

Minister for Housing and Transport
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Convenor
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The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Dear Mary,

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee on 26 June as part of your inquiry into the important issue of identifying steps to prevent homelessness amongst young people in Scotland. I am now writing to you to follow up on some points raised by Committee members and to which I indicated I would respond in more detail at a later date.

a) Housing and Homelessness education in the Curriculum for Excellence

Stuart McMillan MSP asked me to look further into this issue and I can advise that I have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on this issue and will share the response with the Committee in due course.

b) Commitment to look more closely at "Supported lodgings" and "adult adoption" services.

Annabel Goldie MSP asked if I could find out more about the potential advantages of this model of support. I believe it is important that we continue to find innovative and flexible models to supporting those at risk of homelessness and I can advise that the Supported Accommodation Implementation Group (SAIG), who will report in November, and the earlier Supported Accommodation Working Group, have received and considered evidence about the benefits of these models of support to inform their deliberations. For example, SAIG recently received evidence from the Shared Lives Plus project and their web-site can be found at:

<http://www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk/>

c) Provide detail on the National Co-ordinators

John Finnie MSP asked for more detail on the National Co-ordinators, who have a focus on homelessness, and are funded by the Scottish Government.

There are four National Co-ordinators, funded by the Scottish Government's Housing Voluntary Grant Scheme, to identify best practice and promote joint working across sectors in areas of policy the Scottish Government has identified as being important to tackling and preventing homelessness. The areas are employability, re-building social networks, promoting furniture re-use and service user involvement. Each National Co-ordinator is based in a third sector project with expertise in the particular policy field, working with their own cross sector national network as well as building links to other National Co-ordinators. The following provides a summary of the specific policy areas:

Employability - SHEN (Scottish Homelessness and Employability Network) – based at Scottish Council for Single Homelessness (SCSH)

Employability is an integral part of offering sustainable routes out of homelessness and it is widely recognised that people experiencing homelessness face additional barriers to employment, training and education. Therefore, in designing services for homeless people it is vital to incorporate and promote a culture of employability. SHEN is able to provide support around good practice in employability through activities including:

- arranging employability focused events;
- facilitating learning exchanges across the SHEN network; and
- a Scottish Homelessness and Employability Toolkit

Social Networks – SSN (Scottish Social Networks) – based at Rock Trust, Edinburgh

Originally created as a response to a recommendation around be-friending, mediation and mentoring in the Homelessness Task Force Final Report of 2002. The coordinator seeks to raise awareness of the need for positive social networks; to support the development of these social networks for people affected by homelessness or at risk of homelessness and to assist local authorities and homelessness projects who are required to develop assessments and provision to support social networks. SSN provides training to housing providers and shares research, best practice and resources from across Europe, the UK and Scotland.

Service User Involvement – SHIEN (Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment Network) – based at Glasgow Homelessness Network

SHIEN aims to ensure that service users across Scotland have as many opportunities as possible to influence the policies, practices and perceptions that affect them. SHIEN are represented on the Supported Accommodation Implementation Group (SAIG), for whom they have organized regional service user events to inform the Group's work. SHIEN provides support around good practice in service user involvement through measures including:

- resource exchange website;
- organizing and presenting at national and regional events;
- facilitating workshops at events; and
- providing advisory service to local authorities

Furniture re-use – based at Community Resource Network Scotland (CRNS)

Also created originally in response to a recommendation in the Homelessness Task Force Final report of 2002, the Furniture Re-use Coordinator aims to promote the provision of furniture and the use of furniture reuse projects in helping to improve tenancy sustainment for people leaving homelessness. The coordinator works closely with furniture projects, local authorities and housing associations to facilitate partnership working and provides a range of support including:

- organise and accompany housing providers on visits to furniture projects;
- presenting at national and local events;
- maintaining and updating 'more than furniture' website; and
- providing a toolkit to assist social landlords in buying from furniture projects

Thank you again on the opportunity to appear before the Committee. As I outlined on 26 June, the Scottish Government is committed to tackling and preventing homeless amongst young people in Scotland and I look forward to reading your report and identifying any recommendations that may help us take further steps in this regard.

Kind regards



KEITH BROWN

