



Building on Firm Foundations?

SCSH has raised concerns about a number of proposals in the Scottish Government green paper – *Firm Foundations: The Future of Housing in Scotland*. The paper proposed to end the Right to Buy for new social housing properties. In SCSH's response to the paper, we highlighted the lack of clarity on whether this will also include those Registered Social Landlord properties which have the scheduled extension of Right to Buy in 2012.

The paper further proposes increasing the supply of housing across all tenures by targeting the construction of 35,000 houses a year, which is welcome. As documented by many other housing and homelessness organisations, SCSH has raised the issue of what proportion of them will be affordable rented (as opposed to owner occupied) and whether or not realistic funding will be available to achieve the target. With an ageing society, SCSH believes it is crucial that greater

attention is made to the type of housing constructed with increased provision of adapted and 'lifetime homes'.

Role of the Private Rented Sector

SCSH has highlighted a number of issues to be resolved if the private rented sector is to play an enhanced role in meeting the needs of homeless people. With high rents in the sector and the new housing benefit framework – Local Housing Allowance – soon to be introduced (linked to Broad Rental Market Areas), SCSH has concerns that there will be increased restrictions in accessing the private rented sector.

This uncertainty combined with proposed DWP reforms meaning that individuals must move into employment in order to avoid sanctions, could place some people in a very difficult situation. A vulnerable person may have little choice but to either accept poorly paid work, lose certain 'passport' benefits and end up worse off and

unable to afford to sustain their tenancy, or not accept employment and be subject to benefits sanctions which again could put their tenancy at risk.

Whilst SCSH recognises the positive role the private rented sector can play in helping to meet a homeless person's needs, the Scottish Government must also recognise that many people are made homeless from this sector in the first place. The current Short Assured Tenancy does not offer sufficient security of tenure to be a satisfactory solution for homeless people. In view of this, there should be a full debate around the future of tenancy, while any solution must aim to strengthen tenant's rights considerably. SCSH also believes solutions must be sustainable, affordable and good quality.

SCSH's response to the consultation is available at www.scsch.org.uk

For more information please contact Daniel Coote or Robert Aldridge on 0131 2264382 or by email at daniel@scsch.org.uk

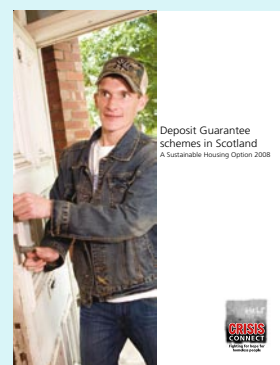
Rent Deposit Guarantee Schemes Report

A report published by homeless charity Crisis demonstrates how Deposit Guarantee Schemes make a major contribution to tackling homelessness. It shows how 28 schemes across Scotland helped give homeless or vulnerable people access to the private rented sector by guaranteeing the deposit to landlords. The charity said this had removed a real hurdle for many people who need a roof over their

heads but couldn't afford the initial outlay.

The report *Deposit guarantee schemes in Scotland* was launched by the charity at an event in Edinburgh on the 1st of February, which included speakers from SCSH, Scottish Churches Housing Action and the Scottish Association of Landlords. Communities minister Stewart Maxwell said: 'I'm delighted to see that deposit guarantee schemes are helping so many people access housing in the

private rented sector which might otherwise be out of their reach.'



Download the report at www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/advisoryservice.html

What's New?

Social Networks: not just about specialist services

Having a strong social network has been linked to many improved outcomes, ranging from increased mental health, lower crime rates for those discharged from prison and even reduced risks of heart attacks. Projects focusing on mediation, mentoring and befriending can play a really important part in helping people experiencing homelessness to develop and repair their social networks. But, as emphasised by Glasgow Homelessness Network (GHN) at Shelter's recent Tenancy Sustainment Conference, social networks are about more than specialised services. GHN's starting point is the view advanced by Lemos & Crane in *Dreams Deferred*, their 2002 report on social networks and homelessness.

'Relieving isolation is not something additional that can be done once the urgent practical questions of having somewhere to live or needing detox or drug rehabilitation have been dealt with. On the contrary a resilient and trusting group of friends and family members at one's side is an important bulwark against, and a method of combating, vulnerability and homelessness.'

So, aside from linking into specialist projects, what practical ways can more general services attend to social networks? Some suggestions from GHN include:

- ◆ Checking on the health – or otherwise – of a person's social network should routinely form part of an initial needs assessment. This isn't easy, as many people are understandably reluctant to acknowledge difficulties in this area. It is important to be sensitive and also to continue to assess potential needs over time. And,

of course, the issue should be addressed, if appropriate, as part of a care/support plan.

- ◆ For temporary accommodation providers, ask what impact your visitor policies have on your residents' ability to keep their social networks going. Of course, health and safety are important, but they need to be weighed against the need for residents to stay in touch with friends and family. In addition, assess your overnights away policy. A fierce policy – such as permitting no overnights away on pain of losing your place – can make it much harder to build up / restore connections with friends and family.
- ◆ For young people in particular, the internet – email along with instant messaging and social networking sites – may be an important way of keeping in touch with the rest of the world.
- ◆ Being in work or training is, for most people, a rich source of social contact. Colleagues can provide support and validation and may also be a source of new friendships. At a more basic level, they help a person feel connected with the wider world. So an additional benefit of employability practices is creating the opportunity for people experiencing homelessness to develop and extend their social network.
- ◆ Building upon needs assessments and support plans, make sure a person's current social networks are one of the factors to consider in deciding where a person wishes to resettle.

Glasgow Homelessness Network's report on social networks, *The Cup With No Handle*, can be found at: www.ghn.org.uk/PDFs/2006/social_networks_report_mar06.pdf

For more information on Social Networks, including a recently launched on-line database of contacts and projects, go to: www.scottishsocialnetworks.org

New Lesson Plans

The Scottish Council for Single Homeless has produced a new set of free lesson plans aimed at challenging students' attitudes and knowledge of homelessness. The three lesson plans, available to download free of charge from www.leavinghome.info, allow students to compare their attitudes about homelessness to those of the Scottish general public, gain a better understanding of the myths and realities surrounding homelessness and decide on what laws they would make to help improve the situation for homeless people in Scotland.

Based on the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2006, the lesson plans encourage students to discuss commonly held perceptions about being homeless and explore their own ideas on how homelessness in Scotland could be tackled.

The Homelessness Series of lesson plans are easy to photocopy and come with teacher fact sheets. For further information visit www.leavinghome.info or contact CSH on 0131 226 4382.

Lesson: 20 mins
Preparation: 5 mins



What Next for Supporting People Funded Services?

The ring-fenced Supporting People grant to local authorities is coming to an end from April 2008. From this point on, services previously funded by Supporting People will need to make a case for continued local authority funding alongside the very wide range of services focused across all groups. For many agencies it will be a real challenge to marshal good evidence on (1) the impact their service has on alleviating and preventing homelessness and (2) an account of the monetary benefit of their service.

The Scottish Government has recently investigated these two issues for the whole Supporting People programme, with their very tentative answers published in a recent report *Supporting People: Cost and Benefits*.

As far as impact is concerned, the report suggests supporting people prevents 4 out of every 10 people it helps from becoming homeless. However, it is clear that the general quality of evidence for this claim is weak. On cost, the report suggests that an average episode of homelessness can be costed at £5,000, though it acknowledges that other estimates vary from as low as £630 and as high as £40,000.

The report tells us that their £5,000 figure was reached by considering a range of cost estimates and taking into account that some

episodes of homelessness are far more straightforward than others. Using this information, along with more specific data about particular interventions, the report suggests that for a £107m spend on homelessness, Supporting People has delivered a cost benefit of £129m, which – by SCSH’s calculations, based on their figures – amounts to just under 15,000 episodes of homelessness prevented.

SCSH suspects that the average cost of homelessness figure is on the low side – it is certainly lower than the costs associated with the two sample case studies calculated by three local authorities in our 2007 briefing *The Cost of Tenancy Failure*.

Overall it is disappointing that the report provides relatively little detail on how it has reached its cost and impact estimates. However, this does reflect the fact that, as a sector, there is a long way to go in routinely focusing on outcomes, both in terms of the impact of interventions and the potential costs savings.

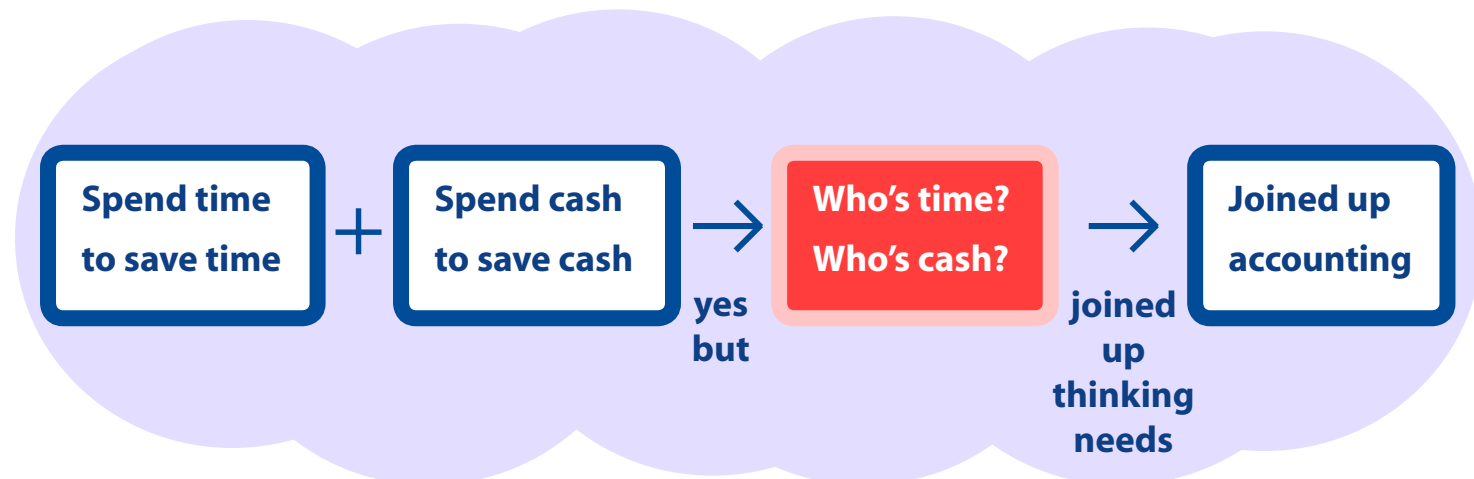
Estimating the impacts of intervention and the costs of episodes can be complex and any approach to doing so will involve reaching a compromise between the resources allocated to measuring and the accuracy of the measurements. That said gathering evidence that is ‘good enough’ for informing decisions and

priorities need not be so hard. Good monitoring – especially using some of the more recently developed outcomes tools – can provide evidence of impact for funders while also providing very useful information for clients, frontline staff and service managers.

Routinely measuring rates of tenancy sustainment is a basic step that a number of housing providers have undertaken, but that ought really to be universal practice. Ideally, this information should be (a) analysed in a range of ways, e.g. broken down by age, gender, household-type, support needs profile and (b) linked to information about interventions the household has received, e.g. tenancy sustainment support, a furniture package, money advice etc.

Of course, all this takes work. But the benefits come in not only having a strong case to make to the local authority – and others – for funding but also, and more critically, in being confident that the work is having a tangible and sustained positive impact for people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

More information on monitoring and evaluating the impact of homelessness work can be found on the SCSH website at: www.scsch.org.uk/features/outcomes. The Supporting People Costs Benefit Research can be downloaded from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/14141444/0>





Tell It Like It Is Conference

Non-traditional approaches to learning – peer education, mentoring and coaching.

Wednesday 27th February 2008, Edinburgh

For more information contact Patricia Crook.

patriciac@learndirectscotland.com or 0141 5876807



Engaging Young People Training

Friday 7th March 2008, Glasgow

More information and booking form at www.scsch.org.uk



CIH Annual Conference & Exhibition

Monday 10th – Thursday 13th March 2008, Aberdeen

www.cih.org or telephone 0131 2254544



'No Place Like Home' Child Support Conference

Wednesday 19th March 2008, Glasgow

Contact Hazel Wilson on 0844 5152465 or email

scotlandevents@shelter.org.uk



Homing In Conference

Friday 30th May 2008, Stirling

Dates for your diary



SHASC Conference

Thursday 2nd October 2008, Edinburgh

Dates for your diary



SCSH National Homelessness Conference

Thursday 30th and Friday 31st October 2008, Edinburgh

Dates for your diary

Engaging Young People Training

Friday 7th March, 9.30am-12.30pm, Glasgow

This half day training seminar provides an overview of the recent SCSH work on service user involvement and recognising learning in young people. A range of activities will be used to help delegates assess and review how they recognise learning and involve service users. This training is suitable for anyone working with young people who wishes to explore different ways of involving service users and recognising skills in young people. A copy of two SCSH reports on service user involvement and rewarding learning is included in the training price.

The cost is £50 per delegate.

Details and a booking form at www.scsch.org.uk



SCSH is the membership body for organisations and individuals working to tackle homelessness in Scotland.

Full membership details are available on 0131 226 4382 or on our web site: www.scsch.org.uk

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Web Links

Links to all documents referred to in this issue of *inhouse*, and to back copies, can be found at our new look website www.scsch.org.uk