



THE 700 CLUB

**Annual Report
and Financial
Statements for
the Year Ended
31st
March 2008**

Content

Foreword by the Chairman	3
A Word by the Chief Executive	4
Corporate 700 Club Report	6
Emma Project Report	10
Hope House and St George's Hostels Report	22
<i>Appendix: Statutory Information and Financial Statements</i>	30

A Foreword by the Chairman

The ten year milestone that the 700 Club passed last year prompted me to put pen to paper and to write a history of the charity. It has been a valuable exercise for three reasons. First, it means that the story behind the charity is preserved against the forgetfulness that changing personnel inevitably introduces. This is important as in many ways the roots of the charity embody the ideals which drive it forward to the present day. The 700 Club began with the idea that 700 residents of Darlington, would, collectively, take responsibility for, and respond to, the problem of homelessness in their town. This action shows collective passion for housing justice confronting a culture of denial, but it also demonstrates the way in which a truly democratic society should operate – from the bottom up. The real difficulty that the 700 Club faces today is how to preserve the idealism, responsiveness and ‘grass roots’ radicalism of its origins when largely reliant upon statutory funding streams and being steered by autocratic government agendas.

The second reason why the writing of a history proved such a valuable exercise is that it made evident the immense contribution that the 700 Club has made to Darlington since the first hostel was opened in 1997. More than one hundred and forty thousand bed-nights and thirty seven thousand floating-support interventions is a remarkable achievement, but the impact of the 700 Club goes way beyond the points of direct engagement. People who utilise the services of the 700 Club come already held in networks of family, friendship, and so on, not in total isolation. To bring stability to a chaotic life, to help put together a broken one, has a ripple effect over the whole community, and improves everyone’s lives. This is the hidden value of the work undertaken by the 700 Club which never appears on a balance sheet.

The third reason why the writing of a history was such a valuable exercise is that it places the ups and downs of the past year into a larger context. In terms of the ongoing work of the charity, history shows that the year on year growth has continued. The outward signs of this are a higher turnover, more staff, and a greater diversity of service provision. But, thanks to the leadership of Ira Laketic-Ljubojevic who has now passed the first anniversary of her appointment, the 700 Club has also grown inwardly. The organisation has a new self-confidence in its ability to meet the challenges of homelessness and to respond to the changing demographic of a problem we always hoped could be eliminated. In spite of both central and local government initiatives, the number of people presenting as homeless is rising, and in the current financial environment, that figure cannot do other than increase. The 700 Club remains committed to meeting that growing need.

As every year I would like to take the opportunity of extending my thanks to all who have shared in the work of the 700 Club over the past year - the staff (both present and those who have moved on), the 700 Club Board, as well as our major partners including Home Group, Darlington Borough Council, Darlington PCT, Darlington Housing Association, First Stop, and the private landlords who work with us. To these, and so many others, thank you.

Dr John Elliston

A Word by the Chief Executive

Like people, homelessness comes in all shapes and sizes. It can and it does happen to all kinds of people, irrespective of their background, age, gender and beliefs. The 700 Club knows it: over 700 individuals and families approached our services last year. That is a large and diverse group of people. What they all had in common though, was a need for assistance to help them go through the rough time they were experiencing so they can gain control of their lives.

Everyone, at least once in their lifetime, will have a serious problem or difficulty which may affect them and their family so hard that they may fear for their livelihood and survival.

One of the consequences of such episodes in our lives can be homelessness. A large number of people will be lucky enough to have support from family and friends to get them through the tough time. Other people are not so lucky. Other people do not have effective support network and as the problems they are facing become so difficult for them to handle, they find themselves homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

If there is no kindness, no help, no guidance on offer for people in those situations, they will fail to get their lives back on track. And that is not only a tragedy for that person or that family. That is a tragedy for all of us as a community because the consequences are far reaching and long lasting.

The 700 Club is a charitable organisation that strives to do all we can to support those vulnerable people by providing them with a temporary accommodation, key living skills and guidance to help people try for, achieve and hopefully maintain independent living. Everyone has aspirations and dreams. We work with people to help them get closer to those goals by empowering them to make positive choices, to engage with the communities where they live and to gain confidence to take charge of their lives once again.

All the work our staff and volunteers do is to get closer to our ultimate aim: eradicate homelessness by preventing it. In working towards this vision we try to find ways and opportunities for people who come to us to be fully included in the social matrix and to contribute to the community cohesion where they live. That is why our success rate is high, averaging about 70% across the board, despite the fact that it still proves very challenging to engage with the members of this disadvantaged group of people. We, at the 700 Club, try very hard to make a positive difference in their lives.

In our work we try to remove stigma around homelessness so that people can access range of services and can improve outcome for themselves. We strive to provide excellent service to people who need it by listening to how their need is changing and responding to their feedback.

The 700 Club is growing. We were born over a decade ago. Since then, the range of accommodation we offer and the breadth of services we provide expanded significantly. Sadly, the need for our work is still very much alive and our organisation branched out into different directions as a result of that. There is always need to do more.

We work closely with all the people accessing our services trying to improve the quality of their lives. But we simply couldn't do everything on our own. Our dedicated staff and volunteers bring skills, experience, enthusiasm and commitment to everything that the 700 Club is doing.

Yet, to help people achieve the optimal outcome for themselves and their families, we need partners. Partners who will support us financially, partners who will work with us on a range of initiatives to improve people's chances in life, partners who can offer their skill and time, even for a short spell, to make a positive difference to someone's life.

That is the reason why I would like to thank all the organisations that are investing in our projects and supporting us in our work, and those that team up with us and tackle problems that can ruin lives, and all of you, our volunteers, who simply want to give some of your kindness and energy to the people in need.

Thank you so much! We are proud to be working with you.

Dr Ira Laketic-Ljubojevic

Corporate Report

By Tracy Marlor

It has been another eventful and challenging year for us within the 700 Club with a number of staff settling into their new roles within the organisation along with some new additions including an administration assistant joining the corporate team.

2007 saw the Ten-year anniversary of the 700 Club in particular with reference to the length of time that Hope House had been open. There were a number of events to mark the occasion which included a hog roast and bucking bronco at Hope House itself. The celebrations culminated with our AGM in November which was a much larger event that was previously held and included a presentation from Jenny Chapman, Councillor with Communities and Engagement portfolio.

The AGM sadly said goodbye to retiring Board members and a Director but also welcomed a number of new Board members who represent a diverse cross section of our community including two service users and a new Director.

July of this year saw the first 700 Club open day. It was our opportunity to let others know what we do at the 700 Club. Invitations were sent out to a large cross section of our community which included service users and neighbours as well as councillors and outside agencies. It was a good start on which we intend to build upon as an annual event.

Service User Involvement

There has been a strong focus towards service user involvement within the 700 Club and this has taken shape in a variety of ways one of which is through a questionnaire asking them what they would like to be involved with. This includes not only activities but representation at the Board level and involvement within the recruitment process, where service users have both short listed applicants as well as contributed on interview panels. This encourages engagement from the service user and the additional activities are important to using or enhancing skills, knowledge and confidence which has long term benefits. The service user involvement also helps the 700 Club to shape and reform both our strategy and services.

Another first was to have a Service User Forum which included a presentation from the Army as well as giving the service users the opportunity to ask questions to a representation of the staff within the 700 Club. This again will now become an annual event.

Halloween saw service users dress up for a fancy dress party where the best costume won a prize. The event included food and apple bobbing and was enjoyed by all.

Volunteers

New to their post in November was our Volunteer Mentor Co-ordinator. The post is funded by Northern Rock for 3 years and it is about recruiting and training volunteers to mentor our service users. A training course has been implemented which has received accreditation and the recruitment of volunteers has been successful.

Along with the volunteer mentors the 700 Club began to encourage other volunteers to be part of the 700 Club and I was appointed the main lead for volunteers to harness the variety of skills that volunteers may have and ensure involvement across the whole of the organisation. We work closely with Evolution (formerly Darlington CVS) as well as promoting the involvement of volunteers at every possible opportunity to encourage social interaction within the local community.

Fund Raising

Christmas brought a lot of generosity to the 700 Club in the form of donations which not only provided a new TV for our hostels but was enough to ensure that each and every one of our service users received a Christmas present.

Along with a number of prize draws and competitions we have organised last year for our service users, the 700 Club held a 'design a Christmas card' competition for the service users. All entries were judged and a winner was chosen. The card will be going to print and will be the 700 Club corporate Christmas card for 2008.

Information Technology

At the beginning of this year we had taken a large step into the world of information technology with the introduction of a server. This has proved to be a positive move for us within the 700 Club and we have looked to improve our understanding and capabilities of what Information Technology can do to keep us up to date in all aspects of our work.

What Our Partners Say:

Michael Durkin – Mikom Systems Ltd.

700 Club IT Development

'Computers are very significant tools in the workplace and along with the increasing demanding for electronic communication is a very valuable asset to the flow of data in any company. To cope with this demand the 700 Club have in place a robust, reliable and advanced, but user-friendly multi site IT system.

The current system consists of a centralised server providing; email, data storage, instant file sharing, remote access, shared faxing and data security. All this is delivered to each user's desktop with the simplicity of logging onto their allocated system.

This year the 700 Club has had major IT infrastructure changes which have affected the whole organisation. One of the changes was the development of new offices which have been linked into the system. The current IT infrastructure has been upgraded to allow company expansion with no change in IT operations.

As well as expanding and upgrading the IT network, the 700club have ensured that Data Protection policies have been implemented and that they are compliant with essential ICO 'Information Commissioners Office' government guidelines. They have done this by ensuring all company disclaimers are up to date, IT policies are in place and that email is archived to correspond with legislation.

The 700 club always embraces new technology with open arms and constantly ensures every aspect of their IT system is tailored to the way they work and that their systems are fully licensed to obey software piracy guidelines.'

Training and Development

A further focus for the 700 Club has been the continuing of training and development for both staff and volunteers. In addition to providing the required induction programme for all new staff and volunteers we also encourage the use of the internet and article reading to enhance both personal and professional development.

Due to the 700 Club being a multi-site organisation there has been implementation of a quarterly all-staff meeting which includes presentations and talks from other agencies as well as awareness sessions on specific topics i.e. race awareness.

The introduction of a new appraisal process also helps in identifying areas for development along with new methods of achieving the development at a personal and professional level.

We approached and worked with a skills advisor from Business Link which resulted in the provision of contributory funding towards media training for senior staff.

A number of staff also gained their qualification in First Aid at work by attending a four day course ending with a practical and theory exam. This ensured that the 700 Club had sufficient first aid provision particularly for any outside events involving service users.

We have introduced additional staff benefits, including discounts from some retailers and service providers in the town as well as a Death in Service Benefit.

New Office Space

As an employer of approx 31 staff we were feeling an increasing need to obtain more office space. This was made available to us by the Grange Road Baptist church as part of their development plans. The new offices have a meeting/training room attached and are compliant with all disability access requirements.

Consultation with all relevant people was in progress with the aim of a move for the Senior Management team and corporate staff in May 2008.

Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity is another important focus for the 700 Club and we have continued to involve this subject matter in all areas of our work with consistent monitoring of all of our interviews with service users, volunteers and staff. Monitoring also takes place within our HR processes. We have worked to raise awareness about all six strands of diversity through training and have been working closely with GADD to the aim of opening a house for LGBT service users. We have also appointed a liaison officer for LGBT service users.

Equality and diversity is pivotal to us and is reflected in all our policies and working practices. We have implemented our action plan and we strive to maintain the high standard and equality of opportunity for all.

The Plans for the Next year

The 700 Club has a number of challenges in the coming year which include:-

- Launch of the new website
- ISO Accreditation / Health and Safety Advisor /
- Links with Universities and Colleges (placements and research)
- Design and implementation of a new database
- Skills Pledge
- Development of new roles within the organisation

I will end this report with the following statement which goes some way to illustrate the dedication and commitment that is the heart of the 700 Club:

***'The 700 Club: A Journey
By Nicola Marlor***

I started my journey at the 700 Club when I joined the organisation in November 2005 as a cleaner at the newly opened St. Georges Hall.

In that role I did not have much interaction with the service users but the small amount I did have made me wonder; why are so many people in this situation? What can I do to help?

In January 2006 I became a Support Worker at St. Georges Hall and began to work with the service users as a key worker. I received training and encouragement to enable me to do my job well.

There are so many perceptions about why a person becomes homeless and the "type" of person you envision when you think of the homeless; a straggly haired, dirty, smelly, middle-aged man, an alcoholic begging on the streets. Being a key worker at St. Georges Hall challenged all of my perceptions and made me realise that ANYONE can become homeless.

In November 2006 I joined the Emma Project as a Floating Support Worker. In this role, I supported people who had previously been homeless but managed to secure accommodation either privately rented, with a housing association or with the council. These people needed the support to make the transition into independent living and it was my role to help with this transition, offering whatever individually-tailored support was needed for each service user.

Unfortunately, my position as a Floating Support Worker was made redundant in February 2008. As required by law, I was offered an alternative position in the organisation; Administration Assistant with the corporate team.

As the Administration Assistant working under the Finance and HR Manager, my involvement with the service users was relatively small. Part of my role however included offering training sessions in basic IT skills and assisting service users with using a computer; one which is set up specifically for service user usage.

Due to personal circumstances I left my position as an Administration Assistant in July 2008. I am currently working as a locum worker for the 700 Club which means I do shifts to cover holidays and sickness as required around the organisation.

I feel that the 700 Club have assisted my progression within the organisation and have been supportive of changes I needed to make due to changes in my life.'

Emma Project Report

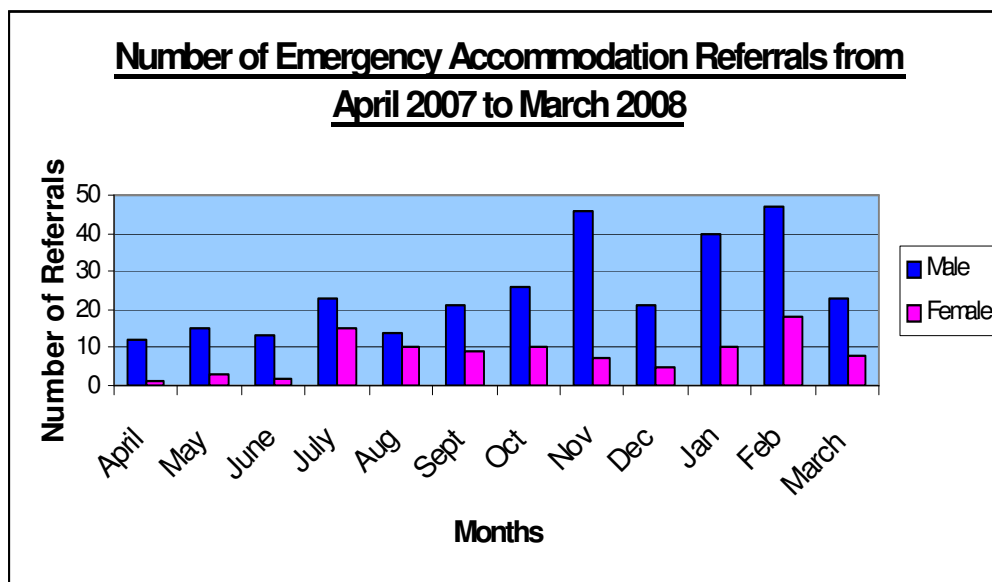
By Caroline Litster

What a year we have had! We have had some ups and downs and throughout difficult times, true to form, we have pulled together. The year began with Carol Shreeve, Emma Project Manager, leaving us to manage Darlington's CAB. I got her job. This left a vacancy for Deputy Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager which was filled by Angela Clement (previously HMO Officer). That vacancy was filled by Lesley Turner, previously a Floating Support Worker, and Lesley's position was filled by Kay Bowman who was new to the 700 Club.

We also employed Sharon Bland as our Managed Houses Support Worker. Her role was to support all the residents in the HMOs who did not have support from external organisations. Sharon's time with us was short. Very sadly she died in August 2007. The last day she worked with us she was in her element. We were all mucking in, as usual, painting our three bed house in Lascelles. It needed decorating as a new tenant was moving in. Sharon always gave more than expected. She had a positive attitude and really believed in making a difference to people's lives. She achieved this, not only with the residents but for those of us who were fortunate enough to work with her and to get to know her. Sharon had the ability to inspire good in others. She was a shining light, a bubbly person and great fun to be with. Our reminiscing of her always ends in laughter when we remember the short time we had with her. We have named one of our family houses after her, Sharon House.

In this years report you can read pieces written by service users and staff. I want to share with you the amazing work that has been achieved in the previous year by our service users and how much we at the Emma Project have accomplished.

Emergency Accommodation



The graph above shows the number of referrals Emma Project's Emergency Accommodation (including Stop2Night) received in one year from 1st April 2007 to

31st March 2008. You can see that we receive a vastly larger number of referrals of men compared to women. Of the 399 people that were referred, 369 were accepted and 401 nights were used. Nearly 20% of referrals were for young people aged between 16 and 25 years. The main substance misused by Emergency Accommodation referrals is alcohol. The main referring agencies are Darlington Borough Council and First Stop Darlington.

The Emma Project's Emergency Accommodation is the last resort for a lot of people who would otherwise be left to sleep on the streets. To ensure we offer a service that fits the needs of our client group we leave a questionnaire in each Emergency Room. Here are some of the comments our service users have made:

'I appreciate everything the Emma Project have done for me during my stay and I don't think I could ask for a better place to stay'

'Thank you very much'

A letter was left to Lesley ' Thank you Lesley, I appreciate your kindness. Hopefully I will be permitted to stay again tonight. If so I will see you at 7.30! Many Thanks'

'I just thank you for putting me up and off the streets. Thank you'

Some have requested TV's, X Boxes and Sky TV – unfortunately our budget does not stretch that far! However we used a monetary donation from a member of the public to purchase four radios. At the end of March 2008 they were all still in the rooms and in good working order.

In October 2007 Sue Aldus (one of our volunteers) was successful in gaining paid employment as our Emergency Accommodation Coordinator. Sue has written the following report:

'The Emergency Room and Stop2night referrals are on the increase. Since starting in October I have set up statistics to try to define a pattern in homelessness, out of areas, referral agencies, males and females etc., in the hope we can adapt the emergency rooms to the requirement.

At present we have determined there is much need for a couples room, this has been discussed within the project and we all feel that the idea is good, however it needs to be used at our discretion to see how it will work! This room will also be suitable for parent and child and other particularly vulnerable groups if it is too distressing for them to be separated at the time of homelessness.

We were donated a cot, which now makes the room in Arthur House suitable for a mother and child/baby. The bed and cot can also be used in conjunction with a male room in the event of a father child/baby becoming homeless.

The donated food from Gregg's has also proved very successful in the Emergency Rooms. The Service Users receive a sandwich, pasties and occasionally a cake! Notices have been put in the rooms to make the users aware where the donations have come from. On the nights we do not receive Gregg's food we have placed a small food and drink pack in the rooms.

I set up a questionnaire several months ago. This is also proving a useful tool for monitoring and developing the Emergency Rooms. We have had several nice statements and a number of positive feedback from the service users.

Stop2night is still very much in need of volunteer hosts, drivers and telephone contacts. Despite several fliers, leaflets etc to schools, colleges and referring agencies we have had no much success in recruiting for those vital roles. We intend to place an advert in the Town Crier in November to hit hard at the season of good will and hopefully recruit some volunteers for this particular project! This is a very worthwhile project that helps particularly vulnerable young people who may be facing homelessness for the very first time in their lives. To reassure the potential Stop2night hosts we now offer services of the HMO on-call team for security and the back up of Emergency Rooms if hosts feel uncomfortable or unsafe with their Service User. In addition we offer payment to hosts: £40 for a first night and £20 for consecutive nights.

I feel another option that may encourage hosts is to offer them an opportunity to shadow the Housing Management Team when on Emergency Room pick-ups. This I hope will allow them to see how professional we are and also what homelessness really is and how damaging and impactful it can be on young people.

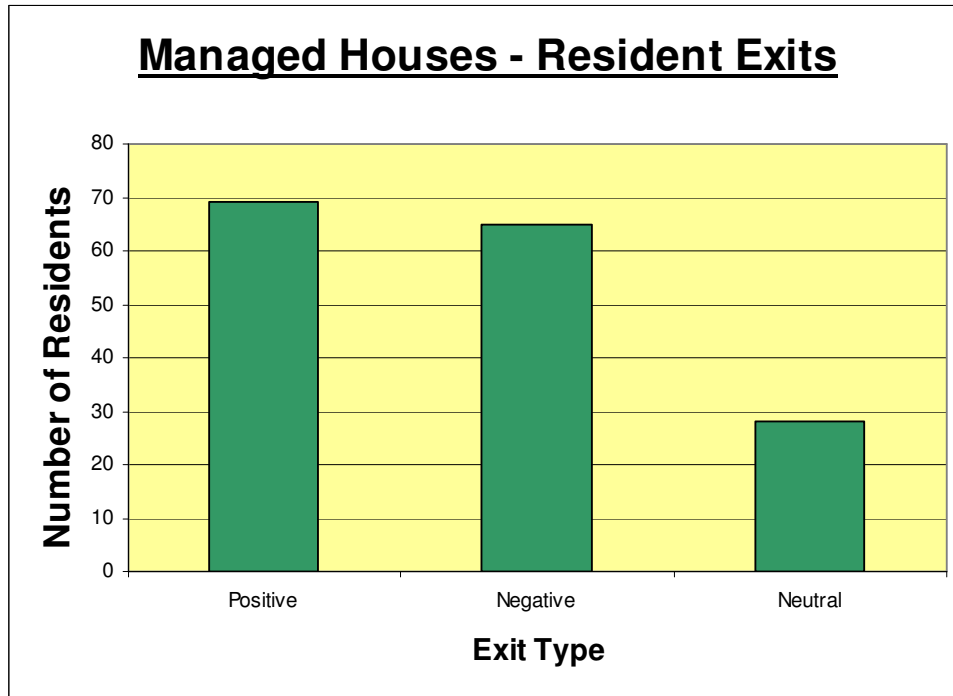
Recently I had a meeting with Nightstop from York, who have welcomed us to see how their project works. They were very impressed with the 700 Club on the whole and the both organisations will look for ways to work in partnership with them.'

Managed Houses

After using our Emergency Accommodation a service user is offered an interview with us for more permanent accommodation. In a number of cases we are able to house them within the Emma Project, otherwise we refer them to Hope House, St Georges Hall and other external accommodation providers.

The Managed Houses Team have worked hard this year, and as always have been supported by the Floating Support Team. However, we have had increased number of void rooms in this year. This has been due to a variety of reasons from staff shortage to the fact that homelessness is changing. More and more families require housing. With such changes the 700 Club needs to change too. Plans are being put together for a new project called Bridge to Home. This project will bring together private landlords with tenants and place the right people in the right homes. There will be elements of housing management, floating support and a bond scheme within the project. Watch this space!

The following graph shows resident exits from April 2007 to March 2008. We have provided accommodation for more than 160 people during this period.



We have had a number of thank you cards from residents who have successfully moved on, and even those who are evicted come to realise the error of their ways and often thank us for our efforts. They are of course given second, third, fourth chances because we recognise that people do change.

The following notes were written by some of our ex-residents:

'We would like to thank the Emma Project for everything they have done.....thank you all we had a pleasant stay.'
'Just a little note to say thank you for all your help and support you've given me.'

Within the Managed Houses, Jolliffe House opened on 26th March 2007. This house is for individuals who are seriously considering reducing their alcohol intake. This was the only house of its sort in the country, the idea being conceived by Chris Brooke, Social Worker at the Elmfield Centre and the set up funds were provided by the Darlington PCT. The house has had backing from DAAT and other partners are coming on board.

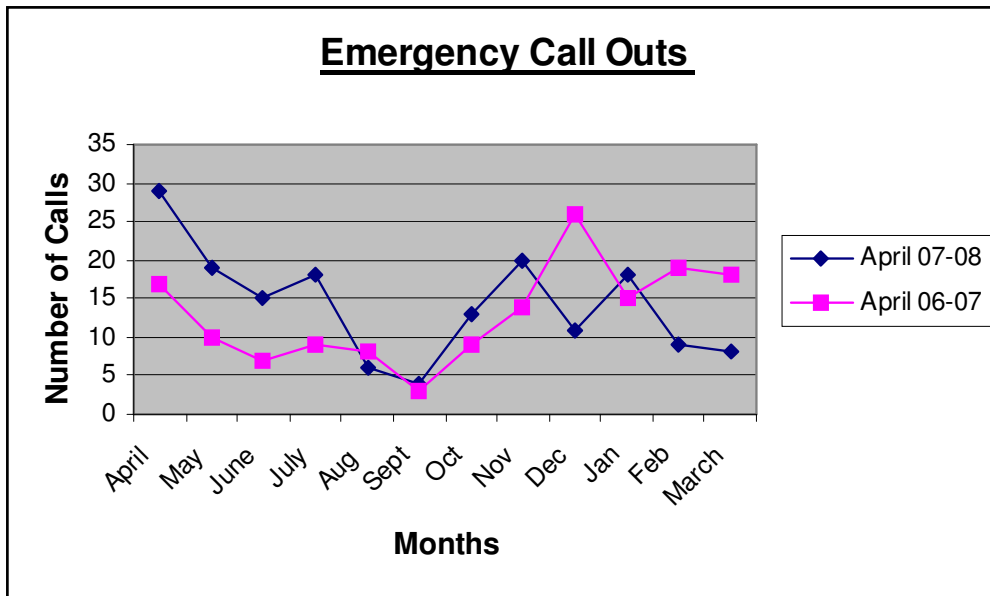
Winston Charles was employed as Housing Management Alcohol Officer and has managed the house since it opened. There were clear prejudices against the house when it first opened particularly by residents in the area. A huge amount of 700 Club resources were ploughed into this project. Night Shift Officers were employed and the Emma Project staff worked more flexible hours as emergency call outs increased. Pressure increased and we all worked extremely hard to positively impact on the neighbourhood and keep in regular contact with locals. We increased partnership work with the police, namely PCSO Christine O'Brien and PC John Foster, and became firmer with our residents. After nine months worth of hard slog we began to see differences. The myth surrounding Station Road is beginning to be blurred, but

sometimes people have short memory and have to be reminded about the positive changes that have happened.

Paul Walsh, Treatment Effectiveness Manager of Darlington's DAAT had the following to say about the 700 Club:

'I have been more than happy with the involvement of the 700 club and their response to the housing needs of our clients. The organization and the staff that I have worked with have been very pro-active in the approach to working alongside the other providers and indeed the DAAT with regards to catering for the needs of Substance Mis users in Darlington. As a DAAT representative, I can say that we are very happy with your input and involvement in service delivery in Darlington. We are very keen to continue this type of multi-agency working across the whole of the Substance Misuse agenda and look forward to many more joint programs for our clients.'

How were Emergency Call Outs affected? The following graph shows the difference between this year and last year. There is a definite trend with peaks in April, December and lulls in August and September time.



Taster Flats

Previously the role of Taster Flat Support Worker sat within the Floating Support Team. The post holder being Nicola Marlor. However due to the end of funding it became more appropriate to move the position to the Housing Management Team. Liz Natrass was successful in securing the post.

The Taster Flats had a history of negative incidents resulting in eviction and although both Social Services Leaving Care Team and the Emma Project recognised that all outcomes were not going to be positive due to the chaotic nature and age of the client group, we did expect a higher number of positive outcomes than we were achieving.

Meetings were called involving the Leaving Care Team, Emma Project and Darlington Housing Association who provide the two flats. It was agreed that the project was viable and very much required. A new operational protocol was drawn up for clarity to ensure we all knew our responsibilities. New relationships were built with different staff member and a concrete base was created for those relationships to develop. Now we are all much positive about the outcomes of this project.

Volunteer Mentors

In last years report I mentioned that we had been successful in our bid to Northern Rock Foundation for a Volunteer Mentor Coordinator. I also mentioned that the coordinator would need to have a charismatic personality.....for any of you who have met Ann-Marie Basnett-Roberts you will know we got what we asked for.

The following report has been written by Ann-Marie:

'The Mentoring Programme is a new service within the 700 Club. It is open to people living in both the houses and hostels. The service matches up a Mentor, to provide personalised support, with a Service User. All Mentors complete a course in Mentoring. The training gives them the knowledge needed to work with the people living with us and it consists of ten, three hour sessions.

These are:

- *The history of the 700 Club, The Emma Project and routes to homelessness*
- *Knowing Ourselves, Values, Attitudes and Confidentiality Relationships and Boundaries and Matching, Motivating and Managing*
- *Goal Planning and Session Planning*
- *Health and Safety, Lone Working*
- *Communicating Effectively and Group Work Listening Skills and body language*
- *Looking after the mentor, safe practice and supervision and promoting achievement, using resources Learning styles for the Mentor and Mentee*
- *Child Protection The referral process, signs of child abuse Safeguarding vulnerable adults*
- *Domestic Abuse*
- *Drug and alcohol misuse*

The Mentor Skills Training Programme is accredited to The Open College Network, level 2, which equates to a GCSE level A-C. This Mentoring qualification has been well received by the volunteers as the diversity of the Mentors has been huge. On the same training programme there is someone who has many years teaching

experience, someone who was once a Service User and lived in our properties, and lots of people who are just finishing college, university or courses and who want to equate their experience to the academic skills they have. They as a group bring many skills relating to their professional and personal lives, and all are reliable, enthusiastic, keen to learn and wanting to help people change their lives. They also want to gain experience for the jobs they want to do in the future.

Altogether 10 have finished the 30 hour course. Another 2 will carry over their training until September, as they have moved away from their University accommodation to home for the summer, and the distances were too far to travel. They will join the next group to start the training to top up their missing sessions.

This programme is essentially about bringing changes to the Mentees' lives, but there must be acknowledgement that the Mentors have experienced changes too. They are more aware of the needs of those they will be working with and of associated services here that can help them.

As we want to ensure we are providing a good mentoring service I have attended The Mentoring Foundation Training and as a project we are working towards Mentoring and Befriending Accreditation. Again this and the mentoring accreditation via the OCN give validity to the work being done here. I have also attended Networking Events to share good practice and ideas and I am constantly meeting with other services and people who work with similar clients to share our experience with them and see what does and does not work in their services.

All the mentors that have completed the training are now matched with at least one mentee, some even have more! And the relationships are developing well.

Several mentees are currently applying for college courses with the support of mentors from searching for the courses right through to going for interviews, and others are working together on a variety of things from budgeting to weekly football sessions.

As every mentee is different, so are the mentors, who bring a variety of skills to the lives of those they are working with.

The project will run it's second set of training sessions in the Autumn to enable more Service Users to have access to a Mentor in the future.'

As Ann-Marie mentioned in her report, mentoring is not just a learning process for the mentees, it is also a learning process for the mentors. There are areas of gain for both the mentor and the mentee.

The following piece was written by a former service user of the Emma Project's Floating Support Scheme. She prefers to be anonymous so let's call her Joanne. Joanne had heard that the Emma Project had received funding for a Volunteer Mentor Coordinator. She rang us up and asked about mentoring, she was extremely keen to be involved in the project and even contacted us before our Mentor Coordinator was employed! She started the mentoring course, which is quite a commitment. Joanne has two children under five years of age and she is expecting again. She has started many courses before and never finished them but is determined to make a difference to herself and 700 Club service users by finishing the course and becoming a mentor.

This is what she has written:

'Before I became a client of the Emma Project, nobody would re-house me, not the council. I've seen a number of houses owned by private landlords, nobody would take me on.

Then I was told of the Emma Project. They were willing to give me a chance, they sat me down and listened to me. If it wasn't for them god knows what would have happened to me and my little girl.

I've got a 2 bed house from the council now, and am moving to a 3 bed with a private landlord because my family has grown.

If it wasn't for the project I would have nothing I have today.

Now I am doing this course, I want to give people like me a chance, just like the project gave me, no matter what has happened in the past, whether it be drugs, a bad relationship with a boyfriend, losing their children, I am sure this is only a few things what people have been through that I'll meet through this project.'

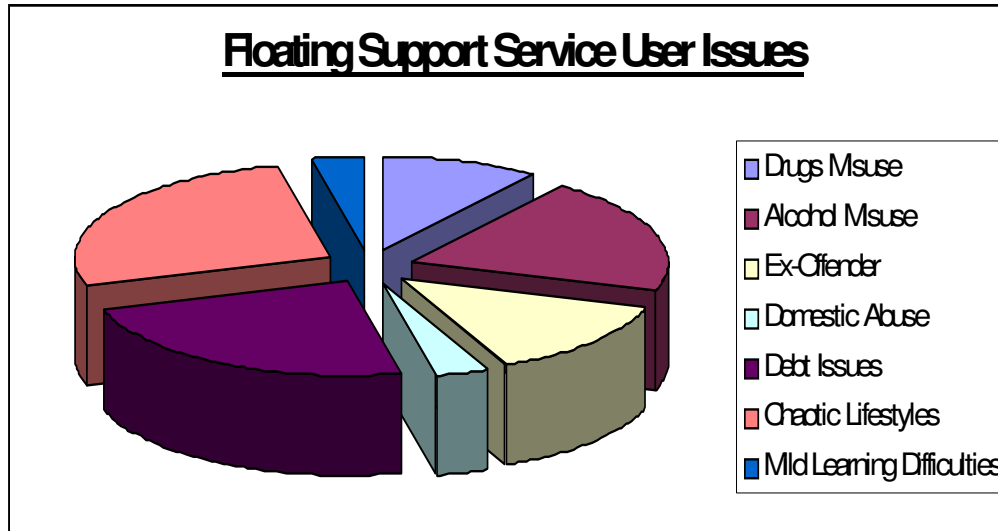
Floating Support

As I mentioned earlier in this report, Kay Bowman was appointed as a new Floating Support Worker. Liz Vas remains our Senior Floating Support Worker.

Our main focus this year has been the Supporting People's Quality Assessment Framework. In the past we were judged as being Level C and when our new Chief Executive, Ira Laketic-Ljubojevic, arrived this just was not good enough. In fact, the whole team agreed. We wanted to be graded as an excellent, an 'A' organisation and were prepared to do what we needed to in order to get there. Hours and hours of hard work was put into changing working practices, increasing our standards and proving that we had done so with evidence. The whole of the Emma Project (whether funded by Supporting People or not) bought into this and we worked together and with our Service Users to achieve highest standard of service provision. The 700 Club were assessed and awarded and over-all Level B as not all standards were at the level A. We are very proud of that achievement however we are still determined to obtain an A in the Supporting People QAF. We are confident that at the next Supporting People visit we will be able to demonstrate that the remaining level B standards are well and truly improved.

During the last year Floating Support worked with 19 Service Users. We have offered them aerobics, outdoor walks, book club, Daily Living Skills Programme, Coffee Breaks and many other opportunities to improve their confidence levels, communication skills and contact with their community. We have involved service users in every aspect of our organisation, we even have two former service users on our Board. We listen to what our service users want and do everything within our power to provide that.

The issues that our Floating Support Team have dealt with can be viewed in the graph below:



Of the 19 Service Users who received our support this year, 52% were under the age of 25 years old. 31% were aged less than 19 years. 63% were female and 37% were male. Darlington Borough Council are the main housing provider for this client group and 31% of service users were families.

The following piece was written by Bobby who resides in his own flat and has a Floating Support Worker, Kay.

This is what he has to say about the 700 Club:

'I was homeless and alone in Darlington and called in to First Stop for help. The staff were very helpful to me. They phoned up a place for me and got me into Stop2Night where I stopped 2 nights. Then the staff at First Stop sent me to the 700 Club at Hope House to see if they had a room for me. The staff at Hope House asked me to go back in one week. As I got to the main door, I was told there was a room for me. When I got there I made some friends in the 8 weeks I was there. I was asked if I would do a swap with someone from Tudor House so he can have more support from staff. I stayed about 6-8 weeks. There I met my key worker Kay who has been a great help to me and given me a lot of support over the last 6 months. I was asked if I would like my own flat I said yes. Kay helped me move to my new flat and filled forms in for me. I believe Kay is a big asset to the Emma Project but I must all so say a big thank you to all the staff. I hope the project runs for a long time to come to help other people in need of help like I was one day some time ago. Thank you very much'.

Liz Vas continues to work closely with the Family Intervention Team. We had to think outside of the box when it came to housing a particular chaotic family in Darlington and this was the solution we came up with. The Emma Project leased a property from Darlington Borough Council to house the family in. Mum moved in with two of her sons. After nearly a year of successful housing the family struggled to manage a particular episode, which resulted in eviction and the family separating. Liz continued to work with the mum and after a couple of months the Family Intervention Programme found a private landlord willing to take a risk with this family and house

them. Again the Emma Project signed the rental agreement with assurances of rent from the Family Intervention Programme. The family continue to work with both the Emma Project and the Family Intervention Programme. Without the intervention and teamwork of both organisations involved, this family would have an entirely different story to tell.

This particular service user wrote the following about the joint work she has received from the Emma Project and the Family Intervention Programme:

'I first came to the Emma Project in February 2006. I was introduced to the FIP Project in May 2006. During this two year period I have needed extra help and have received support with every aspect of my life.....I have a family of four, boys and girls of different ages, although three have grown up and have a life of their own, my youngest remains at home with me. That's not to say I've had it easy. For the last nine years, I have been a single parent, living on benefits. I have had more problems than enough, ones I thought could never be sorted.

One day I had a chance of working with FIP and Floating Support so I did. Guess what? I've never looked back.

I was the 'lost cause' or so I thought.

The support I received was intensive at first, then it got easier, without this I really don't know where I'd be or my family.

At first it was the children creating problems.

- *Not going to school:- I ended up in court.*
- *Causing anti-social behaviour – due to not been at school.*
- *Arrested by the police – a few times a week*
- *Friends – hanging around, meeting not so good friends, getting into trouble*
- *Fines – paying my child's fine.*
- *Eviction – twice I lost my home, twice I was homeless.*

We desperately need a Floating Support Team in Darlington.

I know I am not the only parent with a family with difficulties in many areas.

We need an agency who can work with families, who can assist and guide not only through the day but night time as well. Someone to help maintain a family home in a time of crisis. To help keep the family unit together and safe. Ensure stability within the home. To bring confidence to parents who are stressed depressed.....Floating Support are there for me A friendly, caring chat, benefits, appointments, Life Skills Programme (not that I needed it), budgeting, bills and food, phone call, coffee mornings, home visits.'

Sharon Gilligan, Family Services Manager said the following about our partnership work *'by the two projects working together it has enabled us to provide the high level of support for the FIP families. Whilst both projects have offered practical and emotional support the Emma Project has provided this service to our client's during unsociable hours, providing twenty-four hour cover. Staff from the project have also provided help and support with tenancy and welfare benefits and assisted with budgeting and repayment plans.'*

The following case study depicts the types of issues commonly dealt with by the Floating Support Team. You will see that our Floating Support Workers are particularly skilled and have a variety and wealth of knowledge that they require to do their jobs at the high standard they expect from themselves:

'Client A was referred to us when a community midwife read a letter we had sent offering our services to a young person whose name had been put forward to the common waiting list. Unbeknown to us this person had difficulties reading and writing, although she didn't really understand what the letter actually meant she still showed it to her midwife.

The midwife was extremely concerned about the conditions that this girl was living in, the flat had been targeted several times, windows smashed, cider bottles and lager cans tossed into the garden. Previously whilst client A had been in hospital the flat had been occupied by squatters and the council intervened to help her take it back.

Due to depression client A found it very difficult to motivate herself to maintain any sort of standard in the property. The bedroom was damp so was just used as storage and the client stored her mattress against the living room wall and put it down on the floor at night to sleep. The midwives had decided that a newborn baby could not be brought into this environment and wanted significant improvement.

While investigating the circumstances further and looking into a move of accommodation the first task was to improve conditions in the property. This involved the council making repairs, client A and her partner doing some decorating, together we also sourced some good furniture though local churches.

Shortly after the client's baby was born her flat was targeted again and the council quickly arranged a move, however before this happened the client became a victim of domestic abuse and had a short stay in a hostel.

This client has had numerous problems, poor accommodation, depression, domestic violence, literacy, learning difficulties and debts. Together we have been dealing with them one by one, the client's literacy has greatly improved due to courses with family learning and a child care course with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Budgeting was another issue but the debts have now been addressed and the client is sticking to a payment plan. The client now engages regularly with her doctor. The client engaged for a short time with the Domestic Abuse Team but turned down the offer of attending the Freedom Programme.

After a lot of ups and downs the client is slowly growing in confidence, her new home is well kept and she has just decorated her lounge, she takes pride in what she has achieved. At present she is attending a course to help her understand how to interact with her child as a parent in a positive way. She will shortly complete her period of support having achieved independent living'.

Aims for Next Year

- Increase the Floating Support Team by filling gaps in service provision
- Take stock of the Managed Houses
- Set up new schemes out of area
- Set up Bridge to Home

- Increase capacity within our existing team
- Draw upon volunteers and their invaluable time and experience
- Fundraise for new roles and Service User Involvement initiatives

Some of these aims read the same as last years, however progress has been made and will continue.

To close I would like to say how proud I am to work for the 700 Club. During the last year the organisation has gone from strength to strength because of the determination and commitment of those of us involved and the drive of our Chief Executive. I would like to thank the Emma Project staff and volunteers for their hard work, commitment, patience and understanding (and that of their families). I appreciate each one of you – thank you.

The Hostels Report

By: Yvonne Beattie

This July this year we celebrated Hope House reaching its 10th Anniversary. For ten years now the hostel has given hundreds of people not just a place to stay but has offered support and guidance for undoubtedly the most vulnerable group of people in society. Over the years Hope House has gained the reputation for accepting people who no-one else will house, due to their high support needs and chaotic life styles. Our ultimate goal would be to eradicate homelessness completely however the fact that Hope House is still here ten years later, always working at full capacity, housing 86 people in the last year alone, proves that there is still a need.

Service Users and staff came along to help us celebrate the anniversary. We provided Roast Hog buns, there was a tombola and a bucking bronco for entertainment. The day was such a success and everyone joined in the spirit of the day.

Improvements

Hope House under went a much needed refurbishment this year: from painting and decoration in all areas, to replacing the service users' room furnishings and blinds being fitted at all windows. The whole building has been cheered up with a much lighter colour scheme and more modern surroundings. Our residents were consulted on the changes made, they have contributed ideas and have chosen particular colours and fittings.

This year we have been, and continue to be assessed by Supporting People. We are aiming for and feel confident in attaining a level A. The hostels staff, as indeed all of the staff at the 700 club, have been working hard to adhere to standards and practices expected to obtain and maintain this level of service.

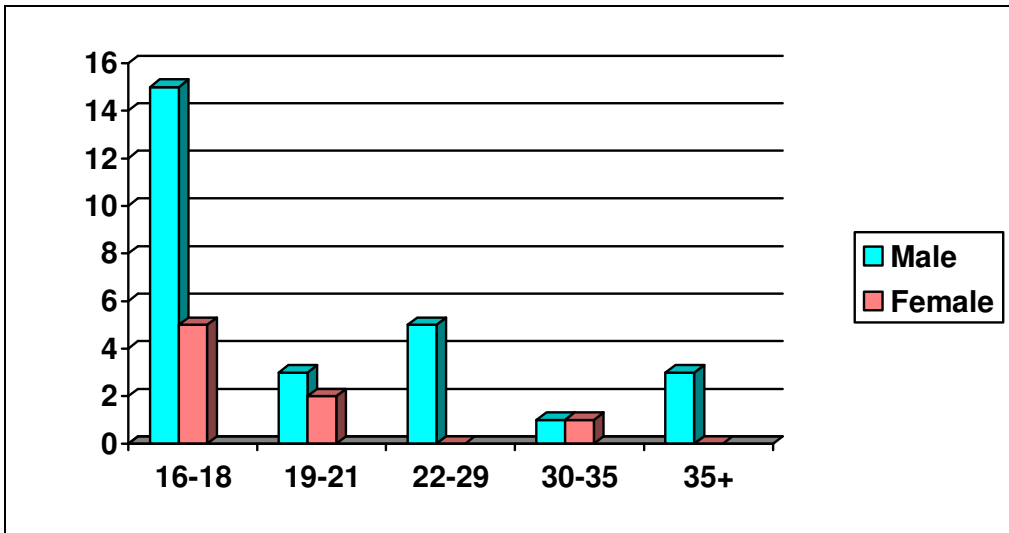
I must say a huge thank you to the staff for all of their hard work, their continuous efforts and their willingness to go that extra mile. The improvements made can only prove to be of benefit to the service users who come to us in need of our services.

As part of our improvements in March I became the named liaison officer for the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual (LGBT) community for the 700 Club. From working closely with Gay Advice Darlington and Durham (GADD) team, initiatives have been implemented in order to further demonstrate that we are an all inclusive organization. Posters and literature have been placed around the hostels and in other areas of the 700 Club to ensure people know that our policy is to encourage equality and diversity.

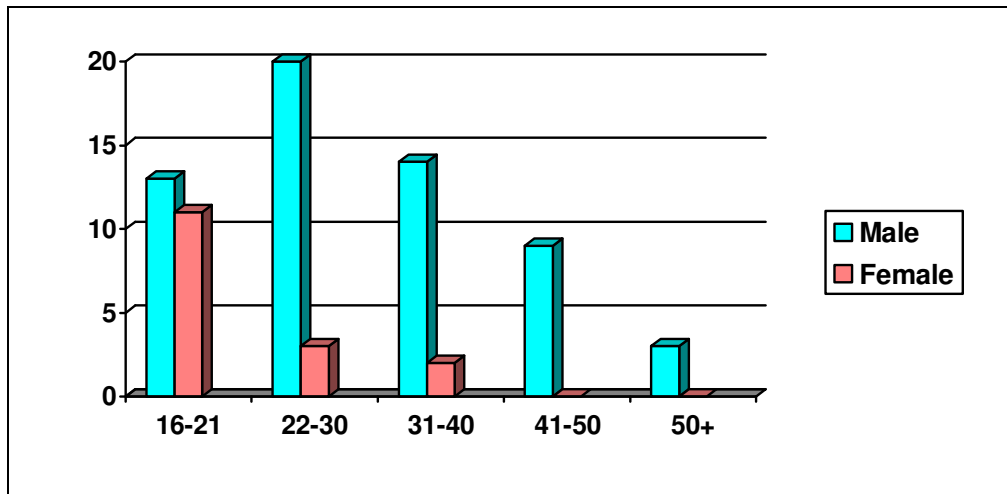
Service User Outcomes and Statistics

Our Service users at both hostels remain predominantly male. The noticeable difference with this year from previous years is that St Georges has started to accommodate older service users. Although the majority of our residents were still aged between 16-18, the average age has risen.

**The Age and Gender of Service users who accessed
St Georges Hall from April 2007 – March 2008**



**The Age and Gender of Service Users who accessed
Hope House from April 2007 – March 2008**



Service user's supports needs have also changed this year. Previously St George's resident's main issue rendering them needing support was predominately from family break downs. Almost all were first time homeless, having being evicted from their parents home or who were referred to us from the leaving care team, however things are now changing. Although we still have many who come to us after a family breakdown, a much larger percentage of service users who have mild learning difficulties are now also requiring our services, as there appears to be insufficient provision available for them in the Darlington area. We are also housing a larger group of particularly vulnerable people who lack independent living skills.

With those accessing our services this year being of an older age group, often after a family break up with their partner ending in them having to leave their shared accommodation, the definition 'First time homeless' which is part of our criteria for entry into St Georges may need to be re-examined.

Hope House service users support needs remain similar to previous years which is predominantly substance misuse (drugs and alcohol), Most of those who used our services this last year came to us with a mixture of complex needs having previously lived chaotic lifestyles, others just needed somewhere to live to enable them to take a step back before they could move forward.

Two residents who currently live at the hostel have kindly offered to tell us their story, of how Hope House has given them the opportunity to do just that:

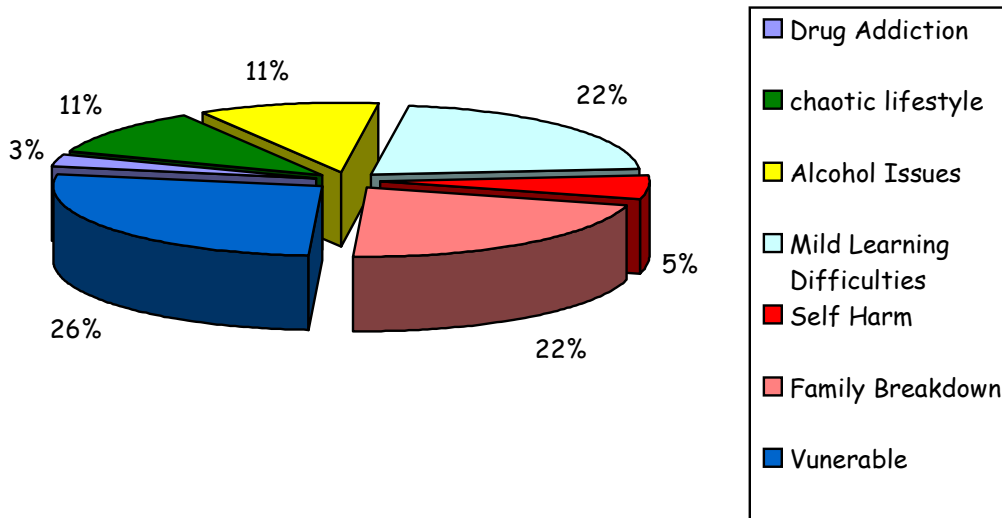
Our Story

After losing our home in June 2007 in York due to being bullied and victimised by other residents, we began living homeless, sleeping by the river. I was so low I began drinking more and more. I kept myself clean as much as I could but it wasn't easy. Shortly after, we went into a hostel in York, I was scared at first as I didn't know anyone but then it was ok I suppose. After 9 months though I was kicked out. I was gutted and was back on the streets, sleeping in a tent in winter was really bad the nights were freezing. Christmas was really sad and lonely. There was only me and Steven! The drinking continued and became a problem.

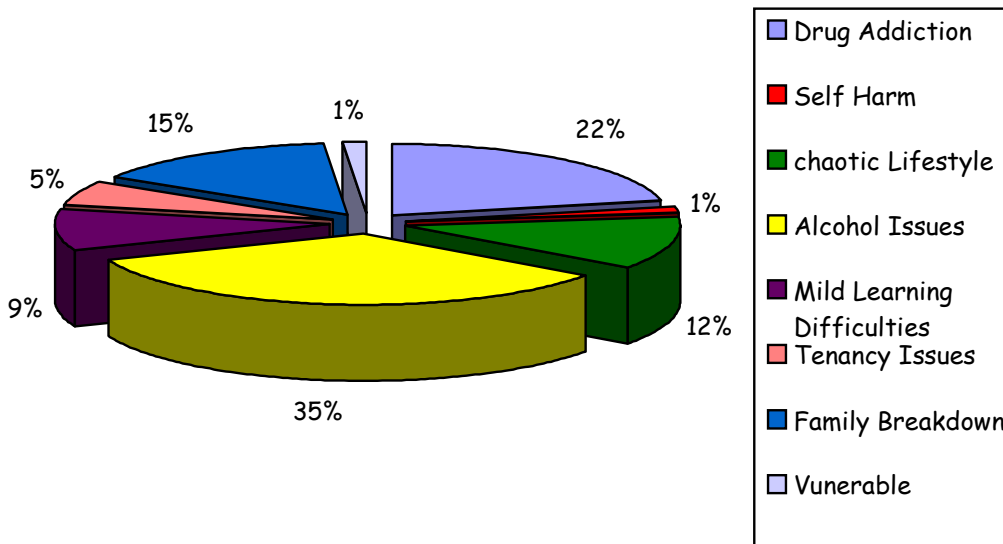
We moved to Darlington as we had been told that there was no where in York who could house us. We were thinking here we go again! .We started going to First Stop getting help and advice, since we arrived we had been living in a tent in a church yard. Eventually I came to Hope House for an interview. Shortly afterwards they offered me a room then a couple of days later knowing Steven was sleeping alone in a tent they offered him a room too. It's great at the hostel and I love the way that there's 24hour support. You've got your own room which you can chill out in and make it your own, which I love. What I do like is that they help us keep our independence, we can do our own washing, cooking and shopping and paying our own rent, it teaches you to be responsible with your money, I find it hard to budget but the staff are always willing to help. Hope House is such a great place to live and I feel it has given me another chance.

(Names and area have been changed to protect identity)

**Service Users Primary
Support Needs at St Georges Hall**

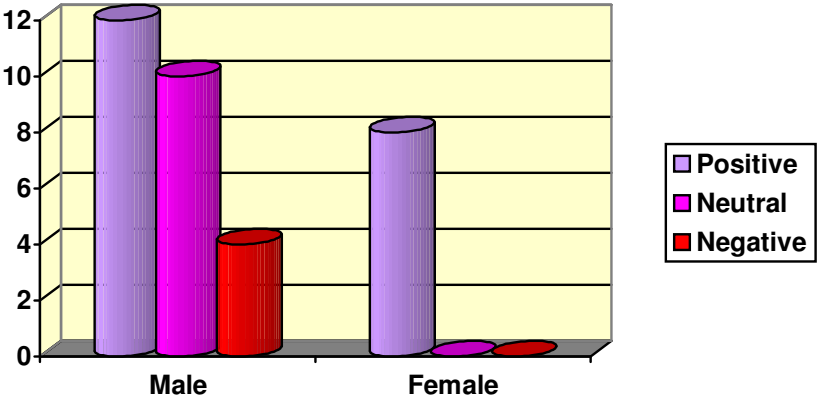


**Service Users Primary
Support Needs at Hope House**

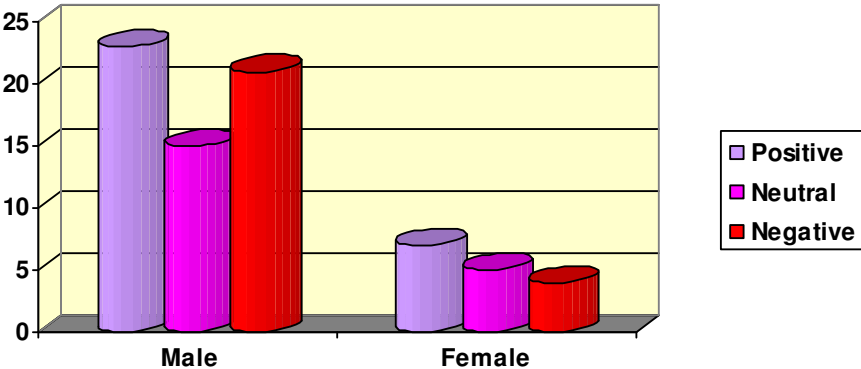


The outcomes of service users shown below demonstrates a difference between the hostels in respect of the percentage of positive/negative outcomes. This is to be expected as Hope House accepts service users with much higher support needs than St Georges Hall. Our aim for the forthcoming year is to raise the percentage of positive outcome. A new risk and referral application has now been designed which will enable staff to assess more accurately the support needs of potential Service users. And our working relationship with move-on housing providers is moving from strength to strength.

**Outcomes of Service Users at St Georges Hall
from April 2007 – March 2008**



**Outcomes of Service Users at Hope House from
April 2007 – March 2008**



There are many advantages of working in the hostels and in this line of work in general, but one of the highlights for the staff is when a Service User comes to us for guidance and help. They then accept and engage in the support they are offered and learn from their experience. During their time with us we can see them working through their issues, develop and mature and eventually no longer need our support and are able to move on positively and independently with their lives.

Below is just one of our success stories:

Julies Success Story

Julie first moved to St Georges Hall in May 2006. She referred herself for an interview as she was having difficulties living with her parents, she was only 17 and had very little experience of independent living or life experiences.

Initially, Julie struggled with budgeting and dramatically fell behind with personal charges and was often left with no food before her next pay day. Her support worker worked through budget and payment plans with her, helped with shopping lists and taught her how to prioritise her spending. It took her a few months but eventually she managed and even started putting some of her money away at the end of each week. By the time she left us she had paid her personal charges up to date, didn't owe anyone any money and had some savings in her bank.

Julie's contact with her family also improved whilst staying at the hostel. She was encouraged by staff to keep working at her relationship with her family. Things did improve and after a while she was even invited by her parents to go back home for tea and stay over the occasional night. The relationship with her family could be rebuilt due to the space that both parties gained by Julie staying at the hostel, and by her change of attitude towards her parents as due to living independently she had matured.

Julie's ability, confidence and independent living skills developed so well that a reference was sent to Darlington Borough Council from St Georges stating that we believed her to be a suitable candidate for their accommodation. In April 2007 she was offered and accepted a council flat which was in close proximity to her parent's home.

She is still in the flat and now lives with her partner, who she has been with since coming to us, he is also an ex resident of St Georges Hall. The young man is in employment and she has returned to college to complete the course that she began before she left home.

Hostel Staff

We have had a few new faces at the hostels, Rachel Gillan has moved over to work at St Georges from Hope House and Eddie Guerin has left us to pursue a different career path. Although it's sad to see staff leave its nice to have new faces, people who can bring fresh ideas. One new member of staff who has joined us at the end of this year is Sarah Allinson. Although she has been with us for just a short time, Sarah has already become an invaluable member of the team. She has written a few words describing her experience of working in the hostels and for the 700 Club:

I have worked for the 700 Club for four months now and I thoroughly enjoy my work. It is so varied, and everyday when I arrive at the hostel there is a different challenge waiting for me. My colleagues have been very helpful, when I first arrived they willingly shared all of the skills I would need to perform the job and more, I feel very much part of the team. My line manager has also been fantastic and offers support to staff whenever we require it and is always encouraging self development.

I have enjoyed learning about each of the organisations projects and the different roles everyone plays within them, it demonstrated to me that each separate project is like a part of a larger jigsaw puzzle, they are all interlinked which makes me feel part of the whole organisation.

This is the first time I have worked in a hostel or with homeless people and I love the way it feels, to know that I'm making a difference to the service users lives, such as in practical ways, like helping them receive their correct benefit entitlements and finding permanent accommodation to just being a positive influence in their lives, which many of them haven't had in their past.

Overall I feel a better person since starting this job, I feel I am really doing something worth while. That I am contributing, even if in just a small way to helping homeless people and making a difference to their lives, by empowering them to make positive choices and by supporting them in moving forward. I finally feel job satisfaction when I go home at night, something which I have never felt in my previous jobs, and I feel a sense of pride when someone asks where I work and I tell them that I work for the 700 Club.

New Approaches and Aims for the coming year

A Daily Living Skills 12 week rolling program has been devised, the first course was scheduled to start at the beginning of April 2008 at Hope House The objective of the course is to fill the gap in existing specialist provisions, services and resources available to our service users to develop their skills and knowledge to live as independently as possible. Included are activities such as preparing and cooking basic nutritious meals on a budget, healthy living, home cleaning and laundry, health and safety, basic first aid, personal hygiene and presentation. Service users attending the course will also be encouraged to engage with the local community, attend local amenities and to be more ecologically aware.

In the coming year we will be looking at working in partnership with other organisations who offer similar courses with the idea that we will learn and gain experience from one another which will enhance the level of support currently offered, to give a more holistic approach which can only prove beneficial to all of our service users.

New initiatives such as a C-Card service (that promotes sexual health and tackles teenage pregnancies) and a smoking cessation class will soon be up and running within both hostels. Both of these services will give our service users the opportunity to make positive choices about their health and well being.

We aim to encourage more service user involvement from the hostels, At times they can be difficult to motivate, but we will persevere! As well as the service user forum, later in the year we are planning to organize a sports day picnic for both Service Users and staff. It will give an opportunity for the whole organization to spend quality time together and have fun in a relaxed atmosphere.

Funding

I would like to take this opportunity to give our thanks to Lillian Patterson and the team from the 'Gregg's Trust' who throughout this year has kindly donated monies to the hostels which has allowed us to purchase a television for Hope House and which over the Christmas period has enabled us to purchase Christmas gifts for every service user who resided within the 700 Club. I cannot begin to tell you what those gifts meant to them, many of whom had no other gift to open on that day. Once again thank you.

I would also like to thank Rock Cliff Doctors Surgery who donated a television to St Georges Hall, it was very much appreciated by the Service Users there who use it constantly.