

Rowan Alba opens second 'homes for life' in Edinburgh

A four bedroom property has been refurbished and extended before being leased to charity Rowan Alba as a home for nine former homeless men.

The home is at Thorntree Mill in Peffermill and is the next phase in providing more 'homes for life' in their pioneering project.

On average people stay for around seven years with the charity, but this model offers permanent tenancies to those with a history of homelessness and alcohol dependency issues.

Community shares were sold at the end of 2020 to raise funds for the Peffermill property. The target of £650,000 was broken with £695,000 raised in just seven weeks from 207 investors. Major grant funding from Nationwide Building Society Community grants, The Clothworkers' Foundation, Crisis: Home for All Grants and the Quaker Housing Trust. Charity Bank set up a mortgage for the extension. Each tenant has their own flat in the property. The City of Edinburgh Council provides revenue funding to support the programme.

Helen Carlin, CEO of Rowan Alba, said: "There is an answer to street homelessness. We are the only organisation in the UK offering homes-for-life to those with a history of repeat homelessness. Current Scottish Government plans do not accommodate the significant numbers of rough sleepers and repeat homeless people. Rowan Alba know these people well and

these are the people whom we support every day at Thorntree Street. The development at Thorntree Mill delivers the same pioneering service, offering safe and secure permanent accommodation, support with physical and emotional health and help with accepting and managing alcohol use for service users.

“Working with Common Ground Against Homelessness, our vision is to develop at least two homes-for-life annually for however long it takes to eradicate street homelessness. Deaths among homeless people have risen by more than a third in just a year. 176 of these deaths were in Scotland. Our pioneering model allows us to reach the persistent street homeless who are typically deemed ‘unsuitable’ or too challenging. Most have a long-term history of problematic alcohol use, and a key part of our work is our volunteer Community Alcohol Related Damage Service (CARDS) which is available to anyone who needs it and provides a crucial befriending service for service users.

“We want to establish a long-term, sustainable solution to homelessness in Scotland, using a model that can be replicated across the entire country. Our residents are accepted for who they are and are supported every day, without judgment, with every aspect of their lives. Most residents do not move on, instead accepting Thorntree Street as their ‘home-for-life’. The same applies to Thorntree Mill.”

- 3371 households in temporary accommodation in Edinburgh at end of Sep 22 (9% increase since Sep 21) (Source: Scottish Government)
- 6198 – Number of live homelessness cases in Edinburgh at end of Sep 22 (21% increase since Sep 21) – ***the highest of any local authority in Scotland*** (Source: Scottish Government)
- 275 breaches of Unsuitable Accommodation Order in Edinburgh July – Sep 22 (Source: Scottish Government)

- The number of households (excluding PSL) in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2022 was 2,753, a 1% rise from 2,717 in 2020/21 (Source: Edinburgh Council)
- The average length of stay in temporary accommodation in Edinburgh for the year ended 31 March 2022 – 317 days (Source: Edinburgh Council)
- 237 households slept rough in Edinburgh in the 3 months prior to presenting as homeless in 2021/22 (Source: Edinburgh Council)
- Mental health continues to be the prevalent support need for homeless households, at 42%, (March 2022) (Source: Edinburgh Council)



Helen Carlin