife Keyfund c/o Cairn Centre, 83-85 Dunniker Road, Kirkcaldy KY1 2QW, Tel/Fax: 01592 201849.

North East Fife Keyfund, Volunteer House, 69-73 Crossgate, Cupar, KY15 5AS, Tel/Fax: 01334 413215.

West Fife Keyfund, c/o Open Door, James Street, Dunfermline, KY12 7QE. Tel/Fax: 01383 314391.

Housing Advisory Service, Cairn Centre, Dunniker Road, Kirkcaldy KY1 2QW on 01592 644060 – contact David Hutchison.

The Lomonds Trust are always keen to take on new volunteers. Training is given and anyone interested should contact Project Manager David Dempster at Oasis for an informal chat on 01592 644060. ▶

Fraud

BENEFIT fraud investigators now have the power to get organisations like banks, universities and insurance companies to provide information on their customers and students when fraud is suspected.

There will be large cash penalties against employers committing fraud. And local authorities and the Department for Work and Pensions will be able to enforce joint penalties against those committing fraud.

A new Code of Practice sets out that there must be "reasonable grounds for suspecting benefit fraud" before action can be taken.

Helpline

THE Domestic Abuse Helpline is at 0800 027 1234, from 10am until 10pm, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Abuse protection

A POWER of arrest can now be attached to any interdict granted by the court to prevent abuse. The Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001 is the first Act from a Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

Anyone being abused will be

noticeboard

SYHN training – advance details

Beginners guide to housing law: 11 Sep, Stirling

Welfare bens – personal income: 17 Oct, Edinburgh

Welfare bens – paying for accommodation: 18 Oct, Edinburgh

Young people with mild learning difficulties: 7 Nov, Glasgow

Working with challenging behaviour: 5 Dec, Edinburgh

Working with young drug users: 30 Jan, Stirling

Young people and mental health: 20 Feb, Edinburgh

Working with survivors of sexual abuse: 13 Mar, Glasgow

able to use this Act – people who have never lived with their abuser, people in same sex relationships, relatives, work colleagues or neighbours.

Surfing

CHEAP internet access points will soon be found in hairdressers, shops, pubs, doctors' surgeries and bus stations across Scotland. The Executive wants to tackle the "digital divide" in Scotland, which lags behind the UK average.

They will fund up to four computers per venue with line rental and internet service provision for two years. Providers must guarantee public access

for at least 40 hours a week and charge surfers no more than a pound an hour.

Jobcentre Plus

THE Benefits Agency and the Employment Service have gone. They are replaced by Jobcentre Plus and the Pension Service. The original Jobcentre Plus pilot schemes will continue across the UK, with a further 225 offices being created this October. Claimants not in a pilot area stay with their usual office, re-branded as Jobcentre Plus.

Lone parents

New regulations mean that work-focused interviews for

lone parents in pilot areas will take place every six months for any lone parent with a child aged three years or more.

Hospital stays

BENEFITS will no longer be cut after the first six weeks of a hospital stay. Instead, benefits will continue to be paid for up to 13 weeks when someone is an inpatient in hospital.

Noise

LEGAL Services Agency has produced a new leaflet on dealing with noise. You can download *Noisy Neighbours* free at www.lsa.org.uk or phone to order on 0141 353 3354.

Briefing

SCOTTISH Youth Housing Network are holding two briefing sessions on the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 this August, in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Dates will be published soon.

Wanted

ARTICLES, noticeboard items and good quality photographs for future issues of *Homing In*. Contact Norma Jones at 0131 538 8191 or email syhn@joa.co.uk.

StepUP work-guarantee pilot starts

Thousands of long-term unemployed people will be expected to take jobs at the national minimum wage under a £40m trial scheme announced by the Department of Work and Pensions.

Lone parents and people on sickness and disability benefits are among the groups who have been targeted for the new programme. Called StepUP, the programme guarantees work for those who cannot yet get a job.

Private firms, local authorities and other public-sector bodies would provide the "real jobs", with the same employment rights, holidays and in-work benefits as other employees.

In return, the Government would subsidise the employers by paying participants on the scheme for up to a year at the national minimum wage rate.

The scheme applies to people in the trial areas who are still unem-

benefits briefing

ployed six months after completing a New Deal programme. They will be offered a choice of jobs but will face loss of benefits if they refuse to accept any of them.

Those with severe difficulties, such as mental illness or drug and alcohol problems will not be liable to these sanctions.

The StepUP scheme began its UK trials in April, with the Scottish test-bed being East Ayrshire. StepUP will be extended next year to include Dundee. Overall, the Government expects to fund up to 5,000 jobs through the scheme.

Rapid re-claim

In another move, new procedures to enable the rapid re-claim of certain benefits for unemployed people were announced at the end of last year. Initially, all claimants of jobseeker's allowance and income support in work-focused interview areas including Jobcentre Plus Pathfinders and ONE were covered.

Since April the scheme has been extended to all claimants in this position. Rapid re-claim will make the claiming procedure much quicker and easier for anyone who is re-claiming benefit after a short period off benefit.

Anyone who has broken their claim for less than 12 weeks will now be able to re-claim the benefit using a shortened claim form.

And anyone re-claiming JSA should also be able to have a jobseeker's interview arranged more speedily than usual. ▶