

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 60 Oct 2007

SYHN courses can help towards SVQs

The new Scottish Youth Housing Network training programme for 2007-08 is underway. And in recognition of participation, all delegates who complete the course will now receive a signed Certificate of Attendance which lists the core course content.

We are also looking at whether the courses will contribute to meeting some of the criteria for the Scottish Vocational Qualifications. SVQs are based on national standards of competence that describe a candidate's ability to work in real conditions.

They are designed to benchmark people's skills against the national standards by recognising the job-related skills and knowledge people need in work.

On each certificate we will state that the training can potentially contribute towards the underpinning knowledge requirements for certain listed Health and Social Care units at Levels 2 and 3, and SSSC codes of practice. ▶



Residential Worker Norman Duffy of Geilsland School shows members of the SYHN steering group around the project. See special feature on page 3

Homeless world cup win for Scotland

It's not often that Scotland wins the World Cup! But that's exactly what happened in July when two young men from the HELP project went to Denmark as part of the Scotland squad to compete in the Homeless World Cup.

Not only did Scotland become the world champions, but one of the HELP players also received the Player Of The Tournament award.

This terrific success follows on from last year, when one young man from the project played in South Africa. And when the event was held in Edinburgh, HELP had no less than six young men in the Scotland Squad.

HELP (Argyll and Bute) Ltd are a charitable project who work with young people in the rural areas of Cowal and Bute.

They employ key workers to give housing support to young people aged 16 to 25 who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or are about to leave care.

They support young people to keep a tenancy, enter employment or training and increase the quality of their lives.

Transferable skills

Once in the tenancy, HELP then assists them to find work or training, and will also encourage the young person to become actively involved in helping their community. For example, work with a local bowling club has encouraged people of all ages to come together and integrate in the community.

For the past four years HELP

have effectively used football as a vehicle to work with a young person to help them develop transferable skills such as team work, motivation and commitment, while encouraging physical exercise to promote health.

Recently the project has initiated a local eight-week football tournament to promote men's health and social inclusion.

Several young men have also gained the Scottish Football Association's coaching qualification and have volunteered to work with younger groups in the area. And some have used football to help them gain their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Contact Janet MacKellar, Manager, HELP, 17/19 John Street, Dunoon, PA23 8BN, at 01369 70 7600 or email to janet@helpitd.org.uk. ▶

inside

Leaving Home and Housing Education Conference

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Innovative practice takes the stage

Edinburgh was the destination for delegates from across Scotland and the UK a month ago when they attended the second National Conference on Leaving Home and Housing Education.

The conference highlighted the range of new and innovative practice in the field of homelessness prevention. Presentations looked at leaving home and housing education in the classroom with emphasis on the Curriculum for Excellence and good practice in schools, such as North Ayrshire's CHAP service and East Lothian's Housing Education Partnership.

Delegates were also treated to a moving dramatic performance by Naomi Breeze. *H is 4* is a new play about homelessness which Naomi performs to young people and professionals in schools, youth groups and agencies.

The impact of homelessness

on young people's lives was a theme further explored by Link Living Falkirk's Smart Move Group. The young peer educators gave an emotional presentation of the first showing of their DVD, *I wish I knew then what I know now*.

This new resource features the peer educators talking openly about their own experiences of homelessness and will

It was really emotional to watch real people talking about their experiences

be shown to schools and youth groups throughout the Falkirk area. As one delegate commented: "*H is 4* was brilliant! Smart Move was outstanding and really emotional to watch real people talking about their experiences."

Workshops included discussion around the impact of family homelessness on young people's education and how local services can work with schools in homelessness prevention.

Family mediation was also an important theme at the event with a presentation on Alone in London's work with young people facing housing crisis and workshop sessions on Amber Mediation's intervention work.

Matt Elton said: "There was a real buzz at the conference this year generated by the innovative work on display. I hope that delegates left feeling supported and encouraged to develop their own practice with new ideas and enthusiasm."

A copy of the Conference Report is available to download free from www.scsch.org.uk.

For free learning materials and other useful information see [Noticeboard on page 4](#).

Network consults young parents

The Dundee drop-in centre and cafe for young people, The Shore, was the venue for the SYHN's consultation day with a group of young parents whose views and experiences of housing and support were being sought.

We wanted to hear how becoming a parent had affected their housing; what it meant to their education, training or work opportunities; the support that they got; what they thought services and housing providers could do better to help; and what advice they would give to other young parents.

Healthy eating

Projects which brought young people included Four Square, Loreburn Housing Association and Streetwork. Workshop discussions helped young parents to give us their views and suggestions about:

- help and support networks;
- education, training and work;
- health issues.

Over lunchtime there were activities such as massage, a video diary room and the chance for parents to get their photo taken with their child. Breakfast, snacks and lunch were provided, with a focus on healthy eating, and the day ended with a healthy eating demonstration.

We will publish excerpts of the suggestions made in our next issue.

Housing allowance changes

As we reported in our last issue, the Welfare Reform Act 2007 will introduce local housing allowances (LHAs) across the UK. From next April LHAs will replace the local reference rent currently in use in the private sector.

In future, each application for Housing Benefit will go to a rent officer, who will have drawn up lists of rents for houses of different sizes in broad rental market areas. These lists will determine how much HB can be paid, irrespective of the actual rent due.

CPAG now reports that the scheme as

enacted seems to differ from the pilot schemes in several different ways.

- The mid-point rather than the median of rents will be used to set the LHA. This change is likely to give a lower figure and therefore more shortfalls between rent charged and HB paid.
- The draft regulations seem to alter the size criteria, removing living rooms, so only providing for smaller accommodation.
- Although no regulations have been published yet, if the LHA is higher than the rent paid or due, any gain to the claimant will now be limited to £15 a week.

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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

Positive Steps at Geilsland

Beith in Ayrshire was our destination when the Scottish Youth Housing Network's steering group set off on another project visit in August. We were met by group member Norman Duffy, who took us to Geilsland School, set in large grounds in the countryside near Beith.

Geilsland is a residential school for 15 to 18 year old boys, run by CrossReach, the former Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility. It aims to offer holistic care "in a truly and fully human manner no matter what the degree of the boys' disability or disturbance."

There are three residential units – Garnock, Cunningham and Lomond – recently completed purpose built buildings. Each has single rooms, with the choice of individual or group living facilities.

With 12 residents Garnock is geared to younger, more vulnerable or more immature pupils who need a clearly defined structure. Cunningham takes 16 people in four-bed apartments. In part this unit is for older or more mature residents who need encouragement to develop responsibility for themselves prior to leaving care.

All residents can progress towards a programme of preparation for independent living. Those referred to the school are often close to the end of their care careers, with many at risk of becoming homeless or entering the penal system. A sound through-care plan for each pupil is therefore of fundamental importance.

The school has developed a programme called *Positive Steps: Promoting Responsible Citizenship* to support young men develop the skills needed to prepare for

Right: Education is a high priority at the school

Below: One of the pupils demonstrates his musical talents on the decks



independent living. Two two-bed units, Arran and Cumbrae House, give young people the chance to test out and gain experience of semi-independent living but within a safety net to allow them to develop.

Each has his own individual living space, and then shares a kitchen/lounge/dining area where he is supported to learn how to cook and house-keep. A team of

residential staff are available on a 24 hour basis to offer support.

In the units each person chooses their own decor, entirely to their own taste. The aim is to make the accommodation as homely as possible, and each flat is provided with good quality furniture and a TV.

Geilsland began as a Church of Scotland Approved School for Senior Boys in 1964. It had the ethos of physically building and extending itself using staff and pupils, demonstrating the work of their trade departments – building, joinery, carpentry, engineering, electrical, painting and decorating.

It now places strong emphasis on classroom education alongside practical skills. All residents are aged 15 – 18 and so some are above the school leaving age. With school and the educational process having often been a source of conflict and

failure, Geilsland sees it as crucial to develop a balanced curriculum and an education package with which young men can engage whilst not duplicating past bad experiences.

It treats pupils as young adults and encourages participation through:

- an age-appropriate package and approach;
- realistic, individualised targets;
- maximising involvement in practical vocational education and sufficient time in core skills;
- accepting boys as they are on admission, but ready to confront challenging behaviour;
- providing an integrated package of care and education;
- the fostering of self-worth and achievement.

Each boy is attached to a vocational department where interaction is more that of craftsman and apprentice rather than teacher and pupil. Some may also take up external work placements as part of their through-care plan. Contact Norman Duffy on 01505 504044. ▶

User involvement

WAYS OF engaging young people were the centrepiece of recent training by SCSH's Youth Unit. Two reports – *Rewards for Learning* and *Service User Involvement* – underpinned the session, which covered a range of approaches for involving service users and for recognising their learning, and discussion addressed what would work best in each organisation. Further information and copies of the reports can be obtained from Wendy Devall, 0131 226 4382 or wendy@scsh.org.uk.

Diary dates

■ THE NATIONAL Homelessness Conference, run by SCSH, takes place on 8 and 9 November in the Apex International Hotel, Edinburgh. Full programme and booking forms at www.scsh.org.uk.

■ THE HOMING In Conference 2008 will take place on Friday 30 May 2008 at the Stir-

noticeboard

SYHN Training Courses, Nov 07 – Mar 08

- **Re-run: Intro to welfare benefits & housing costs: 15 Nov.**
- **Young people & anti-social behaviour: 29 Nov.**
- **Managing challenging behaviour by young people: 6 Dec.**
- **Working with young drug users: 24 Jan 08.**
- **Young people and mental health: 7 Feb 08.**
- **Working with young people who use alcohol: 13 Mar 08.**

Places are still available on these courses: 0131 226 4382.

ling Management Centre, Stirling. Put it in your diary now!

Address update

THE NEW Quarriers Stop-over hostel is at 200 Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow G41 1QB (not Dumbarton Road as we previously listed).

Suicide help

IF YOU are working with a young person who is feeling suicidal, remember that they can contact one of these confi-

dential helplines: Breathing Space from 6pm–2am: 0800 83 85 87; Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90; ChildLine: 0800 11 11 11.

Free resources

A RANGE of case studies, adaptable ideas and materials form part of a toolkit devised as a resource for anyone involved in working with young people and delivering any kind of leaving home and housing education. You can download free tools from the toolkit, including

quizzes, baseline questionnaires and evaluations by going to the resource website at www.leavinghome.info.

Fraud change

UNDER THE new Welfare Reform Act, any claimant with a further conviction for benefit fraud within five years of the previous conviction, (rather than the current three years), may have their benefit withdrawn.

SCC merge

THE SCOTTISH Consumer Council is set to merge with energywatch and Postwatch, to bring together consumer advocacy work into one body. In Scotland the new body will still be called the Scottish Consumer Council.

News wanted

NEWS ITEMS, project features and pictures always welcome. Ring Norma Jones, 0131 557 1954 or email to syhn@joa.co.uk with your ideas. ▶

Sanctions pilot against anti-social tenants

The Welfare Reform Act became law in May. It includes powers to cut Housing Benefit following eviction for anti-social behaviour. The Government has agreed to a "sunset clause" being inserted into the Act, and so the scheme will be a pilot, expiring at the end of 2010. Further primary legislation will then be needed if it is to continue.

The government will now pilot the use of this "HB Sanction" in ten English authorities for two years. Scotland is included in the legislation too.

This is how the sanctions will work. Housing Benefit would be reduced or stopped if a court order for repossession is granted on anti-social or criminal behaviour grounds. The person must have ceased to live in the accommodation as a result of that order. They will be known as the "former occupier".

The Act says that "the claimant must have failed to comply with a requirement by a local authority to take specified action, without good cause, having been warned that such a failure would affect the amount of HB payable and the authority has recommended that the claimant's benefit be so affected."

benefits briefing

Once a person has satisfied the first two conditions, the local authority will try to engage with the person with the aim of ending or preventing repetition of the ASB "through the provision of rehabilitation". If the person refuses to co-operate, the local authority will have the option of using this sanction "to encourage him to co-operate with the rehabilitation."

HB would be cut by 10% for four weeks, 20% for the next four weeks, then 100% until the local authority stops the sanction, or five years after the possession order has lapsed.

The sanction could end if the person begins co-operating with rehabilitation, or where the rehabilitation services are no longer available, or where the person or family have become particularly vulnerable. A lower rate of cut will apply to those in hardship, eg households where someone is seriously ill or pregnant, or with chil-

dren or with caring responsibilities.

A sanction can be restarted if the person doesn't comply with a further requirement. So, if the person stops co-operating with rehabilitation, a further warning can be issued or further action specified. If this is not complied with, without good cause, the sanction will start to run again.

Possession orders must be made on grounds of behaviour causing a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or criminal behaviour. It doesn't matter whether these grounds are coupled with other grounds as well.

Orders can be sisted (frozen), with conditions attached, eg about behaviour and the payment of rent and any arrears. If there are behaviour conditions, a sanction can only be applied if these are breached.

Regulations will cover what counts as good cause, and when a person is or is not to be seen as having good reason for not complying with a requirement of a local authority.

Where a couple are evicted on behaviour grounds, HB can be sanctioned again if either doesn't take specified action. If only one of them lived there then the sanction doesn't apply. ▶