



Higher National Unit specification

General information

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

Unit code: HA06 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 the main issues relating to homelessness, legislation relating to homelessness and the role of the local authority in supporting homeless persons.

This 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 purpose of continued professional development (CPD).

Outcomes

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

- 1 Outline key aspects of current legislation relating to homelessness in Scotland.
- 2 Identify main issues relating to homelessness.
- 3 Describe the role of the local authority in supporting homeless persons.

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 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.

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Assessment

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

Outline key aspects of current legislation relating to homelessness in Scotland.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Relevant current legislation
- ◆ Specific sections of legislation relevant to one group of homeless clients
- ◆ Purpose of these sections and how they affect the application for a specific client
- ◆ Technical definition of homelessness

Outcome 2

Identify main issues relating to homelessness.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Social issues relating to homelessness
- ◆ Definition of 'threatened with homelessness'

Outcome 3

Describe the role of the local authority in supporting homeless persons.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Remit of the local authority
- ◆ Duties of the local authority
- ◆ How the three tests or hurdles determine the duties owed to the individual applicant

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 relevant section of housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended that relates to homelessness.
- ◆ identify three key sections of the act that relate to housing advice.
- ◆ outline the purpose of this act in relation to an unintentionally homeless client.
- ◆ state the technical definition of homelessness contained in legislation.
- ◆ explain the term 'threatened with homelessness'.
- ◆ identify three social issues that may impact on homelessness
- ◆ describe the remit and duties of the local authority with regard to homelessness.
- ◆ identify the three tests or 'hurdles' relating to homelessness.
- ◆ identify the essential elements of a homeless person's application.
- ◆ describe how an applicant's circumstances determine the duty of the local authority.
- ◆ identify one additional duty that has resulted from a homeless application.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Housing Law Advice: Introduction to Homelessness
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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 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 adviser 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.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Learners will develop their knowledge of the main issues relating to homelessness, legislation relating to homelessness and the role of the local authority in supporting homeless persons.

This Unit forms part of the PDA in Housing Law Advice 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

This Unit could be delivered by traditional classroom methods but could also be delivered on-line.

It would be beneficial for learners to develop their knowledge through actual examples, using case studies and scenarios.

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/

It should be noted that references to legislation and guidance documentation given in 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.

The approach to teaching and learning should be to introduce the learner to the broad issues relating to Homelessness in the context of housing law. The topic of homelessness should be introduced by explaining how the focus on homelessness for housing advisors is centred around the local authority's duty to provide a homeless applicant with permanent accommodation. The teaching should be structured around the 'three hurdles' or 'tests'.

- ◆ Homelessness (technical definition contained in legislation)
- ◆ Intentionally homeless
- ◆ Whether homeless applicants have a local connection

Where possible, the teaching should focus on the aspects of homelessness that are relevant to the agency/organisation where advice will be given. Opportunities should be provided to put the knowledge in a context that is, or will become, familiar to the learner.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Outcome 1

For Outcome 1 learners are required to identify the current legislation and to show that they understand the purpose of the legislation relating to homelessness, as applicable to groups and individuals.

Reference should be made to the following legislation as a minimum:

- ◆ Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987 as amended by Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- ◆ Housing (Scotland) Act 1988
- ◆ Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003
- ◆ Code of Guidance

Teaching should include current terminology, including the legal definition of 'homeless' and the technical definition of 'threatened with homelessness'.

If someone is roofless, sleeping rough or on a friend's floor, it is usually apparent that he/she is homeless within the meaning of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. A person may also be homeless if, although he/she has a home, it would not be reasonable to live there, because, for example, there is a risk of violence, or their safety is at risk.

Outcome 2 introduces the learner to the most common circumstances of homeless clients.

Learners should be made aware of the more common reasons for, and situations that can cause homelessness. These may vary in different situations but can include social issues such as: the landlord selling the property, harassment or other circumstances to do with others in the previous household, relationship or family breakdown, financial difficulties, debt and unemployment, repossession of homes due to default on mortgages.

Outcome 3

Outcome 3 gives the learner the opportunity to learn about the role of the local authority and its responsibility to meet the legal requirements set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 to provide housing for homeless persons. Learners should be able to outline the role of the local authority and the provision that it makes for homeless persons. They should be made aware that not all local authorities operate in the same way and it may be useful to explore and discuss the provision of different LAs.

The issues causing the client's homelessness may be used when completing the Local Authority (LA) application form. It may therefore, be beneficial to use case studies to exemplify scenarios for the purposes of this Outcome.

Learners should be able to describe the types of options that the local authority can offer to homeless persons. They should be able to distinguish between temporary and permanent accommodation and to explain how temporary accommodation must be provided by the local authority while the case is assessed.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

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

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.

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.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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General information for learners

This section will help you decide if 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, where applicable, 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 adviser (Type 1 adviser) in a role that provides housing advice in Scotland.

This Unit has been designed to develop your knowledge of the main issues relating to homelessness, legislation relating to homelessness and the role of the local authority in supporting homeless persons.

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 stand-alone 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 the 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 Outline key aspects of current legislation relating to homelessness in Scotland.
- 2 Identify main issues relating to homelessness.
- 3 Describe the role of the local authority in supporting homeless persons.

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.