

homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 34 March 2001



Staff and young people from ACTIV8 relax before tackling their sponsored walk

ACTIV8 take to the hills after merger

Slipway and SAILS – two well established Edinvar Community Care support services for young people – have marked their closer working ties by undertaking a sponsored walk which raised over £300. The two services which provide support to young people who have experienced family breakdown, had contact with the Royal Edinburgh Hospital Young Peoples Unit, or lived in residential care have

now amalgamated their group work and activity provision under the new name of ACTIV8.

To mark the event the users and workers of both services along with other Edinvar staff decided to undertake a ten kilometre walk and climb involving over 2,000 feet of ascent. Their chosen route followed the old Capel Mounth drove road between Glen Clova and Glendoll in Angus and Glen Muick

near Ballater on Deeside.

Although quite a challenge, everyone managed to complete the walk and all monies raised will go to the organisation of a joint winter residential trip to Glen Feshie and the Cairngorm Mountains in March. ACTIV8 would like to thank all who generously sponsored them and acknowledge the support of the Edinvar staff who used their own time and effort to accompany them. ▽

Action on HB delays

Action teams from the DSS will work with councils to clear delays in paying Housing Benefit after criticism from Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling that some are “failing miserably to provide the service that the public expects”.

£24 million over three years will be made available to councils, linked to “a stringent contract to ensure high standards of performance.” Over 70% of respondents to the HB Green Paper on reform wanted immediate action on delays and backlogs.

It is planned to “eradicate complexity from the system” by:

- a simpler claims process to cut out multiple form-filling;
- making it easier to claim HB when starting work;
- speeding up payments if a job ends after a short period;
- altering rules to ease the problems young people face in getting accommodation and to encourage landlords to let to young people. ▽

Homing In 2001 conference

Book now for this year’s conference on Friday 11 May in the Stirling Management Centre, Stirling. We have invited the Minister for Social Justice, Jackie Baillie, to share the platform with some young people.

Sessions will cover the Housing Bill and Supporting People; throughcare and aftercare; reset-

tlement; inclusion in health services; resource transfer and care leavers; and managing projects to avoid exclusion. And you can display information about your service free.

Book now! Tel 0131 226 4382 or fax 0131 225 4382. The conference cost is £70 to subscribers, £130 to others. ▽

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RSI funding allows Ayrshire group to get a START

Funding through the Rough Sleepers' Initiative has enabled Rowan Alba Association to set up the START Project in Ayrshire.

The Support, Training, Advice and Resettlement Team works in partnership with the Councils in North, South and East Ayrshire, in order to meet the needs of single homeless people, identifying those aged 18-25 as being most at risk of rooflessness or homelessness.

Its multi-disciplinary team hopes to provide a high standard of support for those single homeless people identified as in need of support.

Promoting self-development amongst service users and promoting self-confidence and the development of independent living skills is a key objective.

The project will also provide advice and counselling services to service users on matters other than tenancy upkeep, and will provide temporary accommodation to service users in North Ayrshire.

Referrals will be accepted from all local authority departments and related agencies, including voluntary organisations. On-referral a member of staff will discuss the service user's background and support needs with a representative from the referring agency.

Each person accepted is assigned a support and resettlement worker and is actively involved in developing their personal progress plan towards independent living.

The individual's plan may include budgeting skills; independent living skills; tenancy support; liaison with specialist support agencies such as addiction services; and training and employment advice.

for more information, or to make a referral please contact START Project, Rowan Alba Association, 22-24 Main Street, Dreghorn KA11 4AH. Tel: 01294 224924. Fax: 01294 224930. Or contact Helen Carlin, Service Development Manager, Rowan Alba Association on 0131 229 7554. ▸

Two ways to make a smarter move

Edinburgh Cyrenians' Housing Team have developed two initiatives to improve and expand its rent guarantee scheme, the Matthews Smart-Move Project.

Flatmates – funded in its pilot year by the Lintel Trust – is the first project of its kind in Scotland. It helps young homeless people to meet and match with other young people in the same situation, helps them to prepare to share, and mediates if sharing proves to be difficult.

It aims to help more young people obtain accommodation in private flats, reduce tenancy breakdown and prevent people becoming homeless.

Financial help

The Financial Inclusion Initiative will work with SmartMove tenants to provide financial information, advice and counselling, helping them to establish bank accounts or individual saving accounts.

It will pay incentives where tenants manage to save toward a cash deposit, budget for bills and tackle any debt problems. It aims to lead tenants toward independence and social inclusion by offering access to banking and financial institutions and help to cope better with tenancy issues such as keeping rent payments up to date and paying bills.

SmartMove relies on a team of trained volunteers. If you would like to help, then contact Diane Kennedy at Edinburgh Cyrenians, Norton Park Centre, 47 Albion Street, Edinburgh EH7 5QY, 0131 475 2356 or visit the website at www.cyrenians.org.uk. ▸

Change of scene for the Bridges Project

The Bridges Project has now re-located to East Lothian from its centre in Edinburgh. Now based in Haddington, the project hopes to deliver a range of services to young people 16-22 on a walk-in and outreach basis.

The key services which it will provide include:

- advice, information and advocacy to excluded young people;
- housing education to groups of young people aged 14+ in

any setting, including schools; pre-access education, and training opportunities for the target group;

- limited support to young tenants.

A full project description will be available soon, along with referral procedures and other information about the project and the activities which it plans in East Lothian.

Bridges welcomes enquiries about the proposed service and

are keen to engage in detailed discussions with staff, volunteers and young people. They are in the process of making arrangements with a number of agencies, and are keen to initiate meetings with as many projects as possible.

You can contact the Director, Fiona Philipson at 1 Mitchell's Close, Haddington EH41 3NB. Tel/fax: 01620 825024. Email: bridgesproject@compuserve.com. ▸



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.



getting on the network is easy!

■ SPECIAL FEATURE

Housing Bill is new start

The Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced into the Scottish Parliament on 18 December 2000. It follows on from the consultation paper, *Better Homes for Scotland's Communities*, and has incorporated some of the points made during the consultation period. The Bill will be debated in March, and is likely to be finalised in the summer.

Announcing its introduction, the Social Justice Minister, Jackie Baillie, said they were delivering on their commitment to overhaul Scottish housing: "We have listened to the people of Scotland and now our plans are becoming a reality – this is the most radical package of housing legislation in a generation."

This overview of what is proposed concentrates on four key areas of most importance to those in the Scottish Youth Housing Network: homelessness, tenancy rights in the social sector, hostel dwellers, and the allocation of housing. Once the Bill is finalised, we will produce an special issue of *Info* covering all relevant aspects of the new Act.

Homelessness strategies

■ Every local authority will be required to prepare and submit to the Scottish Ministers a strategy for preventing and alleviating homelessness in its area. Deadlines can be set, and guidance given on the form and content of the strategy, which can be reviewed or revised by the local authority (LA) or under direction from Ministers.

Homelessness advice

■ Every LA must make available free advice and information about homelessness, its prevention, and services to help homeless people. LAs do not need to provide the advice themselves. Guidance may be issued by Ministers, and standards set.

Homeless or threatened with homelessness

■ People are to be treated as homeless if they are provided with accommodation which is not permanent accommodation. Therefore, the LA's duty will continue until permanent accommodation is secured. What constitutes permanent accommodation is defined. Short assured tenancies in the private sector do not constitute perma-

Key changes proposed include:

- **an enhanced set of rights for all tenants in the social rented sector;**
- **more comprehensive rights for homeless people, including the right to temporary accommodation for all homeless people, regardless of priority need status and to those who qualify, the right to permanent accommodation;**
- **the introduction of a new tenancy type, the Scottish secure tenancy and a time-specified version to be called the short Scottish secure tenancy;**
- **the right of tenants to go to court if dissatisfied about the type of tenancy given;**
- **succession rights extended to same sex partners and to certain carers.**
- **admission to housing waiting lists of local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) for any applicant aged 16+;**
- **quicker repossession for registered social landlords of abandoned tenancies;**
- **a statutory right for tenants to be consulted and their views taken into account.**

nent accommodation. The qualifying time period has been extended from 28 days to two months.

Temporary accommodation

■ Previously only homeless people in priority need were entitled to temporary accommodation. The Bill creates a new interim duty to accommodate anyone whom the LA has reason to believe is homeless, without taking into account whether they are likely to be in priority need. LAs must secure that the accommodation made available for unintentionally homeless people in priority need must be a Scottish secure tenancy (SST) or an assured tenancy (but not a short assured tenancy). Local Authorities will be empowered to request registered

social landlords in their area to provide an SST, but must look at the availability and appropriateness of their own stock first.

People in hostels

■ Regulations will allow Ministers to establish minimum rights for homeless people in hostels, and will specify the types of occupancy to which these rights apply. The basic terms of occupancy will also be specified, and it will be a criminal offence for the accommodation providers not to comply. There will be consultation on the regulations.

Scottish secure tenancies

■ On a date to be set, most tenants of social housing landlords (but not co-operatives) will be given a Scottish secure tenancy to replace their existing tenancy agreement. No-one should lose rights, and some will gain strengthened rights. Should the tenant die, those who can succeed to the tenancy will include spouse, partner – including same sex partner if living there for the previous 6 months; joint tenant; member of tenant's family; or carer aged 16+ who has given up their main home and lived there for 6 months.

Short Scottish secure tenancies

■ These new tenancies are for a period of 6 months' minimum. To repossess, the landlord has to give 2 months' notice in writing. Otherwise, the tenancy will automatically renew itself for a further 6 months. (This is called tacit relocation). If at the end of 12 months the landlord has still not brought the tenancy to an end, it will automatically become a full Scottish secure tenancy.

Right of appeal

■ A person can raise proceedings in the Sheriff Court to contest that they have been given an occupancy agreement instead of a Scottish secure tenancy or a short Scottish secure tenancy; a tenancy which is not Scottish secure tenancy; or a short Scottish secure tenancy instead of a Scottish secure tenancy. If the court accepts there are good grounds being shown, it can order the landlord to let the house under either an SST or an SSST. ▶

Youth forum

A NEW multi-agency youth forum in East Dunbartonshire is tackling the housing needs of local young people with the help of SCSH's Youth Unit. So far it has produced an information booklet and has trained youth workers in housing issues. Plans are also afoot to open a Youth Housing Information Shop. A housing education programme will be piloted in schools, with support from SCSH's new training worker. Further details from Brian Coles on 0141 570 2505.

Legal guides

A GUIDE to the Human Rights Act, written by advocate Derek O'Carroll, is now available from the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland, 6 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh EH12 5AA, tel: 0131 225 4544. This is the companion volume to two other publications by the same author: The Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Legislation, all funded by the Scottish Executive and available from CIHS.

Appeals

INTERESTED in what's happening with the Appeals Service?

noticeboard

April 2001 benefits uprating details

IS & income-based JSA:

single person, under 18	£31.95/£42.00
single person, 18 - 24	£42.00
single person, 25+	£53.05
lone parent under 18	£31.95/£42.00
lone parent 18+	£53.05
lone parent family premium	£15.90

Then visit their website at www.appeals-service.gov.uk where you will find information about the service, and published minutes of discussions between the appeals service and welfare rights organisations.

Single parents

COMPULSORY work-focused interviews for single parents with children over 5 years 3 months, which were being tested in the ONE pilot schemes, have now been extended to some Pathfinder areas. And from April compulsory interviews for all single parents with no children aged under 13 will be introduced nationally.

SYHN training

THE training course Residential Work with Survivors runs on 9 March in Edinburgh.

Young People and Mental Health runs again on 5 April, also in Edinburgh. To book, phone 0131 226 4382. Each costs £65 to SYHN subscribers.

Funding

THE Scottish Churches Community Trust gives grants and support to help local people working in poor areas. Examples include drop-in clubs, specialist workers, breakfast clubs, furniture delivery, rent deposit schemes, support groups for

drug users etc. For further details contact SCCT at 200 Balmore Road, Possilpark, Glasgow G22 6LJ. Tel/fax: 0141 336 3766, Email: admin@scct.org.uk and website: www.scct.org.uk.

Inverness

A NEW post of Young Person's Support Worker has been set up by Highland Council, using social inclusion partnership funding.

On the net

VISIT Edinburgh Cyrenians' new site at www.cyrenians.org.uk. And for downloadable leaflets on rights, go to the Legal Services Agency's site at www.lsa.org.uk

Resettlement

GLASGOW'S Simon Community is producing a Resettlement Handbook aimed at supporting staff. It will contain sessions dealing with many aspects of change that individuals may have to cope with in the process of settling into local communities. Further details from Margaret Anne Gachagan, Resettlement Training Service, Unit 4 Victoria Court, Hollybrook Street, Glasgow G42 7EH, tel: 0141 423 2100. ▀

Raft of new powers in SS Fraud Bill

New powers to investigate, punish and deter benefit fraud are contained in the Social Security Fraud Bill which was published in December.

New powers will be given to authorised DSS and local authority officers to require that information is provided from private and public sector organisations such as banks, building societies, credit reference agencies, private sector fraud prevention associations, providers of credit (such as credit card companies); insurance companies; utility companies; telecoms companies; and educational establishments including the Student Loans Co Ltd, and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

In particular, the utilities, eg electricity, water, could be asked to supply bulk information about certain addresses (but not named persons). DSS would match this information against benefit records. And so "where

benefits briefing

a person is claiming benefit from an address yet consumes no electricity or water this would raise suspicion that he did not in fact live there."

Sanctions

The Bill gives powers to withdraw or reduce certain benefits for 13 weeks from those convicted twice for benefit fraud. An underlying entitlement to benefit will remain, to ensure that other welfare provisions remain eg free prescriptions and school meals, to protect any dependants. A fallback scheme will pay a reduced level of benefit to prevent hardship. Some benefits, such as child

benefit, statutory sick pay and maternity payments will be exempt.

There will be a right of appeal to a tribunal against withdrawal of benefit and a three-year linking rule between the date of initial conviction and the date of the next offence (even though the date of the second conviction may be some time later). Where the offences link, the person will be subject to a benefit sanction.

Penalties

Where there is sufficient evidence to prosecute an employer for an offence relating to benefit fraud, a new discretionary power can impose a financial penalty of between £1000 and £5000 as an alternative to prosecution.

Existing powers will be clarified and tightened so that an offence occurs when the change of circumstances affecting benefit entitlement arises, and there is a knowing or dishonest failure to report that change. ▀