

# homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 36 August 2001

## Network looks for feedback

As part of its ongoing commitment to shaping services to match the needs of young people, the Scottish Youth Housing Network is running a consultation day in Dundee to find out what forms of information young people value.

On 15 November young people with some previous involvement in producing information will be invited to give feedback on the *I'm Offski* booklet and suggest ways that information provision could be improved.

There are many excellent publications already in existence such as snapfax, leaflets, booklets, packs, videos and CDs.

### Best methods

Through this consultation and other research, we hope that a structure and media will emerge which services and projects can use when drafting information on leaving home, housing options and local services. It is hoped to enable some of the best methods to be shared across Scotland. If you know young people who could be involved phone John Dickie on 0131 226 4382. ▶

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Members of GOSIP's Future Visions Youth Action Group after the preview of their anti-racist campaign in June. (See special feature on page 3)

## Minister launches education project

East Lothian's Housing Education Project was formally launched in June by Jackie Baillie, Minister for Social Justice, who welcomed it as "an excellent and positive example of how Social Inclusion Partnerships are working effectively to bring groups together."

Funded by Tranent Social Inclusion Partnership and East Lothian Housing Department and with guidelines set down by the Homelessness Section, the project is the result of highly committed work from a small group of sixth year pupils at Ross High School Tranent, supported by teacher Hilary Hall and project worker Sandie Wyles from Bridges Project.

The outcome was two boldly

designed products researched, written and structured by the pupils. *Leaving Home? A Few Home Truths* is an attractive booklet full of useful information about the reality of leaving home whether through choice or force of circumstance, while a wallet-sized snap-fax offers immediate advice on who can help in East Lothian.

The Minister said the information "provided vital information to other young people in danger of becoming homeless or who are already homeless in the East Lothian area."

The publications meet the project's purpose of encouraging young people to properly plan moving out of home and to increase their general aware-

ness of housing issues to reduce emergency homelessness in an authority where this has become a significant problem.

A pilot series of lessons to fourth year pupils was developed and delivered by staff from the Housing Department, Bridges and the co-ordinating teacher. Now they plan to roll out similar lessons to all senior pupils in E Lothian to support the distribution of the products.

An important spin-off has been the positive interest shown by professionals and service providers at events where the young people demonstrated their work, most notably at the Homing In Conference where they directed pertinent points to Jackie Baillie. ▶

# Good practice towards homeless drug users

**T**he availability and accessibility of services to homeless drug users in Scotland has recently come under scrutiny. The study highlights the complex and inter-related needs of homeless drug users.

Research funded by Scottish Homes and carried out by Glasgow University's Urban Studies Department set out to find good practice in service provision from the perspectives of both agency workers and service users.

For the 36 males and females interviewed, homelessness was commonly encountered when young, frequently precipitated by leaving care, running away from or being asked to leave home.

Most had used a range of substances, with early drug taking prompted by curiosity, peer pressure, easy drug availability, boredom, depression, or wanting to forget about personal problems. Women in par-

ticular had used drugs to cope with previous experiences of sexual abuse.

Services varied greatly across Scotland, with concentration in the main urban areas. Service strengths included a non-judgmental approach, flexible responses to individual problems and a range of practical, emotional and social support, particularly specialist workers for homeless drug users.

## Service shortages

On the down side was the shortage of most types of service, particularly in rural areas; the lack of follow-up support; problems accessing agencies including restricted opening hours, long waiting lists, strict appointment systems and problems identifying supportive GPs.

Gaps included the shortage of services which will work and accommodate individuals not yet ready to address their drug

use; limited services for those under 16 and over 25; lack of hostels for couples or with facilities for dogs; lack of provision for crack and recreational drug users; and lack of services for homeless drug users with mental health problems.

There was also a lack of support for tenants in danger of becoming homeless; lack of emergency or supported accommodation for women with children; and inadequate opportunities to access training, employment and alternative leisure, particularly somewhere to go that provides structure to the day.

The researchers say future policy should focus on the reasons for homelessness and drug use with a twin focus on prevention and alleviation.

For further details please contact co-author Catherine Kennedy at [c.kennedy@socsci.gla.ac.uk](mailto:c.kennedy@socsci.gla.ac.uk). Copies from Scottish Homes, 0131 313 0044. **▶**

## Conference feedback positive

**F**eedback from the Homing In Annual Conference which was held in Stirling this May was very positive indeed. Comments ranged from "exceeded my expectations" to "keep up the good work."

This year a record 120 people attended. Contributors included young people from Ross High School, Transformers from The Corner, CATH Day Centre's Threshold group and Venture Scotland's Millennium Volunteer Committee all of whom delivered the opening session. Their input at the beginning of the conference and that of young people from S Lanarkshire Throughcare and Aftercare in workshops were described as: "A really good start – young people were brilliant"; "Excellent"; and "Great to hear direct from young people".

Social Justice Minister Jackie Baillie's team were on hand to record the contributions of young people, who described their project activities and key points for the Minister to address. She repeated her commitment to finding workable solutions to tackle homelessness, particularly amongst young people.

Later, Moving Parts Theatre Group gave "a very enjoyable start to the afternoon." The value of networking and attending workshops was also appreciated: "Reassuring to find out so many workers are struggling with similar issues." And the free exhibition facilities and stalls were found to be useful, enabling projects to swap information and network. Ideas for next year please! **▶**

## Glasgow launch for resettlement toolkit

**A** flexible training resource for resettlement and social inclusion services will be launched at the Glasgow Simon Community's Resettlement Conference on 3 September in Glasgow.

Pavilion Scotland have linked up with Simon Community for the conference, which will focus on examples of good practice, identify gaps in service provision and explore innovative joint working partnerships.

The Resettlement Training Toolkit will help staff enable homeless people to become more aware of the choices available to them and think through the process of resettlement. The Toolkit costs £90 from Pavilion on 0845 601 3412, or for a full catalogue visit the web site at [www.pavpub.com](http://www.pavpub.com). **▶**

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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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## Housing info project opens

The East Dunbartonshire Council's new Youth Housing Information project based in Kirkintilloch is open for business.

Set up to give young people an insight into housing issues which could affect them, Project 101 also provides guidance to young people who may be potentially homeless or need housing advice so homelessness can be prevented.

It was set up by the council as part of its Youth Housing Strategy which highlights the need for young people to have better access to the services that they need.

As Project Co-ordinator Zoe Taylor explains: "The aim is to provide a service which young people find useful and relevant to their lives."

### Target group

The project is targeting 14 – 25 year olds who need information, advice or support to help them make informed choices. Staff are now working in tandem with local agencies to provide a one stop service for young people.

In conjunction with Sandie Simpson, SCSH's Housing Education Project Worker, Zoe is now developing a schools programme covering leaving home information and local issues.

For further information about Project 101 contact Zoe Taylor at 101 Townhead, Kirkintilloch, tel 0141 578 0282. ▶

## ■ SPECIAL FEATURE

# Ethnic outreach leads to GOSIP



*A banner created by young people as part of their work to combat racism*

Black and ethnic minority young people in Govanhill have a thriving service to help them access advice, information and support locally. GOSIP – the Govanhill Social Inclusion Project – was set up to prevent social exclusion by encouraging better communication with black and ethnic minority communities. Building on outreach work by Govanhill Housing Association, the service is determined to improve employment and training prospects, educational options, health and housing for 14 to 25 year olds and their families.

Funded by the Scottish Executive through the Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance, the project has a "one door shop" where young people from ethnic minority groups can access a whole variety of services in Punjabi, Urdu and English. The project is run by experienced ethnic minority adults and is based at Govanhill Housing Association.

In just one year GOSIP has established itself in the community, making its work known to its target group of 14 to 25 year old ethnic minority young people and their families. "It's not always easy being young and black", says Monika Sharma, Outreach Co-ordinator at GOSIP. "Bullying, harassment, or just being constantly knocked back. That's all part of the experience of being young and black or Asian in Govanhill today. But it need not be like that."

In the last year GOSIP has attracted enquiries from more than 100 people. It has helped clients get rehoused, obtain welfare advice, access personal development training. It has run a careers fayre, attracting 350 pupils, and run a job preparation course.

Future plans include a survey of 300 families living in sub-standard housing, many of whom are from ethnic minorities. Further skills development work is planned with GOSIP's Future Visions youth action group to enable them to spearhead an anti-racist campaign which will also involve other organisations. And GOSIP hopes for a continuation of the

work which has begun to assist and support young black parents. The project also hopes to set up a self-help group for women fleeing domestic violence. In the words of one service user: "What do I get from GOSIP? The main thing is learning about our rights."

Other work includes a Parental Participation project in partnership with the Workers' Educational Association. A careers event at the Tramway involved pupils from local high schools and unemployed people in Govanhill.

For further information contact Monika Sharma or Shamin Ahmad at GOSIP, Govanhill HA, 151 Coplaw Street, Glasgow G42 7DE, tel: 0141 424 5000, email [monika@gira-gosip.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:monika@gira-gosip.fsnet.co.uk). ▶

“What do I get from GOSIP?

The main thing is learning about our rights.”

### JobCentre Plus

JOBCENTRE Plus is the new name for what was being called the Working Age Agency. Fifty new Pathfinder offices will be opened in October. They will operate compulsory work-focused interviews for most claimants, similar to ONE and the lone parent pilot scheme. But CPAG reports that an important difference has already emerged. Though both of the schemes are founded on the work-focused interview principle, it appears that JobCentre Plus will not deal with housing benefit claims or pass on changes of circumstances to local authorities. If this is the case, it will not meet its aim of being a "single point of contact" for claimants.

### On the move

THE ROCK Trust has now moved to 55 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QY, tel: 0131 557 4059, fax: 524 9879, e-mail: admin@rocktrust.net and web site www.rocktrust.net.

### JSA cuts?

THE SOCIAL Security Advisory Committee has taken views from organisations and individuals on whether JSA claimants

# noticeboard

## Conference diary date

**It's never too soon to get the date of the next Homing In Conference in your diary! It will take place on Friday 10 May 2002 in the Stirling Management Centre, University Campus, Stirling. All suggestions for sessions are welcome, especially those which could involve young people in the presentations.**

who don't turn up at literacy and numeracy skills training should have their JSA cut or stopped. Their findings will be known soon. For a copy of the information and draft regulations contact the Secretary, SSAC, New Court, 48 Carey Street, London WC2A 2LS or visit their website at www.ssaac.org.uk.

## Conferences

THE Scottish Housing and Support Conference celebrates its 10th anniversary. The topics include the new Housing Act, benefit changes, care regulation, young people influencing service delivery, alcohol, homelessness, asylum seekers, disability payments, information provision, and lots more. From 11 to 12 October in the Hilton Dun-

blane Hydro. Residential fees £290, non-residential fees £225. A few discounted places are available. For further information and bookings contact the organiser, Norma Jones, on 0131 538 8191.

SCSH is holding a National Homelessness Conference and AGM – *Making Connections* – on 8 and 9 November in the Apex International Hotel, Edinburgh. Speakers include Jackie Baillie MSP and Sue Irving, the new Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator. Contact 0131 226 4382 for a programme and bookings information. The cost is £195 residential, £140 non-residential, £80 day rate.

## Publications

NATIONAL Welfare Benefits Handbook for 2001/2002 is out.

It includes a commentary on the new HB Review and Appeal procedures. (See [Benefits Briefing](#).) From CPAG, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

## SYHN Training

IN RESPONSE to the success of the courses which have been run on Challenging Behaviour we have designed a follow-on course called Challenging Behaviour Part 2. It is only open to those who have previously attended any previous first course. We will be writing to those people to invite bookings. It is scheduled to run on 14 March in Glasgow. Enquiries and bookings to John Woods, 0131 226 4382.

## Wanted

ARTICLES, noticeboard items and good quality photographs for future issues of *Homing In*. Contact Norma Jones with your suggestions on 0131 538 8191 or email to syhn@joa.co.uk.

## Few homeless votes

HOMELESS people registering to vote was pitifully low at the last general election. Only 24 people registered in London whilst only 17 registered across the whole of Scotland. ▀

# New HB appeals system launched

**N**ew regulations came into force on July 2 to regulate decision-making and appeals for housing benefit and council tax benefit. This brings HB and CTB into line with other benefits, which come under the Decision-Making and Appeal (DMA) rules.

There are transitional arrangements and Guidance for local authorities on how to work with the new rules.

There were two stages of appeal before. One was internal and the other was to a Review Board. These have been replaced by Revisions, Supersessions and independent Appeal Tribunals. Any dissatisfied claimants can take the case further to the Commissioners, and then to Court. The time limit for most appeals and revisions is now one month.

There are three types of time limit:

- A dispute period: Up to one month when the decision can be revised on

## benefits briefing

any grounds; or where the original decision was based on a mistake about or ignorance of a material fact.

- A late revision: up to 13 months from the decision if certain grounds are met.
- An "anytime revision": where the decision was based on a mistake about or ignorance of a material fact which led to the claimant benefiting; or the rent officer has now increased the amount of rent that qualifies; or the decision is being appealed.

An important difference is that they must be requested in writing – unlike for other benefits where they

can be requested verbally.

A decision can be changed – "superseded" – where there is:

- a change in circumstances;
- a mistake about, or ignorance of, a material fact,
- an error of law, if a revision is not possible;
- an appeal decision based on a mistake about/ignorance of, a material fact;
- the rent officer has now reduced the claim-related rent.

Appeals must be made within one month of the decision. They can be accepted up to 13 months in some circumstances. Claimants must be notified in writing within 14 days of the decision, their right of appeal and their right to ask for a written statement of reasons for the decision.

Claimants cannot appeal against rent officer decisions, or benefit penalties under the work-focused interview rules. ▀