

# Rowan Alba launch Christmas appeal

**Homelessness charity Rowan Alba has launched its annual Christmas appeal hoping to boost the core services it offers. These in turn reduce reliance on accident and emergency wards and can also shorten hospital stays.**

This funding will cover temporary accommodation, permanent supported housing, outreach services and the new Rowan Alba hospital link worker, specifically in place to support the NHS Alcohol liaison staff at the New Royal Infirmary Edinburgh at their most challenging time of the year.

Rowan Alba provides a range of services, including its home for life concept at Thorntree Street and its befriending support programme CARDS (Community Alcohol Related Damages Service).

Demand for accident and emergency services traditionally peaks between Boxing Day and December 29, with festive drinking cited as a particular pressure.

Helen Carlin, CEO of Rowan Alba said: “For those who have a problematic relationship with alcohol, Christmas can be a particularly difficult time and we know that the demand on health care specialists, GPs, hospitals and mental health services rises significantly during and just after the festive season. Many of those with whom we work have endured years of

social isolation, are disconnected from friends and family and some are at risk of exacerbating a problematic relationship with alcohol. Early interventions such as those provided by Rowan Alba can reduce the pressure on NHS resources by ensuring people are supported, less isolated and for some, have a home for life and a genuine sense of belonging.”

During December, the charity says alcohol consumption in the UK increases by 41 per cent. Alcohol abuse can lead to more than 60 health conditions including heart disease, cancer and dementia. Alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland rose to their highest level in more than a decade in 2020. There were 1,190 alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland in 2020, an increase of 17% from 2019 and the highest number registered since 2008.

Rowan Alba asks people to support its services over the festive season so that they can provide vital social contact, safe and secure permanent accommodation, support with physical and emotional health and help with accepting and managing alcohol use for service users.

Helen Carlin concluded; “Edinburgh has the highest number of live homelessness cases of any local authority area in Scotland. Drug and/or alcohol dependency amongst the homeless is most common among 35-49 year olds and deaths among homeless people have risen by more than a third in just a year. We work with some of the most vulnerable people in the Capital and we hope that Edinburgh residents will get behind our festive fundraising appeal, support a local charity which is embedded in their city and help us reach as many people as possible. Direct intervention can help keep people safe, thereby reducing the impact on NHS resources which are already stretched to the limit and beyond.”

- £5 can pay for emergency telephone credit to support someone in hospital get their phone back up and running
- £10 can pay for a volunteer to support someone being discharged from hospital in ensuring they have a hot

- meal and essential supplies on their return home
- £15 can pay for emergency gas and electricity cards to heat someone's home for them coming home
  - £25 can pay for an overnight / hospital bag for someone who doesn't own pyjamas, toiletries / washcloths and comfortable clothing to wear in hospital
  - £50 can pay for volunteer expenses for a month of visits to prevent further admissions to hospital and the time to reconnect with their local GP
  - £100 can pay for two visits per week for a month from a staff member to help those frequently attending hospital to link in with local services
  - £500 can pay for a staff member to spend time doing administration to secure proper adaptations to reduce falls, slips and hazards

<https://rowanalba.org/donate-to-rowan-alba-this-christmas/>

