

Emergency beds for the homeless

JUST in time for Christmas, 20 emergency beds have been created for people who are homeless in Edinburgh.

The new accommodation has been set up by local homelessness charity, Streetwork, promising a secure place to stay for people rough sleeping in the capital, helping people get back on their feet over Christmas and assisting them secure new homes.

Hugh Hill, director of Operations, said: "This is more than just a safe place to stay, it's the start of a journey.

"We have dedicated staff from our street team providing intensive support, together with a specialist housing officer from the City of Edinburgh Council.

"Our aim is to firstly get people safe and settled but then move them quickly towards a place of their own." In addition to the security of having somewhere to stay, the facility provides free computer and internet access – with round-the-clock emotional and other support, showers, cooking facilities and storage for personal items.

Streetwork also ensure that people have toiletries, pyjamas, food and a change of clothing, if they need it.

Lorraine McGrath, CEO of Streetwork, said: "Many of the people we are supporting have nothing but the clothes they stand in.

"Women will often have to manage without sanitary products and no access to clean underwear. By making simple items like pants, sanitary products and a hot shower available, it can

instantly bring dignity and well-being back into peoples lives."The charity's team of street work staff have direct access to the city centre facility and can literally walk someone straight from the street into the facility and plugged immediately into housing, welfare benefits, health and employment support.

The facility is jointly funded by the Scottish Government and the City of Edinburgh Council, in response to an approaching winter and a commitment to ending rough sleeping in Scotland.Housing Minister, Kevin Stewart, said: "We are determined that nobody should be faced with the dangerous prospect of sleeping rough in Scotland this winter, and our recently published homelessness action plan sets out how we will implement the 70 recommendations from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group to make sure that is the case.

"I'm very pleased to be able to support Streetwork provide additional emergency beds in Edinburgh this winter, to provide a safe space so people can feel secure enough to make choices about their future, surrounded by the support they need.

"This is an opportunity for the Streetwork and City of Edinburgh Council to work in partnership to help people make a sustainable exit from homelessness into permanent accommodation, to rebuild and get on with their lives."

Edinburgh councillor, Kate Campbell, Housing and Economy convener, added: "We're lucky to have partners like Streetwork who have the vision to identify opportunities for projects like this and the commitment to make them happen.

"This facility will enable outreach workers to take people straight to the accommodation and then offer support in a warm, safe environment. Once people have somewhere to stay, we can then look into benefits and other services they might need. But it's about making that first step as easy as possible.

“Our staff will be working closely with Streetwork, making sure that service users can move on and access other temporary accommodation and that, over the longer term, are we offering all the help and support they need to find a permanent home.” Streetwork would welcome donations of new pyjamas and underwear, together with toiletries like shampoo, deodorant, body wash and soap.

For more information, visit www.streetwork.org.uk