

# homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 52 August 2005

## New Code advice

**C**hapter 7 of the new Code of Guidance on Homelessness gives the following advice to local authorities considering whether a young person is intentionally homeless:

"Failed tenancies are a common occurrence for young people when they first leave home, especially if they have not had much in the way of support to sustain a tenancy. Local authorities should consider the position sensitively and only make a finding of intentionality where there is compelling evidence that the applicant deliberately refused to accept advice or engage with agencies who could provide support and were aware of the consequences of their actions."

"A young person who has a clash of lifestyle with his or her parents should not automatically be considered intentionally homeless and equal weight should be given to both the young person's views and the views of the parent(s)."

See [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005).



Participants at this year's Homing In conference. *Special feature on page 3*

## Dunfermline centre opens its doors

**C**ommunities minister Malcolm Chisholm MSP was in Dunfermline last month to launch its Home4Good Centre. He congratulated the partners involved – Fife Council's Housing Service, the Scottish Executive, Communities Scotland, Canmore Housing Association and Open Door Fife.

"Preventing and tackling homelessness in Scotland takes the efforts of many people working together to provide support and opportunities to enable people to rebuild their lives," he said.

This is the third such centre in Fife, with others operating in Cupar and Leven, and two planned for Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes. By 2007 these centres will be the main point of access

to homeless services from Fife Council and its partner organisations, particularly in the voluntary sector.

Describing the new centre as "a milestone" in the development of its homelessness strategy, Fife Council Housing Manager John Mills saw the centres as breaking down barriers between organisations, and developing a seamless approach to preventing homelessness.

### Information

Each will offer homelessness information and advice (both statutory and independent), housing information and advice, reception, homelessness assessment, access to Single Shared Assessment, temporary/supported accommodation booking, homeless Call Points, direct

access to temporary accommodation on site, access to the Common Housing Register, help with furnishings via Homeless Starter Packs, and access to social work and health services.

Open Door Fife Assistant Manager Carole Simpson said: "We have been providing an independent Housing Advice service in the west of Fife for nearly 12 years. We are used to working in partnership with other agencies as we joined forces with Levenmouth Homeless Trust in 2001 to provide a Fife-wide service. We are pleased to have this opportunity to play an active role in the Home4Good centre in Dunfermline and help towards the aims of the homelessness strategy." ▶

## inside

Special feature:  
The making of  
Video In A Day

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# Views sought on landlord controls

**A**ntisocial behaviour notices and landlord registration became law last year, as part of the Antisocial Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, but have still to come into force. The Scottish Executive has now published a consultation paper seeking views on how they should implement Parts 7 and 8 of the Act, which cover these areas.

The Scottish Executive has powers to make regulations and to issue guidance on this, and wants the system to be as "light-touch" as possible, to minimise the impact on those landlords providing a good service for their tenants.

The consultation paper was developed by a working group of local authority, landlord, agent and consumer interests. The Executive is keen to get feedback by 23 September 2005. The full document, which contains a set of questions and a return form, is at [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

## ASB notices

Under Part 7 of the Act, local authorities will in future be able to serve antisocial behaviour notices "if residents are engaging in antisocial behaviour at their home, and the landlord is not taking normal management action to address it." The ASB Notice will set out the actions which the landlord must take. The notice should describe the antisocial behaviour which led to the notice being served, what action the landlord must now take and within what time period. It also proposes that local authorities must provide advice and assistance on the management of antisocial behaviour before serving an ASB notice.

## Registration

Part 8 sets out the future requirement for all landlords, owners and letting agents, apart from registered social landlords and other exceptions such as resident landlords, to register with the LA and provide a list of properties let. It will be an offence to let a residential property without having registered. Where property is in joint ownership each person will have to register, and views are being sought on how this should be treated. It is likely that Housing Benefit records will be used

to check whether landlords have registered, and other sources of information exchange are also being proposed.

## Fit and proper

Before a person can be registered, the LA must be satisfied that the person is a "fit and proper person" and the legislation lists various factors which must be taken into account. Additionally it is proposed to require further information, such as previous convictions and registrations, and a declaration that the applicant complies with the law relating to letting. Convictions may include physical intimidation and discrimination.

The Executive wants to amend an order under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to ensure that LAs get a full picture of an applicant's past record in relation to letting. The consultation paper proposes that applicants be accepted as fit and proper without further investigation, unless something on their application form or other information prompts concern.

## Rent penalty notices

The LA can serve a Rent Penalty Notice if satisfied that a house is being let without the owner being registered. The notice must give the owner's name, address of the house and the date when the penalty takes effect. It must explain that no rent or charges are payable for that house until the notice is revoked or overturned on appeal. The notice must be served on the owner, and on anyone with a lease or occupancy agreement, or who acts for the owner on the letting, if the LA has names and addresses.

If they cannot identify the owner, the notice can be served by publication in two local newspapers. If the LA knows the owner's name but not their address, the notice should be served at the house to which it relates, and at any previous address the LA has for the owner. LAs should offer tenants support, including an appointment with a money adviser. Housing Benefit liaison should be maintained, as HB can be backdated if an appeal was successful, as back rent would be due. ▶

# Report judges service quality

**C**ommunities Scotland has reported its findings into how well some councils and registered social landlords are delivering services for homeless people in their areas.

As housing regulator, it inspected five local authorities and 22 housing associations during 2003/04, its first year of inspections.

The report pulls together the main findings on homelessness from these inspections and summarises the key themes of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

Inspectors found that advice and information to young homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, is "a strength" in all five of the inspected councils.

## Accessibility

The five councils inspected – Angus, East Lothian, Inverclyde, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire – all have accessible services and interview people quickly, but services are not always publicised in the places where people who need them are likely to be.

Housing associations were making some good contributions, but there was also some confusion about their responsibilities; some homeless people were prevented or discouraged from applying for help; and many homeless people had lost contact with councils because of poor communication or tracking by the councils.

The full report is at [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk) ▶

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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

# Moving pictures . . .

**A** video in five and a half hours, starting from scratch at 10am with the world premiere at 3.30pm. My goodness – what a tall order!

But this is exactly what six young people from Oban Rooftops, the Canal Project and the Calman Trust set out to do at the Homing In Conference, along with artist Tansy Lee Moir and myself. Not just a video however...we also took it upon ourselves to produce a giant cartoon strip telling the story of a young person who is forced to leave home.

Our day began at 10 as we stood up in front of the full conference and let them know our mission for the day, and that we

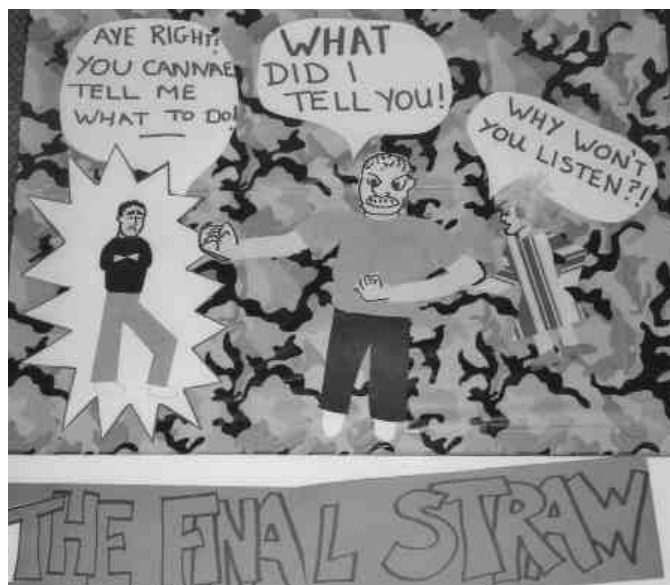
*A video in a day?  
Video worker, Rosie Lewis,  
tells how it was done*

had chosen to accept it. We headed off to our workshop room full of high hopes, excitement and no small measure of trepidation!

The young people had come from three different projects and so our first and most important task was to make sure that we all got to know each other and felt relaxed. The most effective way of doing this is clearly to play daft games; so that is exactly what we did.

We swiftly moved on to the story. We had 30 minutes to come up with the narrative and boy did the young people work hard. With a combination of intense brainstorming, some very brave volunteer actors and a lot of scribbling by Tansy and me we came up with Tom's story.

Tom's story starts with him being forced out of home by a step-parent and follows him through time on friends' sofas,



interviews with the council, a long duration in a B&B and finally sees him getting in touch with a young person's project and beginning to find the support that he needs. It was clear that the group were keen to give a happy ending to the tale, a reflection of the positive attitudes they had towards each of their own projects.

Once we had the story in place the group moved onto to learning how to make the panels that would form the cartoon strip.

Following Tansy's demonstration each person began on their own panel and a concentrated yet relaxed hush descended upon the room as masterpieces began to take shape.

As the work on the panels progressed we filmed the young people, asking them to talk us through the story and the feelings that the character would be experiencing. Every member of the group gave such thought and feeling to their responses and were also extremely generous

*At this year's Homing In Conference, young people from the Canal Project, the Calman Trust and Oban Rooftops contributed to the Video In A Day poster and video-making session*

in sharing some of their own experiences with the camera. Not an easy task and one for which we were extremely grateful.

By the end of the day the group had created a fantastic set of panels and had surprised even themselves with the amazing talent that they showed. The point at which we laid them all out in a line together was a magical moment. We all felt so amazed at what we had achieved.

One member of the group commented: "This is the best thing I have ever made".

As we waited in the corridor before entering the main room to show the finished pieces to the conference, it was like being in the wings before the big show; the sense of pride and excitement in the group was palpable – an immense transformation from the apprehension and nerves of the morning!

The day ended with the young people displaying the panels to the audience. This was followed by a screening of an early version of the video to conference delegates, as a prelude to producing the final version. The young people's achievement in such a short space of time was fantastic. The combination of the panels and the film impressed the delegates no end and the young people received no less than four very well earned rounds of applause. ▶

## ILAs

SCOTTISH learners are to receive up to £200 a year to pay for courses to help them get back into work, improve their career opportunities and fulfil their potential. The new Individual Learning Account (ILA) Scotland scheme, which has been funded until at least 2008, will help remove cost as a bar to adult education for thousands of people across Scotland. Details at [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

## ParentLine

CHILDREN 1st have set up a free, confidential and anonymous helpline for parents. ParentLine Scotland are happy to talk through any problem, large or small, "if you feel that your problem is having an effect on you and your children." Open Mon, Wed, Fri 10-4, Tues, Thurs 3-9. Call 0808 800 2222.

## E-learning

A FREE website has been launched by NHS Education for Scotland. This user-friendly resource is for frontline staff to

# noticeboard

## SYHN Training Update

We still have places available on the following courses:

- beginner's guide to housing law and related issues
- young people and antisocial behaviour issues
- working with young people who use alcohol
- working with challenging behaviour
- working with young drug users
- introduction to young people and mental health
- working with survivors of sexual abuse: Levels 1 and 2

prepare for the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, which comes into force this October. It aims to help staff in social services, health, voluntary and independent sectors understand and work safely within the new legislation. It's easy to register, select a unit and work through at your own pace and is also

suitable to use for inter-agency training. This valuable resource offers a topic search facility and will be kept up to date. Try it out at [www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/mha/elearning](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/mha/elearning)

### News wanted

GOT something to say? Topical news items and project features are always welcome. If you have

something to publicise please email it to [syhn@joa.co.uk](mailto:syhn@joa.co.uk) along with your contact details and we will do our best to include it. Good quality photos always welcome to accompany items.

### YPS

THE CITY of Edinburgh Council has developed a housing advice and support service for young tenants specifically aimed at 16 and 17 year olds. The Young Persons' Service gives fair and confidential advice on housing options, and will discuss what is involved in taking on a council house. Project workers will help the young person develop a move-in plan and offer continuing support. Phone 0131 220 2000 for local area project worker contacts.

### Training

SEE display box above for courses being run this year. To book phone 0131 226 4382 or fax to 0131 225 4382. Each course costs £90 to SYHN subscribers. ▶

# Standards and rights set

**R**egulations setting out what now constitutes unsuitable temporary accommodation for certain homeless households came into force last December.

Since then, local authorities in Scotland have had a legal responsibility to meet the requirements of the regulations, which are entitled the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004.

The regulations specify which type of accommodation is unsuitable for households with children and pregnant women, by setting out the criteria that the accommodation must fulfil.

The criteria include:

- having exclusive use of a toilet and personal washing facilities;
- having the use of a living room;
- having adequate bedrooms for the household's exclusive use;
- having adequate cooking facilities for the household;
- being suitable for children.

Currently there are certain exemptions such as Women's Aid refuges,

## special briefing

and situations where the applicant has been offered what constitutes "suitable" accommodation, but expressly chooses not to go into such accommodation.

If a local authority has offered unsuitable accommodation to such households, they will be obliged to find them accommodation which qualifies as "suitable" within 14 days.

### Hostel rights

The long-awaited draft regulations under Section 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 on standards for hostels housing homeless people were also launched at Christmas, with a consultation period until April.

The accompanying memorandum stated that "at present, homeless people living in hostels have no rights

in relation to their accommodation." This Bill aims to rectify that, and sets out new rights for those in hostel-type accommodation provided under homelessness legislation, women's refuges, ex-offender accommodation and hostels.

The regulations set out minimum rights in the accommodation, basic standards of accommodation and standards relating to the behaviour of residents. They cover issues such as access to the accommodation, access to personal mail, receipt of visitors and access to advice and information.

Minimum notice is suggested as at least 5 days if the person has lived there for 14 days, 7 days if there for 28 days, etc. Where occupancy is less than 14 days the minimum notice is 72 hours.

But if the provider has reasonable cause to believe that the occupier represents a serious danger to other occupiers or staff of the accommodation, occupancy rights can be terminated without providing the minimum period of notice. ▶