



THE APRIL CENTRE

ANNUAL GENERAL

REPORT

2002

Held on 18th December 2002

Covering the year March 02 to February 03

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2001 ended on a difficult note for The April Centre. We were faced with the dilemma of losing our established premises and being unable to find alternative suitable accommodation. Whilst we endeavoured to find appropriate accommodation we reached an agreement with the Emergency Nightshelter to share their premises on designated days so that we were able to continue offering a level of service.

We began the year operating from the Nightshelter, rigorous rules were to be in place to ensure the Nightshelter and its staff team were not compromised by the presence of The April Centre. The transition between the two agencies went well and the clients did not have much difficulty differentiating between the two and the differences in service provision.

The New Year also brought changes to the board of Trustees with Ann Shehan feeling she could no longer devote the time required to effectively act as April Centre secretary. Aiden Carter agreed to undertake the maintenance and management of the accounts along with Ann whilst a replacement was sought. Tony Dixon was suggested as a replacement and this was seconded by Pam Edwards.

After much searching a suitable building was found for The April Centre to operate from, 9 Queen Street. The building required planning consent for a change of use, the cost of which was kindly met by Councillor Blundell.

A new bid for the Community Fund was put together, taking into account the revised criteria. This involved putting together two new projects as funding could not be applied for, for existing projects. It was decided that a resettlement worker for the day centre and an outreach team would benefit both The April Centre and the clients. Funding would also be applied for, for a Project Manager to line manage the projects. The notoriously difficult application form was completed and handed in at the end of June with a decision expected by November.

The summer went well with numbers for The April Centre service being consistent with the limited facilities on offer.

Planning consent was granted in September and the lease signed. Strenuous efforts were made to raise materials and man power to undertake the much needed decoration of the Queen Street premises. Substantial donations in the

form of paint and equipment were made by the local branches of B & Q and Homebase. Friends of the staff team and clients of The April Centre made use of the materials and the building was transformed into a clean and inviting environment.

September also brought changes to the management committee with Tony Dixon taking up the role of Company Secretary and Leonie O'Loughlin joining as a Trustee.

Although not officially open we felt it important to offer some semblance of service. The Day Centre could offer the availability of off street time, warm drinks and a newly established computer suite furnished with computers from the Access to Skills Partnership. We were also fortunate to retain the services of one of our longest serving volunteers, Ron Collins whose input into The April Centre has been invaluable.

November brought exceptional news in the form of a big YES from the Community Fund who has granted our application for funding. The grant for £85,000. will fund the new resettlement and outreach projects for the next three years. We are delighted that we are now in a position to expand our services and further meet the demands of our client group.

Our official opening has been scheduled and we are looking forward to welcoming Councillor's Blundell and Sutton to give speeches, along with representatives from Colchester Borough Council, other agencies and the local press.

All in all the year has been a difficult one for The April Centre. We have faced many difficulties but we are pleased to say we have risen to the challenges and come out the other end a stronger and more professional service.

The staff and volunteers are looking forward to 2003 and what we hope will be a positive and successful future. The prospect of new staff members along with a more comprehensive service will we hope reflect on our profile and reputation as an effective aid within the field of homelessness.

Staff Team - Aiden Carter Co-ordinator
Kristina Hearnden Assistant Co-ordinator