



THE APRIL CENTRE

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

2004

Held on 1st December 2004

Covering the year March 04 to February 05

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Annual Report
1st December 2004

As with last year, this year has been an equally positive one for The April Centre. Again we have made a number of changes, all of which have been embraced and adapted to.

As we have been lucky enough to enjoy a period of secure funding, the priorities of the last 10 months have been to strengthen the existing services we provide and secure our position as Colchester's number one housing advice provider to homeless people. We have made significant progress on both of these priorities and although we still have a way to go, The April Centre has definitely started to become recognised as a valuable community asset.

We have spent a lot of this year producing policies and procedures for staff and clients, as well as up-dating the limited policies we did have. This has definitely led to an increased consistency in our working practice. However this has been extremely time consuming and has resulted in more time being devoted to staff training.

Staff have been issued with written contracts for the first time and CRB checks have been carried out on staff who are required to have unsupervised contact with our clients. This has resulted in an increase in spending as CRB checks are costing about £69.00 per person and are required to be carried out annually. This can be very expensive if we have a high staff turnover so all future funding bids will take this into consideration.

We have just completed our second year at Queen Street and have one year to run on our current lease. The current premises have definitely been part of our success. We are situated in a central location which is close to associated projects as well as being close to Colchester Borough Council's offices. We will shortly be starting negotiations for a renewal of the lease.

PROJECT BREAKDOWN

Day Centre

The Day Centre continues to be at the heart of the organisation. With the addition of the other services, the day centre has been able to take on an extra role as an assessment and reception service, often referring clients to other internal services. The number of clients attending the day centre remains consistent with 2003 and although a large percentage of the clients who used the day centre are housed at the Night Shelter, we have seen an increase in housed clients using the day centre.

Floating support

This year has seen a lot of changes to the floating support service. This in part, has been due to the ever changing requirements of supporting people, along with adjustments we have made to improve the service. We are currently in the process of securing a permanent contract, a process which involves external verifiers assessing the service. We have passed the first stage and await the second stage with anticipation. As a direct result of the assessment criteria we had to meet, the floating support service has become extremely client focused and is enjoying a fair amount of success.

Resettlement

The resettlement service has also seen a fair amount of changes this year.

Night Shelter resettlement

This has become a very successful service. This is mainly due to the fact that we have been able to find and secure housing for a large percentage of our clients, which in turn has led to respect within the client group. Along with the fact that we are able to provide a very worried and insecure client group, with a dedicated resettlement worker, who will exhaust every option to try to house each client. By teaming up with the Night Shelter we have been able to start working with clients very shortly after they become homeless. This has increased the effectiveness of the service as well as offering a complete package to Shelter residents.

April Centre resettlement

This has undergone many changes since the service started in May 2003. The service now provides resettlement to anyone who doesn't reside in the Night Shelter and is not signed up for floating support. This includes clients who have been accepted by Colchester Borough Council and housed in temporary accommodation and those in need of short term support, as well as clients who are happy to use the service as and when they find themselves in crisis.

Outreach

The outreach service has definitely integrated itself into the street scene. The service is extremely well used and the team can be involved with anything from find accommodation for someone for that night, to providing blankets, to just listening to someone. One of the main roles of the team is to keep an eye on the client group to ensure they remain safe and well.

Management Team Aiden Carter (April Centre Manager) and Penny Egan (Project Co-ordinator) continue to line manage the projects and staff team.

The future of the April centre

As ever this is about securing the long term future of the April Centre. We have embarked on an ambitious fundraising programme and are looking at extending the work of the April Centre to locations such as Clacton and Braintree. We are also looking into the possibility of acquiring accommodation for clients which The April Centre will manage.

We have started discussions with Colchester Borough Council regarding the running of the Rent & Deposit Guarantee Scheme. This will involve a three year service level agreement with Colchester Borough Council.

Statistics for the April Centre

Day Centre

Contacts from January 2004 – December 2004

Total	2810
Total female %	21%
Total male %	79%

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	871	73	59	984	14	809
A = UNDER 16	0	0	0	0	0	0
B = 17 TO 18	18	1	1	23	0	12
C = 19 TO 21	61	5	4	73	2	70
D = 22 TO 25	124	4	9	147	2	121
E = 26 TO 35	350	23	21	362	6	303
F = 36 TO 45	206	26	15	232	2	188
G = 46 TO 55	60	10	8	84	1	53
H = 56 TO 65	14	3	0	25	1	16
I = 65 +	3	1	0	2	0	1
J = UNKNOWN	35	0	1	36	0	45

Outreach

Total Individuals met on streets or at Soup Run from May 2003 to October 2004

Total	191
Total male	150
Total female	41

Floating support

The Figures are currently not available.

Resettlement

Total number of clients that have had worked with and close their cases. From January 04 to August 04

Total clients	133
Total male	111
Total female	22

Of which

Nightshelter resettlement	105
April centre Resettlement	28

Please note that there is a high turn around with Nightshelter resettlement as they are only work with by this service whilst stay at the Night Shelter.

Resettlement Service

The main responsibilities in this role have been to offer housing, welfare, benefits advice, and support. We have clients referred to us from Colchester Borough Council, the Night Shelter, and the April Center's Outreach Team amongst other agencies. Some clients however, may present themselves the April Centre drop-in sessions.

The client's needs are assessed through an interview process, which determines their housing, benefits, Mental Health and drug and alcohol situations. We then assist the client in accessing the

right benefits, make various appointments on their behalf and if required accompany them and advocate. When working with a wide range of clients with a variety of needs, we advise them on the different agencies available to them in order for them to improve their current situation. Many of our clients have drug and/or alcohol related issues. In this situation we encourage clients to self-refer to agencies such as NEEDAS, Open Road etc.

Additionally, we assist clients in maintaining their current accommodation. This could involve regular visits to the property, assisting with problems that the client may be having with the landlord, housing benefit issues and if the clients requires any furniture or anything to make their home more comfortable.

The Resettlement team mainly works with Colchester Borough Council, various housing associations, the Night Shelter, Emmaus, Open Road, NEEDAS, Shelter, Homer court, GP's and MIND.

As part of the Resettlement service some of the clients we work with are placed in temporary accommodation out of the Colchester area. We felt that on occasion we are at risk of losing contact with some of our clients. In order to minimise this, we have set up a pilot scheme whereby we visit clients and maintain contact with them in the temporary and again help out with any problems they may be experiencing. This has proved helpful to the clients, Colchester Borough Council and to the people who run the accommodation.

Outreach Service

Three times a week the Outreach team goes out onto the street in order to reach people who are street homeless and vulnerable. They support them in practical ways such as offering blankets and sleeping bags and encourage them to come into the day centre where support and assistance in contacting other agencies is available.

The team regularly walks around the streets of Colchester town centre checking the wellbeing of known clients and making contact with people new to the town. They advise on the location of the

Soup Run and also attend it in order to build relationships with clients.

Trust with clients has built up slowly but surely over the last year and demand for this service continues to grow.

We have just been given a grant by the Co-op to fund sleeping bags which can be given out this winter.

Floating Support's Achievements for the AGM
(Helena and Kate)

- The main areas of responsibility are;
 - To work in an empowering way
 - To build self esteem and confidence in our client group
 - To enable clients to return to individual optimum functioning level.
 - We liaise with the council with people on the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.
 - Referrals will mostly come from the council, however some maybe from the April Centre, self-referral, MIND and probation.

- On first meeting, we make an initial assessment, and if possible complete a profile with them, including their signatures of consent, to enable us to carry our work out.

- Then we make a home visit, during which we assess their environment, and their capabilities of their living skills. At this time we aim to conduct a risk assessment, with the client, this assesses their actual and potential risks.
- We then discuss the client with our manager, to assess the suitability to the scheme.
- We assist with housing information, support, benefits, back to work skills, opportunities for training in life skills. We assess which of these are areas 'needs' and formulate a care plan with the client, setting realistic targets.
- If the client is on any form of medication, we will actively seek out what it is for and any side effects to be aware of.
- We also work in liaison with the mental health services, sexual health facilitator, and drug and alcohol abuse services.
- We also work with Emmaus, who give the clients £50 worth of essential furniture, for our clients, free delivery included.
- We also liaise with landlords, and families of our client group if necessary.
- We have to keep daily records of our visits and any telephone contact, and do written reports in their case files.
- We have to keep informed of current legislation, in order for us to have the knowledge to help our clients be aware of their rights. Recently we have attended an 'assisting clients in debt' training day, and 'crisis loans' seminar. Kate gave awareness to mental health talk, looking at assessing if clients present with mental health problems. In the near future will be attending 'how to complete DLA and AA forms' and 'benefits and mental health' training, next January Helena will be facilitating an 'abuse awareness workshop', we have not yet decided the length of the workshop, it is currently being planned.
- We give our own time on a Saturday, every 6 weeks, to enable a staffed drop in for homeless people.
- For statistical purposes, we have to complete a floating support time sheet; this is looked at on a regular basis.
- These are some of the problems we may encounter in a typical day;
 - Some people suffer from recent bereavements,
 - Some people are slowly recovering from many years of abuse from their former relationship.
 - Some people suffer from severe mental health breakdowns, and sometimes have to be hospitalized.
 - Some of the clients have had family break-ups, and need support.
 - Some of the clients have drug and alcohol problems and need help addressing this.
 - We also find that some of our clients are being supported by many other agencies including ourselves.
 - The fact that Kate is a Registered Mental Health Nurse, and Helena is a Registered Learning Disability Nurse, helps us with understanding our clients further.

- Health and Safety Measures;
 - We have a 'visiting diary', with our visits written in them.
 - We also have a mobile phone on us, which we use to ring the April Centre when we are entering a client's home, and when we depart.
 - Also we have been vaccinated against hepatitis B and C, and do not touch any needles or attend to any wounds of clients.
 - On initial visit we always visit in pairs, if we feel it is necessary we will then continue in paired visits or arrange separate visits.
 - We carry with us a 'Rape Alarm' for precautionary measures.
 - Between us we have weekly or when needed discussions.
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- A gentleman that I have been working with since the beginning of January has an alcohol addiction. He had death threats and abuse from his 30 year old son. Within the past 3 months I have supported him with informing the police, and when it was necessary I supported him with getting a court injunction against his son. After the injunction was taken to court, I have seen my client a few times and he has cut down on his drinking, started reading again, and with support is slowly getting back to his original function, he is no longer scared.
- I worked with this man who had an alcohol addiction, through loosing his brother to suicide, 2 years ago. Through regular support and discussion, his mental health has improved. We managed to obtain a coroners report on his brother's death, which is still with us. This man has managed to return to fulltime work, and come off his benefits, so is fully paying his rent successfully. We are still in contact with him through the telephone and still pops into the April Centre from time to time.
- We have been working with this lady for a year; she was in the women's refuge prior to that for 6 months. She was frightened to go out, and used to have to disguise her looks when out shopping. She has escaped from a 30 year violent and abusive relationship. She has weekly counseling from the women's refuge; she also has 2 hours of our support. she is now able to go into public places without having to disguise herself. She has also started working 2 hours per week cleaning at the women's refuge and is enjoying it. For the first time for 35 years she has been invited to a staff Christmas dinner at her previous employment, which she would never have been allowed to do, whilst with her ex-partner. She wishes for us to continue as feels the support is still necessary.
- We have been working with this man who has a diagnosis of Bi-polar depression and takes a lot of medication for this. We have met and

supported him over this period; he leans toward self-destruction he tried unsuccessfully to take his own life a few weeks ago. He was sorry that he woke up, he doesn't want contact with the mental health services, and they have offered a Community Psychiatric Nurse which he turned down. He has also asked us to 'back-off' for at least a month, which we are doing.

- We have worked with this lady for a very short period of time, she has alcohol problems. We saw her on a few occasions and it was evident that she didn't really want us visiting her home. We manage to obtain £50's worth of furniture from Emmaus for her, and after that was delivered, she wouldn't answer her phone, and wouldn't return the telephone calls. So we had to close her case.