

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

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Concepts of 'home' go on show

An exciting exhibition of work produced by a group of young people in West Lothian will be exhibited in the Howden Park Centre in Livingston during January.

The HOME Exhibition is the culmination of a week-long residency at YMCA Wiston Lodge, where young people from Cyrenians, the Youth Inclusion Project and the Drugs Outreach Service worked with the wood craftsman and artist, David Stobart, to produce various pieces of artwork and furniture which would represent the idea of HOME for them.

Possessions

The work highlights the high importance of personal possessions to young people forced by circumstance to be unsettled.

Some of those taking part have been disadvantaged by their social, emotional and practical accommodation needs.

For further information contact Lorraine Gillies, the Service Development Manager, Cyrenians West Lothian Service on 01506 205413. Their website is at www.cyrenians.org.uk



The Canal Project's premises in Kirkintilloch. *Special feature on page 3*

Guide aims to beat tenancy failure

Some areas report that an alarming one in three tenancies granted to homeless young people fail in their first year, say Scottish Council for the Single Homeless. In response, they have developed an innovative tenancy sustainment guide for young people, called *My Place, My Space*.

The guide was launched in November at their National Homelessness Conference by Communities Minister Malcolm Chisholm MSP, who said: "This is exactly the type of project which can make a real difference and which can prevent homelessness occurring. The *My Space, My Place* booklets are a good example of advice and information tailored specifically for a particular group. The material has been designed in

consultation with the young people it is aimed at, and careful consideration has been given to presentation and language. The result is housing advice which is practical and accessible".

Young people helped to plan the launch and make a launch video. Each was presented with a copy of the guide by Malcolm Chisholm.

Colour purple

For SCSSH's Youth Unit this was the culmination of two years' work and consultation with over 350 young people and workers: "One of the scariest moments was taking the first sample booklets to a focus group and asking the young people what they thought. Let's face it, they're not going to pull any punches.

But the worst comment they came back with was about my choice of colour – they hated purple. I could live with that," said Sharon Dickens.

"It became clear we were getting it right when young people at the focus groups asked if they could take the draft booklets home to read."

The Guide is straight talking, fun and easy to read. At £12.50 it comes in a handy DVD case with eleven magazine-style booklets that tackle key steps in tenancy sustainment using cartoon strips, agony columns, true stories, interviews and even crosswords.

To order the Guide contact the Youth Unit on 0131 226 4382, or visit www.scssh.org.uk and www.leavinghome.info for other publications. ▶

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Children's
Commissioner
consults

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Keeping promises to young people

The creation of the post of Children's Commissioner sparked much interest across Scotland. Delegates to the Homing In Conference in 2004 heard Kathleen Marshall set out her initial priorities. Here we set out two initiatives which are now underway to shape her priorities for the coming two years

Every young person in Scotland has been given the chance to say what they most want changed to make their life better. Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Kathleen Marshall, has asked children and young people to vote on seven issues. The top one will become her priority for the next two years.

To do this, the Commissioner's office – called SCCYP! – teamed up with Young Scot, the national information agency for young people, for a consultation called *Keeping Promises*. It used a wide range of methods – including online, text, freephone and email – to give all young people the opportunity to express their opinion. Every school and youth group in Scotland was sent voting cards for distribution.

Through a series of focus groups, seven issues were identified as the most important to children and young people across the country:

- Safer Streets
- Bullying
- Things To Do
- Education
- Health
- Transport
- Help When Parents Split Up.

Kathleen Marshall said: "In the next couple of years the team at SCCYP! will be looking to make real concrete changes to try and improve the lives of young people in Scotland. The first part of this quest is to find out what young people care about and what issues are most important to them. I want to get a proper steer on the concrete issues young people want us to address, not just what adults think young people care about.

"This is what the consultation we are doing

with Young Scot is about – trying to make sure we work on the issues that have been identified by children and young people. In addition, I want to make a partnership with young people, help them to feel they've got a stake in society and that they can achieve and change things.

"Once the consultation closes we will have a general idea of what we need to do and then, over a two-year span, we hope to identify the main issues and the blockages that stop improvement."

The consultation was officially opened in Edinburgh at an event to launch the Office for the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Holyrood Road. SCCYP!'s new website, www.sccyp.org.uk, was also launched at the event.

Around 100 children and young people, from 11 to 18 years old, attended the day, held at Dynamic Earth, which featured a brief talk by Kathleen Marshall and a series of interactive workshops. The workshops were varied and fun ranging from an exploration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to circus skills.

Young Scot were also at the launch, with their satellite e-Roadshow van. In the lead-up to Christmas SCCYP! and Young Scot ran events in locations across Scotland to seek the views of young people on the consultation and to raise awareness of SCCYP!

STOP PRESS: It has just been announced that over 16,000 young people responded to the survey. The top priority with 26.5% of the votes was Things To Do, closely followed by Bullying which rated 25.3% and Safer Streets at 24%. Parents splitting up had 9.2% of the votes, Education 5.4%, Transport 4.9% and Health 4.5%. ▶

Shaping priorities

In a further initiative from SCCYP!, organisations working with and for children and young people have been asked to help shape the policy priorities of the Commissioner for the next two years.

The consultation, running in tandem with the young persons' consultation, is asking organisations such as local authorities, health and housing agencies and voluntary groups to prioritise one of three themes:

Theme 1 Promoting Proportionate Protection: Balancing protection, fun, adventure and healthy relationships;

Theme 2 Improving Family Support: Making sure that children, young people and families get real and effective support;

Theme 3 Promoting Social Inclusion: Highlighting the challenges faced by marginalised groups and seeking improvement.

SCCYP! will be working on each of these themes, but the one given most priority will attract extra resources.

Kathleen Marshall said: "In the next couple of years the team at SCCYP! will be looking to make real concrete changes to try and improve the lives of young people in Scotland.

"We have already asked the young people themselves what they would like to change but think it is also important to get the views of organisations who work with them every day.

"We have identified broad themes to allow flexibility. We want to be clear about our aims, but creative in our response, taking account of what others are doing and taking advantage of unexpected opportunities that might advance our agenda."

With a theme selected, SCCYP! will map out what others are doing and identify particular pieces of work to focus on. They will then draw up a more detailed plan of action.

SCCYP! is based at 85 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AU, tel 0131 558 3733, email info@sccyp.org.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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getting on the network is easy!

■ SPECIAL FEATURE

Canal project gets results

Eighteen months ago the Canal project opened its doors to young people in the East Dunbartonshire area.

Based in Kirkintilloch, the project provides accommodation for eight young people at any one time, and offers a range of support to help them move on to a more positive future.

Run by NCH Scotland in partnership with East Dunbartonshire Council, the Canal Project offers short term supported accommodation for homeless young people aged 16 to 21 from the East Dunbartonshire area who require support to help them move on to permanent accommodation locally.

Young people come to the project on a voluntary basis and work within an agreed support plan for an optimum period of six to nine months.

The project offers six bedspaces within the main building and a further two bedspaces within self-contained flats which adjoin the main building. The flats are used to evidence successful independent living skills before the young person moves on from the project to live in the community.

Project support workers cooperate with other agencies in identifying, planning and preparing to set up a tenancy or an acceptable alternative in negotiation with the young person, for example supported lodgings or reconciliation with their family.

The support workers offer advice and guidance with the objective of helping young people to pursue a more structured



Examples of the craftwork carried out by residents of the Canal Project

daily living pattern. Young people are helped to grow in self esteem through learning to take responsibility for their actions.

As well as offering general counselling, housing support and practical assistance, the project runs workshops on sexual health, art and DIY.

Staff work with each young person to achieve permanent accommodation for them. The use of the dedicated move-on accommodation within the project helps develop the person's independent living skills.

The project has been praised by local MP Jo Swinton who

said: "It takes a lot of discipline and hard work to create the positive culture of respect that exists in the Canal Project. The staff must be given enormous credit for that."

"The approach taken at the Canal Project, of close attention and support given to young people by staff, is resource-intensive but it certainly produces positive outcomes and is of great benefit to society as well as the individuals helped."

Contact Gerry McGinty, Project Manager, at NCH Canal Project, 34 Industry Street, Kirkintilloch G66 3AE, tel: 0141 776 5277. ▶

Homing In conference 2006

This year's Homing In Conference will take place on Friday 12 May in Stirling.

A topical mix of workshops and plenaries will focus on young people's issues and young people will be involved in some of the presentations.

Two plenaries will cover black and minority ethnic young people and young asylum seekers; and Mental health well-being.

In the planning stage are workshops on:

- Hoodies – responding to young people's behaviour (YASBOs);
- Confidentiality and the sharing information – or the lack of it;
- Look who's talking – mediation services for young people;
- Developing peer education in homelessness;
- Flatmate schemes – pros and cons of facilitating shared living;
- Building social contacts through mentoring or befriending services;
- Are you ready to let go? – disengaging with young people;
- Working with young gay or lesbian people;
- Young people with mild learning disabilities;
- My Space, My Place tenancy sustainment resource.

Attendance costs £100 for subscribers. Non-subscribers pay £160. Further details from 0131 226 4382. Full programme out soon. ▶

Voting age

FIRST Minister Jack McConnell MSP is to lower the voting age to 16 in Scottish council elections in an attempt to increase the turnout at polls. Ministers say that the move will encourage greater political participation among young people, who can marry, work, pay taxes and join the armed forces at 16. The lower voting age will be introduced in time for the 2011 local authority elections.

Westminster will be asked to agree to amend the Scotland Act to allow the voting measure to be extended to the Scottish Parliament elections too.

Special court

IN THE first year of Glasgow's pilot scheme which fast-tracks domestic abuse cases to a special court, there were 607 cases and 450 convictions. All cases were assigned a date within six weeks of being called to trial. 121 offenders pleaded guilty at first calling, 172 before trial, 124

noticeboard

SYHN events update

We still have places available on the following courses:

- Young people and mental health: 23 Feb
- Working with young people who use drugs: 16 Feb
- Working with young people who use alcohol: 16 Mar
- Homing In Annual Conference 2006: 12 May, Stirling

Subscribers pay £90 for training courses, and £100 for a conference place. All bookings to SYHN on 0131 226 4382.

at trial and 33 were later found guilty. Support throughout the court process is also offered by a specialist service called Assist.

Shelter

SHELTER'S website has a new section specifically for young people. It gives information on housing rights, nightmare landlords, leaving in a hurry, students and single parents. It's at www.scotland.shelter.org.uk/advice

Freezones

CONFIDENTIAL advice is available on the Domestic Abuse helpline on 0800 027 1234.

SCCYP! has set up a Young Person's freezone on 0800 019 1179.

New SYHN course

BECAUSE of the popularity of the training course on young people and drugs, we have in-

troduced a new course: *Working with young people who use alcohol*. It identifies some of the key issues for young homeless people who are affected by alcohol issues. It looks at the psychological, social and behavioural effects of alcohol, and the differences between alcohol use and problem alcohol use.

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 along with your contact details and we will do our best to include it. Good quality photos are always welcome to accompany items.

Workshop

AS A partner activity to the *My Place, My Space* guide, a workshop on Practical Steps to Tenancy Sustainment is available to organisations. Details from 0131 226 4382. ▶

Helping homeless people

On 21 December Communities Minister Malcolm Chisholm MSP published a Homelessness Statement of the Executive's progress towards the abolition of priority need by 2012, a requirement of Section 3 of the Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003.

He said: "We have in place an ambitious target to eradicate the distinction between 'priority' and 'non-priority' homeless households by the end of 2012. This will mean that all unintentionally homeless people are entitled to permanent accommodation at that time. This is a very challenging target and we remain committed to it."

The Executive believes that all homeless people should have the same opportunity to access accommodation, with any distinctions "based on the severity of their current circumstances and the options which would be sustainable for them." They will move to a system where decision-making and outcomes are "firmly focussed on applicants' needs."

Progress towards this target would be monitored and revised guidance

special briefing

produced on the allocation of social lets "to ensure there is sufficient local flexibility to retain balanced and sustainable communities, whilst also addressing landlords' responsibilities under the homelessness legislation." Adequate resources were seen as essential if the target was to be met.

The Executive wants to halve the proportion of non-priority homeless assessments by March 09, but says that this must be sustainable. And so it has set out the information it will look at to assess the capacity of local authorities to implement further changes in the law. The effect on other households in housing need will be a key factor. The Minister pledged to maintain "the significant investment already planned" for appropriate and affordable housing.

The prevention of homelessness is

identified as important, with vulnerable groups such as young care leavers mentioned, along with the provision of support to prevent repeat homelessness occurring; and the involvement of the private sector and registered social landlords.

Because providing furniture and basic household goods help to sustain a tenancy, the Executive will consider whether to extend the Furnished Tenancies Scheme, which has already helped 2000 households.

Interim objectives set include:

- reviewing interim accommodation regulations by Jan 07;
- commissioning allocations research in 06;
- beginning discussions to clarify guidance on allocations in Jan 06;
- reviewing the operation of S. 5 referrals to RSLs in June 06;
- taking a decision on the furnished tenancy scheme by March 06;
- consulting on and implementing changes to local connection rules in 06. A monitoring process will evaluate the impact of this change.

The full Statement can be downloaded from www.scotland.gov.uk ▶