

## SCSH Gives Parliamentary Evidence on Homelessness



SCSH has called for a national stocktake of progress towards 2012 and a national review of rough sleeping, in evidence submitted to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee.

Commenting on the changes which have taken place in the last year SCSH Chief Exec Robert Aldridge said it was more important than ever to monitor the impact of changes at national level. He stressed that three new factors need to be considered.

The first is the impact of the recession on homelessness. This new structural element will not have been anticipated in the projections for 2012 made by local

authorities. It is important that the Scottish Government is fully aware of any impact in order that it can intervene where appropriate.

The second is the new relationship between central and local government outlined in the Concordat. The removal of ring fenced funding from homelessness and from housing support services is a dramatic policy change, of which its impact is uncertain. SCSH stressed the need to be aware of any groups or types of housing support which were losing out as a result of the policy change – especially if this impacted on the ability of local authorities to meet their obligations for 2012. Referring to a survey by the Housing Support Enabling Unit, SCSH expressed concern that 31% of homelessness services had said they were operating in deficit, and that those offering low levels of support were more likely to be in deficit. This raises issues that important preventative work

may be at risk. SCSH expressed its concern that the Homelessness Monitoring Group has not met for almost a year which meant there was little independent scrutiny of progress towards 2012 at national level.

The third area stressed by SCSH was the need for caution in relation to increased use of the private rented sector (PRS). There was anecdotal evidence of increasing numbers of landlords with buy to let mortgages being unable to meet mortgage repayments and placing tenants at risk of homelessness. SCSH also drew attention to increasing competition for use of the PRS from potential first time buyers unable to raise a mortgage, and to the lack of protection for tenants under the Short Assured Tenancy.

*The full written evidence can be accessed at - [www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/lgc/or-09/lg09-0501.htm](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/lgc/or-09/lg09-0501.htm)*

*Please contact Robert Aldridge on 0131 2264382 or by email at [robert@scsh.org.uk](mailto:robert@scsh.org.uk) for more information.*

## New Minister for Housing and Communities



Alex Neil MSP is the new Minister for Communities and Housing. The post was created in May 2007 as the Minister of Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell MSP) but has been renamed in February 2009 in a ministerial reshuffle which saw responsibility for the Sport portfolio transfer to the Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison MSP). The minister reports to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, who has overall responsibility for

the portfolio, and is a member of cabinet (Nicola Sturgeon MSP).

Alex was re-elected as a regional MSP for Central Scotland in 2007. He has specific responsibility for social inclusion, equalities, anti-poverty measures, housing and regeneration.

He will also have responsibilities for the continued delivery of Scotland's ambitious and internationally acclaimed homelessness legislation.

# What's New?

## Housing Blueprint



### The Scottish Government

On the 6 February a Government backed expert group published a blueprint to help increase housing supply to satisfy need and demand in the Scottish housing market.

The Housing Supply Task Force report presented recommendations to help establish the conditions for house building to recover once market conditions improve -

- Identify alternative methods of funding infrastructure to accelerate construction of housing/other major projects
- Ensure speedy implementation of planning system reforms
- Establish a framework to assist the house building industry return to full capacity
- Making better use of public sector land for housing.

*The full report can be downloaded from the following link - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1125/0077335.pdf>*

*For more information on Section 11 please contact Daniel Coote, on 0131 2264382 or by email at [daniel@scsh.org.uk](mailto:daniel@scsh.org.uk)*

## New Debt Action Forum set up by the Scottish Government

The Debt Action Forum is to be set up to make sure the Scottish Government does more in its power to give support to people struggling with personal debt.

Chaired by Community Safety Minister Fergus Ewing, the Forum will examine information and initiatives on debt relief, debt advice

## Glasgow Homelessness Research



### Glasgow Homelessness Partnership

Two evaluation studies commissioned by the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership and carried out by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York have been published.

The first report presents findings from an evaluation study of the experience of single person households presenting as homeless in Glasgow in 2007/08. The research reveals that the number of homeless presentations (from single households) had dropped from 10,056 in 2002/03 to 6,269 in 2007/08 – a reduction of 38 percent. As well as substantial improvements in operational joint working in the last few years, service providers also highlighted better joint assessment arrangements while the quality of newly commissioned emergency accommodation and specialist supported accommodation projects were viewed very highly.

The Council's city centre service, the Hamish Allan Centre, was reported as under pressure and experiencing difficulties in accessing appropriate emergency accommodation for presenting households. Further to this, blockages in accessing

temporary furnished flats were highlighted by service providers and both they, and service users, reported pronounced difficulties in accessing permanent tenancies via Section 5 referrals.

The second piece of research presents findings of a longitudinal evaluation of the outcomes for residents resettled from two of Glasgow's large, council-run male hostels. An overwhelming majority (83 per cent) of hostel residents said that their life was 'much better' or 'better' than it had been when they were living in the hostel; only 6 per cent thought that it was worse.

In terms of health, they were far more likely to report improvements than deteriorations in their general and mental health since leaving the hostel and overall levels of both drinking and drug use were reported to have fallen significantly since they left the hostel.

*The full research papers can be downloaded from the following link: [www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/research.htm](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/research.htm)*

*For more information on this article please contact Daniel Coote, on 0131 2264382 or by email at [daniel@scsh.org.uk](mailto:daniel@scsh.org.uk)*

and repossession and recommend a package of legislative and non-legislative measures to tackle the issues.

Mr Ewing also announced improvements to the Debt Arrangement Scheme which will help people with a disposable income pay back their debts over a

longer period, free from the threat of legal action.

Members of the forum include organisations such as the The Law Society of Scotland, Legal Services Agency, Citizens Advice Scotland, Money Advice Scotland, Council of Scottish Clearing Banks and CoSLA.

## Youth Unit Resource Sale - Be Quick Or Miss Out!

SCSH's Youth Team has been listening. We know that across the country organisations are finding funding harder and harder to come by. Every decision about spending requires close scrutiny and every project needs to think hard about where its money goes.

Supporting young people who are setting up in tenancies on their own, or guiding young people who are maybe starting to think about leaving home, takes time, staffing and resources.

We also know that the Streets Ahead guide to leaving home and housing is a rock solid resource. Likewise, My Place My Space, tenancy sustainment pack is valued by workers and young people alike. Put together with the involvement of young service users and professionals, both these resources represent hours of painstaking work aimed at giving the right information in the right format at the right time.

No-one would pretend that written materials can take the place of workers. Research consistently shows that young people respond best when given the opportunity to develop a positive professional relationship with a worker. But



no worker can be on call all the time. Well written, accurate and user-friendly materials can save hours of worker-time. They can help guide conversations and act as a handy reference.

*Which is why we've slashed the price of these resources by 50%. We want as many people as possible to benefit from our resources. In order to do this, we are heavily subsidising our remaining stock of Streets Ahead and My Space My Place to help make them more affordable for hard-pressed projects.*

We are also reducing the price of the My Space My Place Worker's Toolkit. This resource includes a specially written magazine booklet, for workers as well as a CD-ROM containing -

- fifteen session plans for working with young people
- five session plans for young care-leavers
- warm-up exercises

- group and one-to-one activities
- standard letters and templates
- sample policy documents
- useful numbers and information
- video clips featuring young people discussing the challenges of sustaining a tenancy

Containing personal stories, as well as practical advice on helping young people sustain their tenancies, the Worker's Toolkit, like the My Space My Place pack, is accessible, down to earth and resolutely not "preachy". As one worker commented, reading the magazine is 'like sitting down with colleagues having a coffee and sharing the tales of the day.'

In addition we plan to re-launch our Practical Steps Training for preventing homelessness & sustaining tenancies (at a reduced cost, or free if you order enough copies of the packs) later in the year. In order to reduce costs further this training will be delivered at venues across Scotland.

Supporting young people takes time, staffing and resources: at SCSH we are here to support you.

*For any enquiries about these resources or to find out more about training, contact Nick or Jules on 0131 226 4382 or visit [www.scsch.org.uk](http://www.scsch.org.uk)*

## SCSH Practice Bites Update



Our Practice Bites database is taking a retro move in image, but will be very new and up to the minute with its information.

It is about to be the only place you will need to look for information

on organisations and publications relating to youth homelessness in Scotland. It will be a must for your 'My Favourites', and that old address book that is cluttering your drawer can be ditched!

To make sure you are a part of this, please mail me at [jules@scsh.org.uk](mailto:jules@scsh.org.uk) with your organisations details, and a blurb on what you do. A lovely logo can be included too.... in fact, even a photograph or two could be attached, if you fancy! ; We can Photoshop any unwanted wrinkles,

double chins, or bingo wings if requested!

If you are one of the many wise ones out there who choose to take us up on this free offer, we will then e-mail you when the new look database is up and running and the future will not only be bright .... but the future is yellow, and pink, and blue!

The only thing not to change will be the website address, which is - [www.leavinghome.info/bites](http://www.leavinghome.info/bites)

# Diary



## **CIH Scotland - Annual Conference & Exhibition**

**Tuesday - Thursday 10 -12 March 2009, Aberdeen**

Details at [www.cih.org/scotland/conferences](http://www.cih.org/scotland/conferences)

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## **Health and Homelessness Conference: Shared Solutions**

**Tuesday 17 March 2009, Edinburgh**

More Info: [pat.herd@scottishhealthcouncil.org](mailto:pat.herd@scottishhealthcouncil.org)



## **SACRO Annual Conference 2009: Repairing the Harm**

**Wednesday 18 March 2009, Edinburgh**

Details at [www.sacro.org.uk/](http://www.sacro.org.uk/)



## **Working with Young People Who Use Alcohol**

**Friday 20 March 2009, Ramada City Hotel, Glasgow**

Details at [www.syhn.org.uk](http://www.syhn.org.uk)



## **Shelter Working Together to House Scotland's Children (full day conference)**

**Tuesday 24 March 2009, Glasgow**

Details at <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>

## **Membership 2009/10**

The membership year of SCSH runs from April to March. We will be sending out renewal notices late in March. Good news in the economic crisis - our current rates are not changing in the new financial year.

SCSH exists to highlight the needs of homeless people and offer practical ideas and information to tackle homelessness. To do this, we work closely with our membership which includes local authorities, voluntary organisations, housing associations, front line services, health bodies, academics and individuals.

We develop policy and influence practice at national and local level. We offer support to those implementing homelessness services and other services relevant to homeless people. We provide an information source for policy makers and other interest groups. We ensure that the experience of front line service

providers and service users is conveyed to policy makers allowing service providers to share experience with each other.

Our members' fees help us produce our 10 newsletter issues per year, which are posted to over 900 addresses across the UK. Members receive consultation briefings and enjoy discount rates at our events. SCSH membership is a great way to stay in the know about current issues in homelessness and housing in Scotland.

SCSH membership fees – representative members £150, waged individual members £25, unwaged individual members £10.

*For more information on membership please contact Bence Solymar 0131 2264382 or by email at [bence@scsh.org.uk](mailto:bence@scsh.org.uk)*

### **Back Copies**

Back copies of previous newsletters can be found at our website [www.scsh.org.uk](http://www.scsh.org.uk)

## **SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR SINGLE HOMELESS**

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

For full membership details phone 0131 226 4382 or visit [www.scsh.org.uk](http://www.scsh.org.uk)

### **Staff information**

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