

# homing in

Newsletter of the Scottish Youth Housing Network

No 37 Nov 2001



Part of the giant mural created by homeless people in Aberdeen

## New internet portal

Plans are afoot for a single gateway to Scotland's Voluntary Sector, using the internet. SCVO is developing a voluntary-sector portal which will act as a one-stop shop to access all information, services and opportunities available.

It envisages creating "a huge and totally interactive warehouse of websites" with "the biggest electronic library exclusively containing voluntary sector information, and a shopping mall housed within."

All participating organisations will be able to display information, publish events, access funding sources, advertise job vacancies and volunteering opportunities, review the latest news and contribute stories.

### Roadshows

The new portal is called [workwithus.org](http://workwithus.org). To find out more, book a place on one of SCVO's free roadshows. They take place on 11 December in Glasgow; and 12 December in Edinburgh. Further information is available from SCVO's Portal Team at 18-19 Claremont Crescent, Edinburgh EH7 4QD, tel: 0131 556 3882 or email them at [portal@scvo.org.uk](mailto:portal@scvo.org.uk).

## Art without walls

Aberdeen Cyrenians recently held an exhibition of homeless people's art entitled *Art Without Walls* at Ferryhill Parish Church.

The exhibition was the result of a collaboration between Aberdeen Cyrenians, the John Lewis Partnership and the New Futures Fund Initiative.

In return, Ferryhill Parish Church offered the use of their purpose-built atrium and coffee shop, as well as the main church – providing the perfect venue for this exhibition.

Over 50 people attended

the opening, viewing the giant house mural in the church, as well as two series of black and white photographs focusing on scenes in the city and women's issues.

Other pieces of artwork include paintings, felting work, clay and fimo models, candles and glass painting – all made through the weekly art group run by Lucie Norton, secondee from the John Lewis Partnership.

For Louise Christie, an Aberdeen Cyrenians' client and resident, this show is the first time she has been

given the opportunity to display her artwork.

*Dots Progression* is a set of four pieces showing an evolution of her ideas from paper and paint into feltwork.

She says: "It was great seeing the people coming in, looking at my art and saying how they like it. It feels brilliant to have my work up on the walls!"

You can contact the Aberdeen Cyrenians' director, Paul Hannan, at Simon House, 106 Crown Street, Aberdeen AB11 6HJ, tel: 01224 572 877, or visit [www.aberdeen-cyrenians.org](http://www.aberdeen-cyrenians.org)

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# Decade of courage SAY Women in tribute to survivors of abuse

This year marks the tenth anniversary of SAY Women's services to young homeless women who are survivors of childhood sexual abuse and rape or sexual assault.

It began back in 1988 when a group of women from a range of agencies and groups – including Women's Support Project, Women's Aid, RSPCC and Glasgow Council for Single Homeless – identified the need for safe housing linked with emotional support for young women who were homeless or trapped in an abusive situation.

The group met regularly to identify the type of accommodation and support necessary, and the possible funding sources. An open meeting was held in 1990 to take their ideas forward.

Initially applications to Glasgow District Council, Strathclyde Region and charitable trusts were all unsuccessful. However, the determination of this group of women eventually paid off with a grant in 1991 from Comic Relief to employ one paid worker to support three young women in a shared flat set-up.

The original unmet need coupled with SAY Women's specialist services has now gained wide recognition. Over the past 10 years the service has expanded to six individual flats and one shared flat in partnership with Shettleston Housing Association, and a core staff of five workers. And funding from Glasgow City Council and Greater Glasgow Health Board (GGHB), has secured its core staff funding.

## Demonstration project

A unique development is now underway, thanks to funding from the Health and Homelessness Group of GGHB. As part of its commitment to tackle issues of homelessness it has given three year funding to a Demonstration Project managed by SAY Women. It will identify and address the key issues relating to homelessness and addiction for survivors of child sexual abuse.

A Follow-On Support Worker will work with those women who move on from the residential

project, with the aim of preventing repeat homelessness.

A Development Worker will identify current practices and concerns of agencies working in the homelessness field, in order to identify an effective model of good practice which can then be extended throughout the network.

Both posts will enhance SAY Women's training and consultancy support to agencies in their response to survivors of abuse. There will also be the potential to extend SAY Women's services through the introduction of scatter flats.

## Greater awareness

The last ten years have been difficult for those involved in SAY Women, working in a climate of reluctance to recognise the existence of childhood sexual abuse, let alone provide funding. Despite greater public awareness of the issues there has not been a parallel growth in the services needed to support adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Rosina McRae, Co-ordinator of SAY Women and author of this article comments: "SAY Women has played a small part in this change of climate and provision but has always done so in recognition of the courage, strength and human spirit of the young people who have survived the trauma and whose experiences have informed the work of SAY Women. This article is dedicated to survivors and as a thank you for their contribution to our knowledge and understanding."

In the last year SAY Women has received 54 referrals, including seven re-referrals. Thirty one per cent had a history of rough sleeping, and three were living rough at the point of referral.

High levels of vulnerability and complex needs continue, with 40% of young women survivors self-harming, 27% with a history of overdosing, 25% with drug dependency and 23% facing criminal charges.

You can contact SAY Women at 11 Bell Street, Glasgow G1 1LG, tel: 0141 552 5803. ▀

## Moray group aims to connect

Chain Connections is a support and social group set up two years ago by young people involved in the Moray Independent Living Project in Elgin. At present membership is restricted to those who are 16-24, involved with the project or the Throughcare and Aftercare project, though this is under review.

The group meets twice a month to discuss issues, plan events and socialise. Inadequate public transport is just one problem they face when organising activities, and they have voiced their concerns on national radio.

They organise trips, most recently to Aviemore, and have succeeded in their bid for funds to cover the costs.

Group members Tracy Williamson and Michelle Coull said the group has "helped our confidence, self-esteem and made us aware we are not alone in the difficulties we face."

## Saying no

They explained how the group enables them to discuss with others in similar situations how to deal with conflict, and how to be decisive and deal with events which could threaten their tenancies – such as saying no to house parties.

The group are reviewing their constitution. As part of this they want to involve more young people who would benefit from membership. They also want to establish charitable status for the group.

For further information on the group, or if you have information of use to them, contact Chain Connections through Moray Independent Living Project on 01343 549557. ▀



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

# Literacy is the key



*Quarriers education project takes a multi-sensory approach to learning*

One million Scots are functionally illiterate; 400,000 lack the basic skills to hold down a job. In recognition of these stark facts Quarriers adult education service works with young homeless people to improve their literacy and numeracy and boost their self-confidence.

Quarriers has two Glasgow-based homelessness projects. The James Shields Project provides accommodation for up to two years to 39 young homeless people aged 18 to 25. Stopover has temporary emergency accommodation for 14 young homeless people aged 16 to 25.

The Adult Education Worker Coleen Willoughby provides literacy, numeracy and other forms of learning support to residents. She identifies one of her most important duties as developing and building self-esteem and confidence. "So many of this programme's service users have had negative educational experiences. Many have shame around their literacy and numeracy abilities.

"Participants benefit from a positive approach to their learning. They receive one-to-one, specialised, customised literacy and numeracy support. Many are especially pleased with this. They feel less sensitive and embarrassed in a private learning envi-

ronment. Working individually allows me the unique opportunity to assess their idiosyncratic learning styles and needs.

"I see education work as a partnership. I empower students to claim their education. While students are often surprised by this approach, they seem to really enjoy being partners in their own learning process."

Quarriers take a multi-sensory approach – people learn how to use a variety of senses to help them read and spell. For example, students may use movement to help them learn, such as manipulating blocks to track the number and order of sounds in a word. Or they may make particularly difficult letters in a word a different texture or colour to make learning easier and more fun.

Coleen explains: "Most work with a variety of approaches. Those who have difficulty with phonetic processing (ie tracking the number and order of sounds in words) are taught how sounds physically feel in their mouth and throat. This is quite techni-

cal and is very effective. The motor sensory feedback is a tool they can use to help them read and spell words. It's a very different, radical approach and works very well with people who have dyslexia."

Another approach helps people strengthen their visual imagery of words. "This works well in conjunction with the tactile approach. I also use it to help people improve their reading and listening comprehension. The most successful readers are those who make pictures of what they read."

Michael became homeless due to bullying in his neighbourhood. He had low self-esteem, little confidence and his trust in others was badly shaken. In the education programme he thoroughly enjoyed the individual attention.

Michael writes: "When I started I was not very good at spelling, reading and writing. I started off with small words and I did not like to write or read. Now I am spelling big words and I have learned common suffixes and prefixes. I write a lot now and read big books like *The Little Prince* and *Harry Potter*, which I really enjoyed. What I really found helpful about this programme was it was one to one unlike school, which I was in a class and struggled."

Stephen is intelligent and articulate, but unable to express his creative ideas in writing without help. He says of school: "In the subjects I was good at such as art and science the teachers helped me, but in subjects like English and Maths teachers didn't seem to help me. Students were often violent."

"A lot of students made fun of me because I didn't know how to read. Teachers didn't ask me questions because I didn't know the answers. They ignored me. The only teachers who seemed to pay attention to me were the science and art teachers."

"This programme is much more intense. It focuses on my abilities. It recognises my strengths and brings my weaknesses up to the power of my strengths. The one on one work is much better for me because it helps me focus on areas that I need help in and I'm not just going over things I already know. I feel you treat me as an equal whereas others treated me like a moron."

You can contact Coleen Willoughby at Quarriers on 0141 429 6738. ■

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## Transitional HB

RESEARCH into how the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme is developing has just been published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Crucial to the success of Supporting People, THBS runs until March 2003 and should provide information about the current costs of providing support through HB.

The report finds that some authorities had made good progress and were developing innovative ideas to improve data quality and deal with remaining barriers; others were only making slow progress. Benefit Agencies had not appreciated the importance of what had been asked of them and had not been proactive in identifying the support costs within service charges.

## Link launch

A NEW website has been launched by Link Housing Association, whose housing services include accommodation and support for young people. At [www.linkhalted.co.uk](http://www.linkhalted.co.uk), the site describes its new, expanded structure and wider range of activities. It is being developed to include news items, policy

# noticeboard

## Homing In Annual Conference 2002

Next year's Homing In Annual Conference will be held on Friday 10 May in the Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling Campus, in Stirling. If you have any suggestions for main sessions or workshop topics please let us know about them. You can e-mail us with your ideas at [syhn@joa.co.uk](mailto:syhn@joa.co.uk). There will again be the opportunity to display information about your organisation and to bring along a stand, entirely free. So make sure you're there! And book early to ensure you are represented.

statements, tenants newsletters, etc. It will soon become interactive – so that tenants can report repairs and applicants can apply for housing on-line. Feedback please to Craig Sanderson, Chief Executive, Link Group Ltd, 45 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QY, 0131 557 0350, or e-mail to [cs@linkhalted.co.uk](mailto:cs@linkhalted.co.uk)

## Human rights

*THE Human Rights Act 1998 And Scots Law* by Tom Mullen and Paul Brown summarises the way the HRA fits into Scots Law, explains the basic concepts, raises points for discus-

sion, and includes a full set of materials. It is published by LSA in association with the Scottish Refugee Council, Castlemilk, East End Ethnic Minorities, Dumbarton and Paisley Law Centres and Drumchapel Law & Money Advice Centre. £15.00 plus p&p from LSA, tel: 0141 353 3354.

*A Brief Guide To The Human Rights Act 1998 In Relation To Housing*, by Derek O'Carroll, advocate, discusses the basic concepts and operation of the HRA generally and applies it to housing law. It is one of the first publications to have systematically applied the Act to housing

law in Scotland and essential reading for all housing advisers. £4.80 plus p&p, from LSA.

Special offer: Order a copy of *Human Rights Act 1998 And Scots Law* and get a copy of *A Brief Guide to the Human Rights Act 1998 in Relation to Housing* free whilst stocks last Tel: 0141 353 3354.

## Other publications

*BUT what about me...? – Homelessness After Stock Transfer* is a report which examines the English experience of how the service for homeless people was affected as a result of local authority stock transfer. It costs £10 plus £1.50 p&p from SCSH, Wellgate House, 200 Cowgate, Edinburgh EH1 1NQ, tel: 0131 226 4382.

## DWP website

THE NEW website for the Department for Work and Pensions is at [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk). Malcolm Wicks is now the Parliamentary Under Secretary (Work), and has particular responsibility for Housing Benefit, Social Fund, Fraud and Methods of Payment Reform, Income Support (for Working Age) and Jobseeker's Allowance. ▶

# Broadening the Single Room Rent

**O**n July 2 new criteria for the assessment of the Single Room Rent were introduced. The criteria which are used by the Rent Officer in deciding the level of costs under the Single Room Rent scheme have now been broadened to take account of the cost of shared accommodation.

A new Circular from the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly the DSS), HB/CTB A20/2001, gives full details and sets out the background to the change. It advises local authorities of the steps to take to ensure that claims are re-assessed from the date of the change.

The Single Room Rent restricts the maximum rent which can be paid to a young individual living in the private rented sector. It was set at "the general level of rent of a single room with shared use of toilet and kitchen facilities (but without board and attendance) in the locality."

## benefits briefing

A young individual is defined as a single claimant under 25. And a single claimant is someone who has neither a partner nor is a lone parent.

Private sector rent claims for HB are referred to the Rent Officer, who then takes into account whether the claimant is a young individual when deciding what the SRR should be.

The problem with this method was that the SRR only reflected the cost of basic accommodation. It did not take into account the position of shared houses or flats where tenants shared the sitting room.

The government has decided to change the rules in order to "better reflect what is available on the market to young people." As a result, the SRR has now been broadened.

The broader SRR will operate in much the same way, but will now allow broader scope. The criteria that the Rent Officer will use are that the tenant has:

- exclusive use of one bedroom;
- does not have the use of any other bedroom;
- shared use of a bathroom and toilet;
- shared use of a kitchen (without the exclusive use of facilities for cooking food).

Unchanged are the criteria which state that the rent does not include any amounts for board and attendance and that the dwelling is in the same locality and in a reasonable state of repair. ▶