

In this edition of the newsletter you will find:

- information on **research** into social networks projects
- an update on **evaluation**
- information on a new **Active Futures project**
- an article on **Night Stop Scotland**
- **A World To Belong To** research into mental health and social networks

But first, **Happy New Year and best wishes for 2007** from me and Joanne. The holiday period is a time to have fun with friends and family but unfortunately a time when the tensions mount and the cracks start to show. With "Loss of accommodation with relatives/friends" still standing at 36% and "Dispute within household" 23% of the main reasons for making a homelessness application in 2005/6 and as one in four of us¹ will experience a serious problem with our mental well-being at some point in our lives the importance of action to promote positive social networks has never been clearer. For more information on Scottish Social Networks please see www.scottishsocialnetworks.org or contact me or Joanne.

Cheers **Lesley** (Lesley Stenhouse, Forum Coordinator)

[¹ Figure from the Mental Health Foundation]

What makes a successful social networks project happen?

This is the question we are researching. We are investigating mentoring, befriending and mediation projects for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to try to identify the triggers that enable homelessness projects to be set up; the key features of successful projects; and the risk factors. The aim is to develop a "toolkit" that will make it easier for local authorities and others to develop successful new projects. Mentoring, befriending and mediation were identified in the Homelessness Task Force final report as key measures in building and rebuilding social networks and so preventing or resolving homelessness but even now, over 5 years on from the Task Force report, homelessness mediation, mentoring and befriending are only available in a very few areas. Initial investigations have highlighted a number of important issues. Some specific to the type of project [e.g. the difficulty of maintaining the independence of the mediator] and some common all [e.g. the complex needs of homeless clients].

We would like to hear from you if you are involved in homelessness mentoring, befriending or mediation or have views on these or other issues. Please email Lesley (lesley.stenhouse@scottishsocialnetworks.org). The investigations and toolkit should be completed early this year and will be available in a future newsletter.

Evaluation was an issue some of you have expressed concerns about and back in 2005 we held workshops to discuss evaluation. It's a topic



I always meant to return to but thankfully the experts got there first! Befriending Network Scotland, Scottish Mentoring Network and Evaluation Support Scotland have published a new comprehensive toolkit for anyone interested in monitoring or evaluating social networks projects. **The Evaluation Resource Pack** is essential bedtime reading! www.befriending.co.uk/pdfstore/EVALRESOURCEPACK.pdf

or email info@befriending.co.uk Those of you involved in mediation will probably be aware of SACRO's Good Practice Guide. **Community Mediation - Measuring Service Performance** - www.sacro.org.uk/services/consultancy.html



I'll return to the issue sometime and post examples on the website - but not yet!



Emergency accommodation for single homeless young people exclusively in the homes of approved volunteers

Nightstop primarily helps:

- **families** who need a break, perhaps a cooling off period;
- **agencies** who need time to make assessments and the right decision;

and most importantly

- **young people** who, at a time when everything feels strange, uncertain and frightening, need somewhere safe and welcoming, where they can talk or just chill out. It can make a huge difference. Just two quotes from young people who have used Nightstop: "I had somewhere to stay that was safe & friendly"... "It found me somewhere to stay and didn't leave me on the streets"

There are 2 affiliated Nightstop schemes in Scotland: South Lanarkshire Nightstop and South Ayrshire Nightstop. www.nightstop-uk.org. (Click on about us and Nightstop Scotalnd) Nightstop UK is keen to develop links and schemes in Scotland. For more information or the Scottish version of the booklet "Opening Doors - A step by step guide to setting up a Nightstop scheme" contact David Harris on 01274 533004 or e-mail: david@nightstop-uk.org.



Active Futures is a newly funded project that aims to provide an inclusive, sensitive, fun approach to sport and active recreation for socially excluded and vulnerable young women aged 16-25. Our main target group are homeless women, those at risk of homelessness and those who feel socially isolated. The project hopes to inspire this hard to reach group and create new opportunities to be physically active. Crucially, the project aims to increase self esteem and self confidence, as well as fitness. The programme will run in

10 week blocks, with 5-6 different types of activities offered on a weekly basis. These activities will be varied, from dance and swimming to climbing and other outward bound activities. The first block is due to start January 2007. For details of the referral process and other enquires, please email jo.surcouf@rocktrust.org or telephone 0131 524 9862. Details are also on the website www.rocktrust.org



A World To Belong To SAMH launched this report last month. It summarises the findings of a research project exploring the social networks of people who use mental health services.

The research found that in every area of community life, including work, people with mental health problems are still likely to experience exclusion. One of the areas the report considers is services' promotion of social contacts – within the services; through other community services and with friends and family. Issues highlighted include:

- the advantages and disadvantages of making friends with other people who use mental health services;
- the potential benefit from people developing relationships with people outwith the mental health field;
- less than half who used services felt helped to access other community services despite the fact that the majority of the professionals said they aimed to do this;
- the important role played by supportive relationships in recovery; and
- the important role mental health services can play in supporting relationships.

The report makes recommendations for mental health service providers and planners but the findings are of much wider interest. www.samh.org.uk/assets/files/118.pdf to view A World to Belong To (2.5Mb) or e-mail enquire@samh.org.uk



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