

Cyrenians

Newsletter Winter 2009



Innovations in tackling homelessness



This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Peter Yeo (1947 - 2009). Peter was a volunteer when Cyrenians was founded in 1968, became the first member of staff in 1971 and later served as Chairman on the Board of Trustees. He was devoted to helping others and his work lives on after him. We are currently looking into setting up a memorial in Peter's memory and would be delighted to hear suggestions from anyone who knew him.

New ways to keep in touch

As technology advances, so do the ways in which we can communicate. In response to these changes we have set up our own page on the social networking site Facebook. This allows us to keep in touch easily with our 'fans' and post regular updates (including job vacancies and events). Take a look at our page: www.facebook.com/cyrenians

We are also increasing our web presence through the development of two new sites. Both Good Food and SmartMove will have their own dedicated websites in the New Year. These will offer service users, customers and the general public alike to access a wide range of information and the opportunity to interact with each services.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, simply email your name and email address to admin@cyrenians.org.uk

What our customers said

The key to providing good quality service is listening to your customers. Here is a selection of the comments we have been given recently:

"I've learnt more about myself and what I want. It's given me the push and confidence to go a bit further. I'm ready to see the world!" young person taking part in a 'People with Potential' activity

"You listened to me" young person referred to Amber mediation

"First class, I've always had a lovely service from you over the years and my current tenant has been a dream" SmartMove Landlord

"It has been a great personal opportunity and has given me some real challenges and opportunities to grow. You have also given me a lot of food for thought about my future directions." work placement

2009 Events

Congratulations, and thanks, to everyone who took part in fund-raising events this year. Alongside the Edinburgh marathon and Water of Leith Walk, events included the Perthshire Amber Music festival, a Corporate Cook-off, a week in the West Lothian thrift shop and a bake sale at West Lothian college!



Getting Involved

Cyrenians is committed to providing opportunities for people from all walks of life to get involved in their local community. Whether its volunteering at the Good Food depot, running the Edinburgh marathon or working on a project that make the best use of your skills, there are many ways in which you can get involved:

Regular Volunteering - our Farm and Good Food depots would be glad to hear from you if you would like to do some 'hands-on' activities or driving. There are also some office based roles that may be of interest.

Short-Term Volunteers - do you have particular skills that you think would be of benefit to Cyrenians? We can offer you the chance to work on focussed projects to make the most of these skills. Volunteering can be a valuable step towards employment or a useful stop-gap if you are between jobs. We are currently looking for: Website Editor, Media Officer and Photographer.

Fundraising - take part in one of our annual events. In 2010 we will be participating in the Edinburgh marathon (May) as well as organising the Water of Leith Walk (April). Alternatively, organise your own event and ask friends, family and colleagues to take part or sponsor you!

Donations - if you don't have any time to spare but would like to support us you can always make a donation. Either visit our website or complete to form on the back of this leaflet.

For information on all the above please visit www.cyrenians.org.uk or email admin@cyrenians.org.uk

Philip's Story

Philip, who is now in his early 40's, became a volunteer with the Good Food Programme soon after it started in 2000.

At that time he had a precarious existence, living alone in his own flat but returning to homelessness centres for meals, more for the company and something to do and to stave off the overwhelming feelings of loneliness and depression that beset him.

He saw a Good Food van delivering to a project where he was having a meal and was quick to ask what we were all about. Philip was very willing and helpful but also needed a good deal of listening and practical help from the workers at Jane Street to resolve his many issues.

After a two year period of volunteering with his new confidence and experience, Philip made the move "big time" as he would put it, and went to work for a local supermarket, firstly as an order picker and then as a home delivery driver. Now (2009), he is still there, thoroughly enjoying his job and looking to take on management responsibility.

Philip has also married and still lives in his same flat. He is very happy, fulfilled in his work and looking forward to a bright future.

Philip keeps in touch with his Good Food colleagues, he wrote, "I was able to gain a lot of experience that has helped me in my work and to enable me to be in the position I am currently in. All thanks to the team at Cyrenians Good Food Programme!"

**names have been changed*

Amy's Story

Amy is a single parent with two teenage sons. She has never been homeless and has been living in private lets for a several years. Everything changed with the arrival of new neighbours who were verbally abusive towards her and played loud music late into the night.

Despite having contacted the police and her landlord about her concerns; as well as keeping a record of every incident, Amy felt that nothing was being done. Her landlord had also written to her saying she was in rent arrears, although she was certain she was up-to-date with her payments. Finding it difficult to manage, she was feeling increasingly depressed.

Amy contacted Cyrenians and spoke to a Personal Advisor in the Homelessness Prevention Service. Together they discussed all the options available and Amy decided she definitely wanted to move on. Her Personal Advisor helped her search for new accommodation and supported her when meeting landlords.

Still worried about the alleged rent arrears, Amy considered walking out on her lease. To avoid this, her Personal Advisor set up a mediation session with the landlord. This was very constructive – it turned out that there were no arrears and the landlord accepted her notice. As Amy had found a flat, two months wait could mean she missed out, so her Personal Advisor successfully applied for a 'two homes' payment to cover the overlapping period.

Three months on and things are still going well. Amy and her sons feel settled and happier in their new home.

**names have been changed*

Tackling Homelessness before it happens

More and more people who did not think homelessness could affect them are finding it harder to make ends meet. This could be for any number of reasons, such as relationship breakdowns or money problems or general isolation.

In this financially unstable time, people who previously thought of themselves as financially secure can find themselves in a position that is very unfamiliar and frightening for them. The recession has meant that issues such as unemployment, homelessness and debt have become a reality for many people living in Edinburgh.

Through our Homeless Prevention Service (HPS), trained Personal Advisers are able to meet people in their own homes, or elsewhere, to go through the problems they are facing and work out a strategy to deal with the issues.

Many people can feel stigmatised by the label "homeless" even though homelessness can happen to anyone, regardless of their background.



Personal advisors work in the community and can also offer help and advice over the phone

This new service – funded by City of Edinburgh Council – is free to everyone regardless of income or employment status, including owner occupiers, tenants and those have other housing arrangements.

HPS and SACRO have also teamed up to offer a mediation service. This can be invaluable to anyone experiencing a difficult situation with their landlord, neighbours or creditors.

We would strongly recommend anyone who feels they are struggling to contact us. Simply call 0131 475 2556, or email HPS@cyrenians.org.uk

More details can be found on our website www.cyrenians.org.uk

"Before making a self-referral to Cyrenians HPS, I had encountered negative, dire and bleak attitudes from other agencies; very much 'we'll deal with this when the person ends up on the street.'

I am totally indebted to your organisation and hope for your future success."

The Homelessness Prevention service also runs a **volunteer befriender** scheme. Befrienders help reduce the effects of loneliness and isolation on people who have experienced a difficult time in their lives, such as having their home being at risk or having had to move.

For more information on the befriending scheme call 0131 475 2556 or email HPS@cyrenians.org.uk

Jim's Story

Jim is 43 and had to move out of the home he had shared with his partner when their relationship broke down. Due to increased drinking, he lost his job and his debts were mounting.

Jim was referred to the Homelessness Prevention Service and a Personal Advisor helped him to find somewhere to live, made sure he was getting the benefits he was entitled to, and helped him to budget and pay off his debt.

But the worst thing for Jim was that he'd lost a lot of friends with the break-up with his partner and his confidence was at its lowest. He was living in a part of the city that he wasn't familiar with and he didn't know where to start.

His Personal Advisor referred him to the HPS Befriending scheme. Through the scheme Jim was introduced to Paul, a volunteer befriender of a similar age. Together they go to a monthly book group, regularly visit the local swimming pool and look into other events that are of interest. As a result Jim is starting to make some new friends and feels his drinking is under control again; his confidence is coming back and he is starting to put his troubles behind him.

**names have been changed*

Amber Mediation

Amber Mediation, the Cyrenians and SACRO partnership that works to prevent homelessness for young people through providing mediation and support has been extended to East and West Lothian. This is great recognition from both local authorities for the need for early intervention work to help reduce the risk of homelessness amongst younger people.

Amber's work was also recently acknowledged by a group of pupils from Portobello High School. As part of a competition run by Youth Philanthropy they were tasked with researching local charities and nominating one for a cash prize. Amber was asked to make a presentation to a panel of students, teachers and representatives from the Woods Family Trust (who funded the competition).

The outcome was that the students chose us to be the recipients of the £3000 prize that they had won. The decision was arrived at primarily due to the passion and enthusiasm that the group felt for Amber. As one of the young people said:

"Amber is about people just like us - any one of us could fall out with our parents at any time and its just good to know that there's somewhere we can go if that happened."

If you would like to find out more about Amber mediation or to make a referral please contact:

0131 475 2493 (Edinburgh)
0131 653 5294 (East Lothian)
01506 205 413 (West Lothian)
or **email amber@cyrenians.org.uk**

Eddy and Fran's Story

Eddy (16) and his mother Fran were referred to Amber back in April. Eddy had recently returned full time to his mum's following from a period in care. They were having a lot of arguments about chores, boundaries and respect but the two most difficult problems were around Fran's alcoholism and Eddy not being allowed a set of keys for the house.

Meetings were initially quite difficult to arrange due to the family circumstances but, after a lot of perseverance, when meetings did take place both Fran and Eddy used the mediation sessions to talk through what was wrong and what each could do to change.

When we first met with Eddy he had a lot of anger and concern about Fran's drinking and hated that she lied to him about it. Fran felt that she was addressing her drinking through the support that she got from another agency and that Eddy was not pulling his weight around the house.

Last week, our mediator Paul met with them both to conduct their face-to-face meeting. Eddy took the opportunity to tell Fran about how he worried about her drinking and didn't want her to die. This was the first time that he'd told Fran how he felt and Fran really listened to what he was saying.

They worked together on a housework rota, identifying who would do what and when and how they would spend time together.

Eddy has now started a training course at college and, on condition that he attends, Fran has agreed to return his keys to him.

**names have been changed*

Getting The Measure



Not only are homelessness and alcohol use inextricably linked, but alcohol use is widely acknowledged across society as being a contributing factor to poor health and wellbeing. At Cyrenians we recognise that alcohol use often presents a barrier to our service users in moving forward with their lives.

Getting the measure is a pioneering service, funded by Comic Relief which will identify ways of working with young people to prevent their alcohol use turning into a crisis. The project is developing an early intervention model which will not only allow our service users to identify the impact their alcohol use may be having, but will also equip staff with the skills to respond more effectively.

Our learning so far has helped us get additional funding to provide an outreach key worker to work specifically with those whose alcohol use is impacting on their ability to sustain accommodation; and 20 weeks of sessional group work focusing on health and well being (including white water rafting!).

If you would like to find out more about Getting the Measure please contact Jenny on 01506 205413 or email admin@cyrenians.org.uk



Turning Food Waste into Opportunities

CORE – Cyrenians Organics Recycling Enterprise - is an innovative recycling social business which provides food & catering waste collections for businesses in Edinburgh and the Lothians. All the food waste collected goes to compost, meaning a reduction in landfill as well as a benefit to the environment. With the pilot period complete and over 20 customers on board, the service is now expanding to cover the Fife area.

CORE is a social enterprise - meaning that any money made from providing the service is put towards helping achieve our charitable aims.

The service also creates the opportunity for us to offer supported traineeships to some of the people we work with. The traineeships are a positive step towards employment; our first trainee joined us in November and is off to a flying start!

For more information about CORE please call 01506 536102, email core@cyrenians.org.uk or visit www.cyrenians-core.org.uk

Cyrenians Christmas

Following the success of 2008, we are delighted to be able to offer both the Cyrenians Farm Hamper and Cyrenians Christmas e-cards again this year.

Both items are available now; the hamper can be ordered via our online shop www.cyreniansfarm.org.uk/shop where you will also find a full list of contents. The e-cards are available via www.cyrenians.org.uk

We would like to thank everyone who supported these ventures last year and the artists who donated their e-card designs this year.



How you can help

If you would like to make a donation to the work of Cyrenians, please complete and return this form.

I enclose a donation of £ _____ (cheques payable to Edinburgh Cyrenians)

Name
Address

I hereby declare that I am a UK taxpayer and I would like Edinburgh Cyrenians to reclaim tax on my donation

Signed	Date
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