



Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Housing Law Advice: Introduction to Housing Issues
(SCQF level 6)

Unit code: HA07 33

Superclass: HE

Publication date: November 2015

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 01

Unit purpose

This is an introductory Unit which has been designed for learners who work or wish to work (in a paid or voluntary capacity) in a setting which provides housing advice. Learners will develop their knowledge of legislation relating to housing in Scotland and explore the role and responsibilities of the advisor in the provision of appropriate advice and information to service users.

This Unit forms part of the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Housing Law for Advisors: an Introduction at SCQF level 6 and can also be taken as a standalone Unit, perhaps for the purpose of continued professional development (CPD)

Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Identify key aspects of current legislation and professional guidance relating to housing and housing advice in Scotland.
- 2 Identify the range of information required by service users in relation to specified housing issues.
- 3 Describe the role and responsibilities of the housing advisor.

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 6: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6)

Higher National Unit specification: General information (cont)

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Recommended entry to the Unit

Entry is at the discretion of the centre however learners should have good communication skills. Although no prior knowledge of housing advice is required for this Unit, it would be beneficial for learners to have some experience of working or volunteering in an agency or organisation which offers housing advice.

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

The Unit has been designed with the training needs of first contact housing advisors or 'Type 1' staff in mind, to enable them to effectively meet the needs of service users.

This Unit may be delivered as part of the PDA in Housing Law for Advice at SCQF level 6. It is however, a free-standing Unit and may be delivered as such for purposes of continuing professional development (CPD).

Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Identify key aspects of current legislation and professional guidance relating to housing and housing advice in Scotland.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Current legislation relating to housing in Scotland
- ◆ Current guidance on best practice relating to the provision of housing advice in Scotland

Outcome 2

Identify the range of information required by service users in relation to specified housing issues.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Range of housing issues experienced by service users
- ◆ Types of appropriate housing advice and information available to service users
- ◆ Appropriate sources of referral for service users and when to use them
- ◆ Importance of equality of opportunity in relation to housing

Outcome 3

Describe the role and responsibilities of the housing advisor.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Role and responsibilities of the housing advisor in the provision of advice to the service user
- ◆ Professional boundaries of the housing advisor role
- ◆ Range of skills and knowledge required of the housing advisor

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills across all Outcomes by showing that they can:

- ◆ identify the three key housing acts which relate to homelessness.
- ◆ outline the purpose of one piece of legislation relating to housing in Scotland.
- ◆ identify one source of professional guidance on best practice for housing advisors.
- ◆ identify the key aspects of legal information required by service users experiencing different issues.
Evidence should cover the following issues, one key aspect for each:
 - Social issues
 - Financial issues
 - Discrimination.
- ◆ state what is meant by security of tenure.
- ◆ identify one relevant source/resource for assistance relating to social issues in housing.
- ◆ identify one relevant source/resource for assistance relating to financial problems in housing.
- ◆ give one example of how service users may suffer unlawful discrimination and how promoting equality of opportunity in housing helps overcome this.
- ◆ describe the role and responsibilities and boundaries of the housing advisor.
- ◆ describe what is meant by active information and passive information.
- ◆ identify three examples of information relating to housing advice that is available to support the needs of the service user.
- ◆ outline what is meant by signposting.



Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Housing Law Advice: Introduction to Housing Issues
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Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit has been designed to reflect the requirements of the Scottish National Standards for Housing Information and Advice Services, developed by the Scottish Government for workers engaged in providing advice on a range of housing issues and, in particular, housing law advice in the specific areas of homelessness, security of tenure, repair and disrepair and housing-related financial issues.

The Scottish National Standards for Housing Information and Advice Services were first published by ScotGov in 1985, 2000, 2003 principally for housing advice service. The final version was published in 2009.

The Unit has been designed with the training needs of first contact housing advisors or 'Type 1' staff in mind to enable them to effectively meet the needs of service users.

The definition of the role a staff member (paid or voluntary) fulfils at this level is as follows:

Active Information, Sign-posting and Explanation

This work refers to activities such as signposting for example, referring the service user to other available resources or services, appropriate to their needs, and helping service users by explaining technical terms or clarifying official documents, for example a tenancy agreement or possession order.

Such assistance and information may be provided in an appropriate format to meet the needs of the service user. The distinction is made between the 'passive' provision of information through the availability of leaflets, etc. in public places, libraries and 'active' provision of information through providing assistance to the individual seeking assistance. The role of housing advisor at this level is a facilitative role.

'Service users' may also be referred to as 'clients' or 'customers'. This refers to the person or people who have requested advice and/or support to deal with a range of housing issues.

Learners will be introduced to the range of information that service users require to deal with housing issues, ie social and financial issues and unlawful discrimination. Learners will also develop their knowledge of the key legislation relating to housing in Scotland.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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This Unit forms part of the PDA in Housing Law for Advisors: an Introduction at SCQF level 6 and can also be delivered as a standalone Unit perhaps for the purpose of CPD.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

Learners should be given opportunities to learn from practitioners in the sector. Talks from experienced housing advisors, field workers/specialists and other guest speakers would help to broaden the learner's knowledge.

Outcome 1

This Outcome covers current legislation and best practice guidance relating to housing and housing advice in Scotland. Learners should be introduced to the legal terminology and to the key aspects of the Acts and their relevance to the needs and/or issues experienced by service users. These needs may vary in different organisations within the sector.

The key Acts to be covered;

Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987 as amended by Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
Housing (Scotland) Act 1988
Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2002
Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003

Guidance on best practice may include:

- ◆ The Scottish National Standards for Housing Information and Advice Services
- ◆ Relevant Local Authority policies
- ◆ Employer/Organisational procedures

It should be noted that references to legislation and guidance documentation given in the support notes of this Unit are current at the time of publication; however teachers/lecturers should ensure that Learners are given access to the most up to date versions.

Outcome 2

In this Outcome, learners will be introduced to the range of information (in different formats) that is available to service users.

The strengths and weaknesses of active and passive information should be explored.

- ◆ Passive information is the provision of information through for example pre-printed leaflets
- ◆ Active information is the provision of information by providing pro-active and client centred assistance to the service user.

Learners should be encouraged to look for ways of providing active information to meet the needs of the service user.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Learners should be also be made aware that the needs of service users may vary in different agencies and organisations. When appropriate, they should be able to identify the most common types of advice required for their own agency/organisation's clients and the best format for the provision of that advice.

The range of information which should be covered within the delivery of this Outcome includes the following:

- ◆ Legal information
- ◆ Security of tenure
- ◆ Key social issues
- ◆ Sources of referral which can help resolve social problems
- ◆ Key financial issues
- ◆ Sources of referral relating to financial difficulties
- ◆ Unlawful discrimination and equality of opportunity in relation to housing

It is important that information and/or advice is provided to service users in the format which best meets their needs. This may be written (eg published in a pre-printed pamphlet/information sheet or in some cases, electronically via e-mail), or verbal (face to face or by telephone).

Learners should be made aware of the importance of the availability of 'alternative format' information (access to large print/braille/foreign language, etc) as this contributes to the promotion of equality of opportunity in housing.

Outcome 3

Learners will develop their understanding of the role, responsibilities and professional boundaries of the housing advisor role. Delivery should include the definition of advice in this context.

If learners are currently working or volunteering in a role which provides housing advice, they may find it beneficial to refer to their job description and/or role profile. The use of group discussion within a classroom setting is recommended during the delivery of this Outcome. This will allow the learners to share their experiences from practice (where applicable) and discuss the skills and competences required of advisors in different situations.

Personal presentation and excellent communication skills are important components of client-facing roles. Learners should explore the range of skills and knowledge specifically required of housing advisors, eg:

- ◆ Verbal and written communication (knowledgeable, polite, jargon-free)
- ◆ Non-verbal communication (listening skills, body-language, self-confidence)
- ◆ Interpersonal skills (reassurance, empathy)

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Housing Law Advice: Introduction to Housing Issues
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Subject specific knowledge:

- ◆ Underpinning general knowledge of housing issues and their related legal implications
 - and the information/advice that can be provided in response to these
- ◆ Working definition of advice in this context, the standard sequence of advice and how to recognise that not all stages of this advice sequence are required for all clients (client-centred advice)
 - Listening to clients
 - Diagnosing the problem
 - Giving information
 - Advising on the options available
 - Taking action on behalf of clients
 - Negotiating on their behalf
 - Representing clients' cases at tribunals and courts
 - Referral where appropriate
 - Enabling or empowering individuals to take control of their own situation.
- ◆ Distinction between passive and active information
- ◆ Signposting (referring the service user to other resources or services)
- ◆ Explanation (providing explanations and clarifying terminology)

For all Outcomes, it is important that examples and case studies (where used) are presented in a context that is familiar to the learner. They should deal with areas of advice that are most common for their organisation/agency and that the learner can relate to. By using familiar situations, learners can be encouraged to relate theory to examples of their own practice.

There may also be opportunities to encourage self-study through the use of publications and websites such as:

www.cab.org.uk
www.scotland.shelter.org.uk
www.leavinghome.info
www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk
www.gov.scot/

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

All three Outcomes could be assessed by a series of short answer/multiple-choice questions set under closed-book conditions.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

There are opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills in *Communication* at SCQF level 6, and *Numeracy*, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*, *Working with Others* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5 throughout this Unit.

History of changes to Unit

| Version | Description of change | Date |
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General information for learners

Unit title: Housing Law Advice: Introduction to Housing Issues (SCQF level 6)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This Unit is suitable for you if you work or wish to work (paid or unpaid) as a first contact advisor (Type 1 advisor) in a role that provides housing advice in Scotland.

This Unit has been designed to introduce you to the common housing issues in Scotland and the role and responsibilities of the housing advisor. You will learn about the key aspects of legislation in Scotland that underpins the provision of housing in Scotland. The content is drawn from the Scottish National Standards for Housing Information and Advice Services, developed by the Scottish Government.

The Unit forms part of the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Housing Law Advice at SCQF level 6 and can also be taken as a standalone Unit, perhaps for the purposes of continued professional development (CPD). You may have the opportunity to progress to other qualifications at a higher level upon successful completion of this PDA, eg PDA in Housing Law Advice at SCQF level 7.

There are no pre-entry requirements as entry is at the discretion of the centre. However, you will be expected to have good communication skills and it would be beneficial if you have previous experience of the housing advice sector.

There are three Outcomes to complete in the Unit:

- 1 Identify key aspects of current legislation and professional guidance relating to housing and housing advice in Scotland.
- 2 Identify the range of information required by service users in relation to specified housing issues.
- 3 Describe the role and responsibilities of the housing advisor.

Assessment will typically be short answer or multiple-choice questions under exam conditions however this may vary by centre.

You will have the opportunity to develop your Core Skills in *Communication, Problem Solving, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* and *Working with Others*. Your transferable and employability skills, eg in time management, customer service and personal presentation will also develop throughout this Unit.