

Simon Community provide bikes to volunteer support team

Simon Community Scotland, the homelessness charity, is trying to completely eliminate rough sleeping in Edinburgh. To help with that effort, they are providing bikes to volunteer support teams, so that they can see more people at one time.

By the charity's own estimations, rough sleeping in the capital is at an all-time low, and they are copying a highly-successful Street Cycles model from its base in Glasgow, having recruited a dozen volunteers to provide support to people at risk of, or currently, rough sleeping.

The help which the volunteers offer includes connecting people with services such as health and accommodation and providing basic essentials like food, clothing, telephones, sanitary products. Most importantly, the charity says its work shows that someone cares and that no-one should feel they are on their own.



Fundraising has helped with the purchase of eBikes and the move to add Edinburgh to the Glasgow bike service follows Simon Community Scotland chief executive, Lorraine McGrath, also becoming CEO of well-known Edinburgh homelessness charity, Streetwork.

The eBikes will not only allow volunteers to see more people at any one time, but will also allow them to extend their reach, beyond the city centre. The volunteers, who have all received dedicated training, come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including health, law, corporate finance, education and retail.

Training includes the administration of opioid antidote, Naloxone, and also CPR.

The service is officially launching, tomorrow, on Thursday March 4.

One of the volunteers is Jill Reilly. She first became involved with Streetwork during the COVID-19 lockdown, helping make meals in a hotel used in the city to accommodate people who were homeless.

She said: "The Naloxone training is a potential life-saver. But, more generally, getting to know people and to hear their stories, makes me realise why I got involved, as a volunteer, in the first place.

“I like walking, but I think I prefer cycling, and the bikes should allow me to see more people. The main thing, of course, is to help people find secure, if necessary supported, accommodation. When that happens, it feels like a real achievement.”

The charity is seeking to recruit more volunteers plus partners who can provide bike storage and maintenance facilities.

Said Hugh Hill, director of Services & Development, at Simon Community Scotland: “Edinburgh has seen a dramatic fall in people rough sleeping in the city.

“Streetwork, along with key Third Sector partners and The City of Edinburgh Council, have worked throughout the pandemic, supporting people into safe accommodation.

“We are determined to see that no-one ever has to sleep on our cities’ streets. Our brand-new cycle outreach service is powered not just by electric motors but, crucially, by our volunteers working hand in glove with Streetwork’s existing street outreach team.”