

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 42 October 2002

Streets Ahead launched

Young people were the focus of attention at the launch of Streets Ahead in Motherwell on October 7.

Scottish Executive Minister Margaret Curran was joined by local councillors to hear four young people with recent experience of housing crisis speak about their contribution to the project. Ian, William, Ryan and Therese were part of a small group who offered advice and ideas at every stage.

Project Worker Rosie Lewis described how many of her ideas about the guide were challenged. For example, the young "consultants" were insistent that no logos or bright colours should be used on the case. A cool but anonymous black was preferred.

Also at the launch were students from Braidhurst High. They had been introduced to the guide during a housing education session the previous week. They were impressed with the guide and said it had made them realise just how big an undertaking that leaving home can be. [More details in Noticeboard.](#)

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Youth mediation in South Ayrshire

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Margaret Curran MSP joins young people and local councillors to launch Streets Ahead

Homelessness Bill out for comment

Hot on the heels of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, which extended the duties local authorities have to people facing homelessness, comes further help.

The Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Bill focuses on four key areas: priority need; intentionality; local connection; and repossession.

The Bill proposes a phased approach to expanding priority need categories. Initially it includes 16 and 17 year olds; 18 to 20 year olds at risk of sexual or financial exploitation or serious misuse of alcohol, any drug or volatile substance; those who were looked after by a local authority at school leaving age; and those at risk of violence because of race, colour, sexual orientation, ethnic or national origins; or harassment; or domestic abuse.

At present, those in priority need but intentionally homeless only get a "minimum package" of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance towards finding their own accommodation. The Bill also removes the *duty* to investigate intentionality, replacing it with a *power* to investigate, allowing local authorities discretion.

Tenancy offer

Where a person is assessed as intentionally homeless local authorities will have to offer a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy, with support so that it can be converted to a full Scottish Secure Tenancy after a year if successfully sustained.

Should the short SST fail the tenant's right to permanent accommodation remains suspended, but the local authority will still have an ongoing duty to

provide accommodation on an occupancy basis along with support. A further short SST can be offered so that the tenant still has the opportunity for access to permanent accommodation.

The Bill also changes the rules on local connection. It brings in a power for Ministers to prevent an authority from referring a case or having a case referred to it on the basis of local connection.

In private-sector eviction cases a court would have to take into account whether the arrears were caused by delays in or failure in paying housing benefit.

And landlords would have to tell the local authority when court action was being raised against a tenant for eviction, giving the chance to act early to prevent homelessness.

Youth mediation service leads way

North Lanark advice leaflets

Recent research on the need for family contact in youth homelessness shows that being homeless can be very damaging for vulnerable youngsters. Isolation from family and friends can exacerbate things and loneliness can increase the likelihood of mental illness.

South Ayrshire Council is keen to promote healthy relationships between young people and their families where it is safe and reasonable, where there is a risk of homelessness or where a young person is homeless. Two years ago its Throughcare Support Team appointed a social worker specifically to mediate between young people, parents, carers and extended family where homelessness existed.

Aimed at young people 15-21 years, an open referral system operates and as mediation becomes more familiar young people and their families have self-referred, keen to find ways to improve family relationships when living away from home.

Most referrals come from the Youth Housing Support Group which has representatives from housing, social work and education support. It monitors and reviews all young people accommodated in homeless services and provides housing support. In the words of a Homeless Section member: "The family mediation role has benefited young people in facilitating a return home and/or forging family links. Cross agency working has also promoted the needs of vulnerable young people through the adoption of a common philosophy as well as de-stigmatising homelessness as a problem."

Whilst other mediation services are aimed at couple separation, neighbourhood disputes and community mediation, this service is seen as an integral process in helping young people re-build or forge links in relationships that have broken down as a consequence of homelessness.

Young people need continued contact with family and friends whilst in homeless accommodation even if a return home is not possible. Mediation can play a key role in rebuilding relationships and extending social networks to young people

who require assistance in making sense of their past and future events.

The service uses principles common to many mediation practitioners, but the focus recognises that the key to effective change lies with the family and the young person. An objective, impartial third person – the mediator – represents the views of both parties; makes discreet voluntary contact over a few weeks; helps define the purpose of contact; and reflects back observations of family based work.

The mediator also develops group work and workshop events through direct work with the young person and family, agreeing the issues and the action necessary to prevent total family breakdown. For some, a family meeting is the best way to tackle things but is not always the way families prefer. "Shuttle" mediation is helpful when young people find it difficult to come face to face with their family at first. The ultimate goal is to reach an agreed action plan which is reviewed in subsequent discussions with the young person, family or carer.

Case study

DAVID IS 17 and lives in a B&B. Homelessness was caused by aggressive behaviour and alcohol misuse. His parents were very unhappy about his living arrangements, and though keen for him to come home were anxious about his continued aggression.

In a family meeting he was able to tell his parents that his behaviour had been brought about by feelings that they did not listen to him and took his younger brother's side in disputes. His parents acknowledged what he felt and agreed that communication and trust were matters to be considered. A range of support was offered to the family and ultimately resulted in David returning home. "The family meeting helped us to make appropriate decisions and prioritise our thoughts."

To find out more, contact Andrew Craig, Mediation Officer, South Ayrshire Council, Throughcare Support Team, 1 Holmston Road, Ayr, or phone 01292 612092. ▶

The Youth Unit of Scottish Council for Single Homeless has published two new leaflets for young homeless people in the North Lanarkshire area. Produced in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council, they give information for those under 21 who need advice, support or accommodation. A specialised leaflet is also available for those who have been in care.

The booklets cover who to contact for housing advice and what to do in an emergency. Advice is also given on things to remember at housing interviews and on the legal position of homeless people. Both booklets list useful local and national telephone numbers.

SCSH is keen to develop partnerships with other local authorities to produce similar materials. Contact John Woods at SCSH on 0131 226 4382 or email to johnw@scsh.demon.co.uk. ▶

Bridges on move

Bridges Project is moving its central base and the Access and Advice Service to new premises at Bogpark Road, Musselburgh EH21 6RT on Wednesday 20 November.

Contact 0131 665 1621, fax 0131 665 3179, email mail@bridgesproject.org.uk, web: www.bridgesproject.org.uk. The Freephone for young people remains at 0800 068 5554.

The Education and Training Service, Jumpstart and Way to Work will stay temporarily at Mitchell's Close, Haddington EH41 3NB, tel 01620 825024 until refurbishment is complete. ▶

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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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SPECIAL FEATURE



Young people join project co-ordinator Paula Tennie and Kashif Bashir from Equal Voices to promote the Citizenship Programme which runs in secondary schools across Fife

An equal voice in Fife

Equal Voices is a positive youth movement designed to give black and ethnic minority (BEM) young people in Fife a voice and encouragement to provide positive images of themselves, writes Development Worker Kashif Bashir. The project encourages black and white young people to collaborate and develop shared values and discuss issues that concern and affect them. Funding is from the Home Office Race Equality Unit and Fife Community Safety Partnership.

Kashif explained: "We aim to challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions that surround BEM youth. The project has allowed us to connect with young people through music, multimedia training, international trips, and development work so those who feel disconnected by society feel empowered to contribute."

Kashif continued: "Our group is multicultural – members or their parents originate from places like Pakistan, India, China, Africa, Spain, Germany, England and Scotland. We aim to harness youthfulness, so they can use their own experiences, drive, confidence and identity through creative expression and their web-site to build bridges to connect other youth communities and help make Fife a better place.

Equal Voices has a multi-racial group

called Equal Futures. Aged 16-22, they meet weekly to discuss issues that challenge them. They are producing their own newsletter to inform a wider audience of the positive youth work in Fife. A group member said: "We are proud and celebrate the wide range of cultures in our group, and are looking forward to taking the lead in welcoming young asylum seekers to Fife."

The project has connected with young people through music to provide a platform for them to express themselves. A mobile recording studio moved from Dunfermline to Cupar to Kirkcaldy, showing that an integrated resource can be equally accessible.

Role play

In its Citizenship Programme Equal Voices runs day sessions in local secondary schools. The idea is not to discuss racism but to focus on the positive aspects of identity and citizenship through role play, images, arts, multi-media and discussion groups. Pupils are encouraged to apply critical strategies to issues of identity, and encouraged to develop skills and be creative and responsible as well as gain an understanding of different identities and cultures.

Equal Voices have delivered four sessions in Kirkcaldy High to second year pupils, tackling issues around asylum seekers, immi-

gration, Scottish Heritage and much more.

To monitor effectiveness a questionnaire asked students what they had learned: "It was interesting to learn about cultures, I've learned blacks are the same as whites"; "I did enjoy today because I now know what other people go through to be where I am"; "I enjoyed it and learned not to judge people by their appearance"; "The refugee game gave us a taste of reality".

The Youth Counselling Service Agency (Glasgow) are also working with the project, and opinions on access to services will be sought. Kashif comments: "At present it is not clear what health services BEM youths access or what they perceive as priorities. They come to Equal Voices and YCSA once a fortnight – they could be coping with depression, self harm, abuse, addiction, stress, bereavement, personality issues, social issues, racism, and emotional isolation. There are also people with dyslexia and learning problems.

"When coupled with unemployment, homelessness, care leavers, poverty and physical illness, clearly there will be major problems for individuals and also agencies who try to provide services for them."

A Citizenship Programme CD ROM is available from Equal Voices at 01592 269092. ▶

Streets Ahead

COPIES OF the new guide are now available from the Leaving Home and Housing Education Project at SCSH at £6+p&p or £5 + p&p for orders of 1,000 or more. It has been developed for use within housing education programmes, and to help local authorities meet their duties under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Free training is also offered to those working with young people to maximise the impact of Streets Ahead and housing education in your area. For further information contact 0131 226 4382. (see front page).

Seminar

ANTI Social Behaviour: Strategies for Young People is the subject of a seminar being run by the Chartered Institute of Housing, CoSLA and the Scottish Executive on 24 October in Edinburgh. Topics include acceptable behaviour contracts; diversionary activities; supporting young people; whether ASBOs are appropriate for young people; and youth strategies in a rural setting. £160 or

noticeboard

SYHN training – new course

SYHN is running a new course targeted at everyone who needs to communicate more effectively with young people with mild learning difficulties. So whether you job involves information-giving, advice and assistance, support or accommodation provision, this course is for you. It runs on 7 November in Glasgow. Full details from 0131 226 4382.

£80 for voluntary organisations + vat. More details from CIH on 0131 225 4544.

Standards

THE National Care Standards have been distributed across Scotland to service providers, voluntary organisations, local authorities, health boards and others. The standards include criminal justice services, supported accommodation services, housing support services, care homes for those with physical impairments, learning disabilities or with mental health problems.

You can download all of the Standards free from the website at www.carecommission.com.

Free copies to service providers and service users from the Care Commission Sponsorship Branch, Scottish Executive Health Department, 1-R St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG, 0131 244 3520 or 3699.

Rough sleepers

A REPORT by the Scottish Executive shows that the average number of people sleeping rough on any given night rose from 64 to 87 between October and May last year. And on one targeted night last October, 117 people were sleeping rough while more than 180 bed spaces were unfilled across Scotland. The research found

that in all but five authorities, available accommodation was sufficient to meet, or exceed demand.

Funding guide

THE Youth Funding Guide has now been updated and is in two sections. The first offers practical advice on fundraising for youth-related causes, fundraising for projects, writing applications, and raising money from the public.

The second section details sources of funding covering the National Lottery, grant-making trusts, companies, national, regional and local government, and the European Union. £16.95 from the Directory of Social Change, 24 Stephenson Way, London SW1 2DP, tel: 020 7209 4949. or email: info@d-s-c.demon.co.uk.

Wanted

ARTICLES, news, noticeboard items and good quality photographs for future issues of *Homing In*. Contact Norma Jones on 0131 538 8191, fax to 0131 477 7042 or email syhn@joa.co.uk. ▶

Care leavers see policy making in action

The start of September saw a flurry of activity around national policy developments for young people leaving care in Scotland. The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum and other Scottish organisations welcomed the publication of the long awaited report from the Scottish Executive's Throughcare & Aftercare Working Group, writes Alison Caulfield Dow.

The report follows on from the first Scottish leaving care research, undertaken by the University of York and published in June.

The Working Group's report sets out proposals to bring in new responsibilities and improved services for young people leaving residential and foster care by April 1 2004. This will ensure that Scotland keeps up with similar developments in England & Wales under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and further promotes the support that young people leaving care are entitled to under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

special briefing

The report was officially launched on the same day as a debate in the Scottish Parliament on throughcare & aftercare for young people. Cathy Jamieson MSP, Minister for Education and Young People, invited a group of young people's representatives to meet her beforehand. They shared their views on what needs to be improved and what support is required. Everyone was pleased that the minister is obviously keen to listen to young people and take into account what they say. As Tracey said: "She seemed aware of the issues that were raised."

Afterwards, there was an opportunity to go along to the Scottish Parliament to listen to what the minister

and MSPs from all parties had to say during the debate. All of the MSPs present agreed that it is crucial for services to improve so that young people leaving care are well-supported into adulthood and can have the same chances in life as other young people. There was some disappointment because more MSPs didn't stay to attend this debate. As Andy pointed out: "When the other MSPs came back before the debate had even ended, they were all talking. It was a disgrace!" It was certainly an experience to see policy making of this kind "in action"!

There will now be a period of consultation on the report's proposals. The Scottish Executive are requesting comments by December 2. The Forum together with other organisations will make sure that young people can have their say too.

More information and copies of the report and York University's research are on the Forum's website at: www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk. ▶