

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 53 Nov 2005



Two of SAY Women's support workers at this year's AGM and art exhibition held in the Studio of the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow. [Full story on page 3](#)

Pilot scheme to run in Argyll and Bute

Local Housing Allowance went live in Argyll and Bute this June. It joins Edinburgh as the second Scottish local authority to pilot this new housing allowance to private-sector tenants.

Eighteen authorities across the UK now participate, while the remaining councils will continue to run housing benefit in the traditional way until they are eventually included.

So how does it work? In the pilot schemes private-sector tenants with similar circumstances and living in the same area now get the same amount of LHA as each other. The actual rent they are liable to pay to their landlord is ignored.

If the LHA is less than the rent, the tenant has to make up the difference themselves. If the LHA is more than the rent, the

tenant is allowed to keep the balance.

The theory is that tenants will be able to choose the quality and price of their accommodation without having to be tied into HB restrictions in the same way as before. For example, tenants could opt to pay more for accommodation that is larger than they would have qualified for previously. Or they could (in theory) opt to move to a less expensive house and keep the difference.

LHA levels

LHA payments are based on two things: how many people live with the applicant, and the local area they want to live in.

Claimants under 25 living alone will only get the Shared LHA rate. Those of 25 or over living alone can claim the rate

for a self-contained flat with two rooms (as long as they actually do rent a flat with two rooms, eg a one-bedroom flat).

But if some of the facilities are shared, such as bathroom or kitchen, the tenant only gets the Shared LHA rate.

The government hopes that by paying the LHA direct to the tenant, they will be encouraged to take responsibility for budgeting and paying the rent rather than having it paid direct to the landlord.

The tenant cannot choose to have the money paid direct to the landlord. But should the tenant default on the rent the landlord can apply to the council for direct payments.

For the first four weeks the benefit level will remain the same if the tenant gets a job. ▶

Link joins survey

LinkLiving has joined other support providers to assess the potential impact of Supporting People funding changes to ensure service users continue to get the best quality of service.

In tandem a group of service users is making a film and a booklet to show the benefits of the high quality support that LinkLiving offers.

LinkLiving provides housing support and care services in the Lothians, Fife and Falkirk for 400 service users, including young people.

Peer education

In Falkirk, Link is developing a Peer Education Service to empower a team of young people with the skills and confidence to operate a service to support other young people to make choices about their housing options.

It will offer housing information and advice to young people aged 14-25 to help them be better able to sustain their own tenancy when that is their option of choice. ▶

inside

Inverclyde peer research project gets results

Page 2

We'll ask the questions!

Young people in Inverclyde were given the opportunity to air their views on housing, homelessness and youth participation through an extensive and influential action research project that took place between January and June 2005.

Inverclyde-based Youth Connections, in partnership with the Inverclyde Housing and Young Persons Task Group, secured funding from Communities Scotland for research to identify the needs, aspirations, opportunities and recommendations of young people looking to secure and sustain tenancies within Inverclyde.

Eight young people from Inverclyde were recruited to carry out the research. They went out into their communities to meet, listen to and interview their peers. The researchers were paid a nominal fee for their work and were trained in skills such as interviewing, data inputting, research skills, equal opportunities and community capacity building. In recognition, James Watt College have agreed to provide them with certificates.

The project managed to engage with 200 local young people, to gather information on "What works" for young people. The

Inverclyde young people trained to carry out peer research project

research identifies how local government and voluntary agency services can best meet the needs of young people in terms of:

- Securing and sustaining tenancies within Inverclyde;
- Setting up a young people's housing forum;
- Successfully sustaining young people's participation in housing and homelessness issues.

It also identifies the steps that agencies can take towards supporting young people as they move on to independent living. This research will give these agencies the opportunity to identify areas for improvement and development, and will support the set-

up of an effective young people's housing forum.

This project engaged young people in their communities, bringing benefits both for the young researchers and their peers. It raised awareness of housing and homelessness issues for young people aged between 16 and 26 and promoted housing education across Inverclyde

■ Six of the researchers attended the Scottish Youth Housing Network's Homing In Conference in May. They saw it as an excellent opportunity to put their newfound knowledge and experience into action.

Overall they interviewed 40 participants. Twenty-six people took part in interviews and completed questionnaires around the theme of: *Involving young people in forums and committees looking at housing issues.*

Interviewees included the main speaker Wendy Johnston, conference delegates, practitioners and young people participating in the day. The researchers also attended a number of relevant workshops themselves. In the panel below is a summary of their questionnaire findings and scoring results. The figures represent the numbers agreeing with the statements listed below. ▶

Homing In conference survey results

What things need to be done to keep young people interested?

Allowing them direct and tangible influence and feeding back progress – 7; Making sure activities are fun – 6; Incentives eg giving them stuff for their house if they are a young tenant – 4; Genuine and sustained interest – 4.

Should young people be paid?

Yes – 9; Vouchers and/or expenses only – 7; No – 5. Five people suggested eg £10 per day or minimum wage on hourly basis.

Would you take young people on trips and if so where?

Twenty-one said yes. This broke down as: Residential and sports trips and activities for teambuilding, building cohesion of group etc – 9; Young people's choice – 6; Special interests related to group/ housing/participation etc – 5; Trips with educational dimension, eg schools, FE, Careers etc – 3.

Techniques for gathering information from young people:

Conversation/discussion in informal groups and meetings – 8; Detached, outreach work, eg going to

places where young people meet, youth clubs etc – 5; Text/Internet/E-mail – 5; Storyboards, speech bubbles, graffiti walls as part of group/detached work – 4; Social evenings with personal and social development on offer, and related to the theme – 3; Conference with fun activities and learning (educational and recreational dimension) – 7; Workshops and/or social evenings focussed on the theme of housing – 3; Arts, music and drama for learning – 2.

Who would you invite as guest speakers and what kinds of event would you hold?

People that young people have identified themselves and with whom the young people can relate – 5; Decision makers – 4; Relevant agencies and individuals, eg health services and benefits agency – 4; People who respect and understand young people, eg young people's celebrities – 3.

How would you know you had made a real difference?

Feedback/evaluation (we need to find a way to measure?) – 9; Young people came back and/or young people became focussed and motivated – 4.

Art of survival

This year's SAY Women AGM took place in the Gallery of Modern Art, where Katie Bruce, Social Inclusion Co-ordinator with the gallery described how artists had collaborated with women affected by violence, to express their opinions and experiences.

One installation was created by international artist Barbara Kruger, who utilised the floor, walls, columns and skylights of the gallery to display giant press cuttings about violence against women, incorporating statements from women.

SAY Women members were able to view the installation at the end of the AGM.

Based in Glasgow, SAY Women works with survivors of sexual abuse. It has a resource service, an accommodation service and a follow-on service. Over the year the resource service had 36 new referrals, 32 women and 4 men, a decrease from the previous year but with 81% following through compared to 61% previously.

Flexibility

Flexibility and accessibility of the service is vital. Some who feel ready and are relatively stable attend regularly for specific areas of support. Others opt in and out as needed. Homelessness is a barrier to emotional wellbeing since the lack of a safe place to sleep is paramount.

More than 1 in 5 had been abused by more than 1 person. One in 3 were abused by fathers or father figures. Over half self-injured and 42% had a



SAY Women members visited the Barbara Kruger installation in Glasgow after the AGM

history of deliberate overdosing. Over a quarter were hidden homeless, staying c/o or unsafe/unsupported in the family home.

58% were from Glasgow. Others fled from elsewhere or used Glasgow services where their home area had little provision. Substance misuse is a major issue, with 39% reporting drug misuse and 47% alcohol misuse.

Fifty six referrals were made to the accommodation service, of whom 13 were accommodated.

Eight were survivors of historical child sexual abuse with one experiencing ritual abuse. Five had been raped or sexually assaulted and six had been abused through prostitution.

The follow-on service has been able to engage with young women where the accommodation project has been unable to. For example, one young woman moved out after two months but she has been with follow-on for four years. This reinforces the need for flexibility and "stickability." ▶

Two new guides launched

A new booklet designed for foster carers, residential workers and anyone caring for a young person moving towards independence is now available from SCSH.

In Scotland it has been estimated that young people may make as many as six attempts at managing their own tenancy before they achieve real independence.

Many young people can rely on the backing of their families. But such support is not always available for care leavers, and they are far more likely to experience some form of housing crisis.

Moving towards independence – a carers guide is both a reference book for housing information and a practical tool for talking to young people about preparing for and maintaining their own place when they eventually move on.

It costs £2 plus p&p from 0131 226 4382. Discounts are available for larger orders.

Starter packs

SCSH and Scottish Churches Housing Action have published *Start Me Up!* – a handbook which sets out the practical steps in running starter packs schemes for homeless people. Packs provide basic household essentials such as kitchen goods, cleaning materials and bedding to people who are resettling.

Churches Housing has helped develop 15 starter pack schemes as part of its Churches Homelessness Initiatives Programme and has drawn on its experience for the handbook. Cost is £6 inc p&p from 0131 226 4382. ▶

SYHN
SCOTTISH
YOUTH
HOUSING
NETWORK

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.

SYHN
SCOTTISH
YOUTH
HOUSING
NETWORK

getting on the network is easy!

Web update

THE website address for the Scottish Youth Housing Network has now changed to www.syhn.org.uk. On it you will find information about the Network, how to join, training information and INFOS. And coming soon – the programme for next year's Homing In Conference, which will be held on Friday 12 May in Stirling.

Training

PLACES are also available on the *Young People and Antisocial Behaviour Issues* training which will run again on 24 January in The Edinburgh Training Centre, St Mary's Street, Edinburgh. On the same date, Level 2 of the *Working with survivors of sexual abuse* is also running. This Level 2 course is open to anyone who has previously attended Level 1 or similar training. To book ring 0131 226 4382.

Wages rise

THE minimum wage was increased on 1 October 2005. All

noticeboard

SYHN Training Updates

Places are still available on the following courses in 2006. Cost is £90 per place. To book contact 0131 226 4382.

- working with young drug users: 17 Jan
- working with survivors of sexual abuse – Level 2: 24 Jan
- introduction to young people and mental health: 23 Feb
- working with young people who use alcohol: 16 Mar

adults must now be paid at least £5.05 an hour (an increase of 20p), whilst 18 to 21 year olds must now be paid at least £4.25 (an increase of 15p).

Lone parents

HELP for young single parents is available from Lone Parent Helpline which is run by One Parent Families Scotland. For free confidential information call Freephone 0800 018 5026. Useful websites with information for single parents can be found at www.opfs.org.uk,

www.oneplus.org and also at www.go4learning.org

Room rents

RESEARCH for the Department for Work and Pensions into the impact of Single Room Rents can be downloaded from www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5. Some of the key findings are listed in the article below.

Forced marriage

AN ADVICE leaflet for any young person worried about being forced into a marriage

abroad is available from the Community Liaison Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Old Admiralty Building, London SW1A 2PA, tel 020 7008 0230. On request, the Unit will also confidentially store information about the trip, passport details etc in case the person needs to ask for help. Website is at www.fco.gov.uk.

ASB Guide

THE CHARTERED Institute of Housing in Scotland has published *A Guide to the Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004*. It costs £22 incl p&p. To order phone 024 7685 1752.

Gateway

WORKWITHUS.ORG is the single gateway to Scotland's 44,000 charities, voluntary and community groups. Organisations who join get a huge suite of software on the internet coupled with real opportunities for increased exposure. To find out more visit www.workwithus.org/intro. ▶

Single room rent findings

Priate-sector rented accommodation has become increasingly unavailable to under-25 year olds on Housing Benefit since the introduction of the Single Room Rent, say government researchers.

The SRR restriction was introduced in 1996 for childless single people under 25. A local rent level was set for single-room accommodation with shared kitchen and toilet. In 2001 a shared living room was also added.

By 2003, SRR determinations had fallen from 100,000 to 34,000. The researchers from Dundee University and IRIS Consulting point out that a 24% fall in unemployment among young people will have lifted some out of HB entitlement; others will have failed to claim or remained in, or returned to, the parental home. But some are likely to have found themselves "in marginal forms of housing."

Despite the increase in SRR payment levels in 2001 the researchers found that there was no appreciable difference to the supply or the quality of private accommodation available to young HB claimants, or to their

special briefing

ability to access it. The researchers also found that:

- The reluctance of many landlords to let to young people seems to have resulted in many taking informal lettings, staying c/o friends, or being offered council housing in hard to let areas.
- Consultees said the SRR was hampering efforts to get young people into work by not providing them with the stable housing base they needed to take up training and jobs. Temporary housing arrangements were likely to make job-seeking harder.
- Eighty-seven per cent of SRR claimants faced a shortfall at the start of 2002 of £35.14 a week, more than double the £16.34 faced by non-SRR HB claimants.

○ For those with a shared living room the shortfall was £18.10, just above the shortfalls of non-SRR claimants. Since the 2001 changes most SRR claims have been for self-contained dwellings.

○ Work incentives are not significantly related to eligible rent, which remains the same whether the claimant is in or out of work. There is also a very low level of awareness of claiming HB when in work.

○ Pre-tenancy determinations were generally helpful, though some landlords were reluctant to co-operate, especially in areas of high demand.

○ Most case study areas had a single SRR rate for the whole local authority area which became well known to landlords and advisers. Benefit officers and advisers played a significant role in informing claimants.

○ Discretionary Housing Payments could potentially help to sustain a tenancy and avoid arrears. But in most case study areas, under-25s were a low priority for DHPs. Claimants knew little, or nothing, about DHPs. ▶