

# Third Sector Aberdeen

Winter 2011



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# Aberdeen Cyrenians

**Aberdeen Cyrenians aim to be a stable presence in the lives of people who have found themselves with very little security, but they couldn't do that without the ongoing generosity of their supporters.**

**The Cyrenians**  
tackling homelessness

“We see the same businesses and the same individuals come forward every year to make donations,” states Fundraising Officer, Kimberley Wilson, “and that long term support is really important to us. We don't want to receive a donation and never talk to a person again; we want to build up relationships.”

Aberdeen Cyrenians work with 2,000-2,500 homeless people every year, providing a range of support services including information and advice, hot meals and food parcels, showers and laundry facilities, and, in some cases, accommodation.

“Everybody has the right to a shower,” Kimberley states. “It gives the people that we work with dignity.

“Homelessness is not as simple and straightforward as people may believe. There is a stereotype of drugs and alcohol, but it's not as easy as that. Homelessness can happen to anybody; all it takes is a few missed payments on a mortgage. One day you're in employment and

the next you're not – that's happening all over the country – and if you're suddenly finding yourself unemployed and you don't have any savings or support behind you, it's not very long before you find yourself with nowhere to live.”

Kimberley stresses that being homeless does not always mean rough sleeping. Anybody with no fixed abode, whether they're staying with friends or family, squatting in abandoned buildings, or in temporary accommodation, is technically homeless and can access Cyrenians' services. “A lot of people interacting with us have families, but they're maybe living in a two bedroom house with five people – it's hard, if you're wearing on people's welcome; people feel they need to keep moving on.



“There is an image of the on-street beggar because they're visible, but that is a small group and the rest of them are completely invisible because they walk down the street in clean clothes, they have access to toiletries, they're clean shaven, washed, impeccable.”

Cyrenians receive some external funding, and are particularly pleased to have recently had five years of funding confirmed for their

Violence Against Women project, but several of their services rely on local generosity. This generosity is largely accessed through three annual campaigns.

“We have our Sleepout which happens at the start of the year, and that can have anywhere from 500-1100 people taking part,” states Kimberley. “We’re holding it at Transition Extreme at the moment – we’re right by the beach, the weather can be quite ferocious, and we try to go through with the event in any sort of weather because people who are sleeping rough don’t have the option of deciding whether to sleep in a house or not. We really do want people to get a feel for what it’s like.” The Sleepout typically raises £15,000-£25,000.

The next annual event is the Harvest, which sees thousands of pounds worth of food being donated over the course of October; the donations are then used for food parcels and to enable the Street Alternatives project to provide hot meals to the homeless. “We usually expect the donations to last us about a year, but we won’t expect it to last that same amount of time this year as we’ve seen an increase in the amount of people coming in to use our service.”

The final event is the Christmas Appeal. At the time of this interview, the Appeal had been running for just two weeks and had already brought in £12,000, a figure which Kimberley was thrilled by. “The Christmas Appeal allows us to extend our services over the Christmas period; Street Alternatives opens every single day over the holidays. As the cold weather comes in we get busier and busier and busier; we know that our clients are not having the same festive experience that everybody else has, so we try to provide some holiday cheer.”

The Street Alternatives project is run by a team of dedicated volunteers, but new volunteers are always welcome, particularly as Cyrenians plan to extend the project to

seven days a week, year round.

Cyrenians also have volunteers who come in to rotate their food stocks, to do thorough cleaning of their industrial kitchen, or to work on their reception desk. They also have volunteers who collect donations or who help out with their fundraising events and appeals. “We have the most fantastic base of volunteers. It’s unbelievable – we can rely on them to step up when we really need them and they do it with so much enthusiasm; they come in with a smile on their face and they’re happy to help.”



Several of Cyrenians’ volunteers are past or present clients who want to give something back to the organisation.

“Most people we see for a four or five month period and then they move on,” Kimberley states, “but we also see people who require longer support and we will provide them with that. It can be about more than meeting their basic needs – they can be dealing with mental health issues, disabilities, abuse, or maybe a lack of education, a lack of employment or a lack of life skills. It’s different for each individual. Our support is always there.”

### Contact Aberdeen Cyrenians

t 01224 625732

f 01224 646257

62 Summer Street  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1SD

[www.aberdeen-cyrenians.org](http://www.aberdeen-cyrenians.org)

# CLAN

Last winter, local cancer support charity, CLAN, spoke to *Third Sector Aberdeen* about their plans to build and open a new centre;

this year, with the doors having been open just a few weeks, we went to see how they are settling in.



Information Coordinator, Joan Cowie, showed us around the beautiful new building on the edge of Westburn Park. "The architect kept talking about bringing the outside in," Joan states, "and I'll be honest: I didn't get it. But when I stand in the conservatory, I get it. Everywhere you look there's green, there's trees, there's open space, and that's what we want for our clients – somewhere that is warm, welcoming and relaxing.

"The most important thing is the increase in rooms in the Haven." The Haven offers accommodation to clients who have to travel to Aberdeen for treatment.

"Previously we were having to turn people away, but we now have 27 rooms, all en-suite, including two family rooms and two that have been adapted for disability access."

The new centre also offers more counselling and therapy rooms, a dedicated space for the Children and Family Service, activity rooms and meeting space, and a more accessible

library and information centre.

CLAN are very proud of the smooth move



into their new centre.

Guests at the Haven were taken to their hospital appointments in the morning then brought back to the new centre a few hours later, where their luggage was already waiting in their rooms. The centre itself was closed for just one weekend, opening on Tuesday 1st November in time for CLAN's monthly coffee morning on the Wednesday.

Joan emphasises that their doors are now open to anyone who might benefit from their services. "You don't need an appointment; you can just come in. If you want information or maybe you want to talk to somebody who isn't close to you so you don't have to put on a brave face, you can just come and be yourself. Come and sit for half an hour or the whole afternoon, have a cup of tea with our support volunteers, or make an appointment with one of our complementary therapists."

CLAN is open to visitors 9am-4:30pm, Monday -Friday, with a 7pm close on Thursdays, and 10am-1pm on Saturdays.



## Contact CLAN

t 01224 647000

f 01224 640802

[enquiries@clanhouse.org](mailto:enquiries@clanhouse.org)

120 Westburn Road  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2QA

[www.clanhouse.org](http://www.clanhouse.org)

# Families Need Fathers

**Families Need Fathers has spent almost forty years providing support and information to separated parents who want to establish or to maintain contact with their children. “Our other title is ‘Both Parents Matter’,” states Ian Maxwell, National Development Manager for Scotland. “We are champions of shared parenting so that both parents can be involved with their children after divorce or separation.”**

Families Need Fathers set up its Scottish office last year, and has been running monthly support meetings at Queen’s Cross Church in Aberdeen since October 2010. “Our first meeting had eight people,” Ian states, “although the second one was a disaster with only one hardy soul making it through the snow! Since then, we have had about 5-10 people at each meeting.”

The organisation now has around 150 members in Scotland, with new people getting in touch for support or information every week. “We estimate the number of people facing problems after separation is in the thousands. If you reckon that about 7,000 divorces each year involve children, and at least as many people are living together as married, that’s a lot of families splitting up. Not all of them have major problems, but when they do it affects everyone on one side of a family.”

Families Need Fathers’ support is not limited to fathers; any family member, including new partners, can contact them for advice or attend their meetings. Members can also undertake training to allow them to help



Supporter, Chris Devenport

respond to enquiries.

In addition to their support and information services, Families Need Fathers, “campaign against family law, benefits and other systems which make it hard for one parent to stay in touch with the children. We want to get politicians to support our aim of making shared parenting the default position after separation. That doesn’t mean children have to split 50:50 between the new households, but it does mean they stay in touch with both mum and dad, and both parents have an equal part in the key decisions.”

Families Need Fathers recently received two years of funding from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, but they are actively seeking new sources of funding. Ian adds, “Our members have raised over £2,000 for us this summer in a variety of sponsored events. These include a kayak ride across Scotland from Inverness to Fort William by a son whose father stayed in contact with him thanks to FNF.”

## Contact Families Need Fathers Scotland

t 0131 557 2440  
[www.fnfscotland.org.uk](http://www.fnfscotland.org.uk)

**Meetings are held from 7pm-9pm on the third Thursday of every month at Queen’s Cross Church, Aberdeen.**

# Grampian Hospital Radio

**Grampian Hospital Radio is currently celebrating thirty years of bringing music and entertainment to patients at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.**



Founded in 1981, the station has grown from a three hour broadcast each evening to a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week service - no mean feat for a station which is manned and run entirely by volunteers.

Request Coordinator and presenter of Thursday night's Hippy Hour, Stevi Pitre-Gormley joined the station in July last year after his wife spotted an advert on the Aberdeen Volunteer



Centre website. "I started off going round the wards, collecting requests from patients," Stevi states. "I then got asked if I could organise the new volunteers, so I help them to get their confidence up about approaching patients and setting up the bedside units. Some of the patients are unsure of the units - especially as

they mention money on the screen - but it's free to set up the units and listening to the station is completely free.

"Our request collectors also provide patients with a visitor. Although they are on the wards to ask patients what music they would like to hear, they often spend time with patients hearing stories of what the songs mean to them, where they first heard it. You also hear tales of their youth or what they do or did for a living, and what family they have. Many patients at ARI are from the shire or the islands or have moved here for work so may not have family nearby to visit. Being a request collector is also about being a good listener; we can help to break up the loneliness."

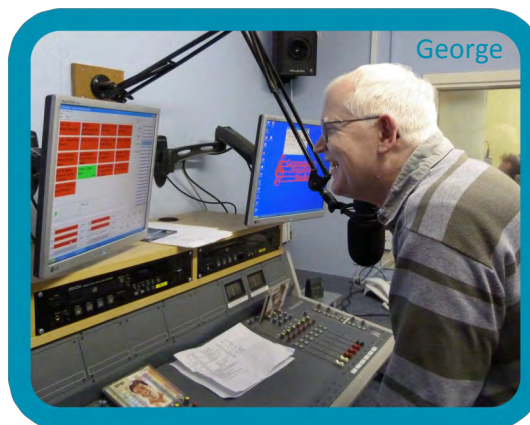
The Request Show broadcasts every night from 8:30 until 10, playing an average of 12-15 songs, but earlier this year the station decided to celebrate its thirtieth birthday with thirty straight hours of requests. "We started at four o'clock on Friday 30th September," Stevi states, "and were on air until just after ten the following evening. We played over 200 requests."

The thirty hour show, which aimed to raise awareness of the station amongst staff, patients and visitors to the hospital, was also an opportunity for the volunteers to get to know one another better. "The Request Show is the only show which has to go out live," Stevi explains. "A lot of people pre-record their shows, so some nights you come in and there's nobody here. For the thirty hour broadcast we got as many presenters as possible to take a time slot. At one point, we

had both studios on air - six people on air between the two studios - and there must have been another half a dozen people in the corridor and the office, all blethering. A lot of people hadn't met before or, if they had, it was so long since they had seen each other - it brought a bit of sociability back to the place!"

Both Grampian Hospital Radio and its sister station, Radio Rainbow at the children's hospital, are always keen to hear from potential volunteers. "We're particularly lacking in bodies at Radio Rainbow," Stevi states. "We had a full complement of presenters about May, but they were mostly students so come the summer they all headed home. The children really need a bit of cheering up; they need somebody who will play the nursery rhymes and the latest pop songs that they want to hear."

Both stations rely entirely on public generosity to keep them on air. They have collecting cans based with local businesses, have a Friends scheme and they offer companies the opportunity to sponsor a show; they can also provide a disco for events. "We're always looking for new ways to fundraise," Stevi says. "We would welcome suggestions or advice."



The station also receives occasional donations of records and CDs, although the team are running short on storage space. Their library contains a wide variety of music from 1920s tunes to the latest releases.

As well as the Request Show, the station presents a wide range of specialist shows

including classical, jazz and blues, country, show tunes and Scottish. They also broadcast the hospital chaplain's service on Sundays for those patients whose faith is important to them but whose illness or injury prevents them from attending in person.

"You've got to have a passion for this," states Programme Controller and Librarian, George Findlay, "to come up here every week."

But, as Stevi explains, "Being in hospital can be stressful, boring and lonely for a lot of patients. If we can help to make that experience a little bit easier for them by playing their favourite tunes, that's what it's all about."

With this in mind, the station has set up an email address - [requests@ghr.org.uk](mailto:requests@ghr.org.uk) - which allows friends and family members to make requests for patients. "It's one way for people to show that they care, even when they're unable to visit."



## Contact Grampian Hospital Radio

[ghr@ghr.org.uk](mailto:ghr@ghr.org.uk)

01224 552964 (GHR)  
01224 550321 (Radio Rainbow)

[www.ghr.org.uk](http://www.ghr.org.uk)

# Independent Age

**“When I stop working, I’m going to be a lonely old person!” This was the realisation which prompted Anne Carmichael to become involved with Independent Age. “I saw a picture in a paper of an old lady, Edith, and her only companion was her TV. I remember thinking: that could be me in a few years. It drew me up short.”**



Anne initially made financial donations to Independent Age but it wasn’t long before she started volunteering to visit some of their members; she is now an Organising Volunteer, leading a team of volunteers and organising events across an area which extends from south of Stonehaven up to Elgin and out as far as Torphins.

“We provide personal support and practical



support,” Anne explains. “We visit older people who want to stay independent and in their own homes; that can include some social isolation, and we try to combat that. We also just check that their needs are being met and we provide help with one-off situations.”

Anne spoke about one member who has benefited from the practical support. “We have one lady who is actually very disabled and, although she had an adapted car which was provided for her – which was fine – she was saying, ‘You know, I can’t actually go around my local supermarket and pick things off the shelf; I have to get somebody to go and do that for me.’ We stepped in and helped her get a mobility scooter, so now she can go out and about, up and down the street, go and have coffee with friends, do her shopping and come back home. And it’s hers for as long as she needs it.”

The charity was originally established in 1863 by a group of wealthy people whose servants were becoming too frail to work but had nowhere else to go; the group gathered together a large sum of money – a fund which is still in use to this day – and began offering a small pension to anyone who had been in service.

Over the years, the charity began to offer support to any elderly person who had provided a service within their community. “When I joined, for example,” Anne states, “I visited a man who was then in a wheelchair but who had coached teams of young footballers in Aberdeen; he was eligible.

“And then, about two or three years ago, we

began to even question, ‘Well, look, is that really fair? Does everybody have the opportunity to serve like that? Probably not,’ so now we try to help in many circumstances.”

Anne is always seeking new volunteers who can go out and visit local members. “Our minimum visit is every six months, but in practise some people are happy to see a volunteer every month, while others say, ‘No, no, I’m absolutely fine; I’m off to my class – I don’t need a visit!’ and you touch base with a phone call or, in one or two cases, by email.

“We also have volunteers who assess people’s needs – they might be people with financial backgrounds – and we have people who are fundraising experts. There are several different roles for volunteers to take on.”

In addition to visits from volunteers, Independent Age provides opportunities for members to socialise with one another. “We recently had our first members’ lunch in Aberdeen,” Anne explains. “We organised a minibus to collect everybody, to take them out to lunch and chat. Two of the ladies said they had bought new outfits for the occasion because they hadn’t been out in so long. To see people talking together and exchanging phone numbers was lovely.

“We hope to offer more outings in the new year – things that are completely free for our members, and all they have to do is wait at their front door and be ready. That would be great. Or another thing we’re thinking about is a monthly film club.”



Independent Age already has an established library club. “Groups of six get together on the phone – a conference call – and decide which books they’d like to read; they’re sent their books with a reply-paid envelope, they read them, they talk about the books and they get to know each other.” The charity has also

been able to supply CD players and audio books to members with visual impairments.

Independent Age recently joined forces with Counsel and Care. “We’re combined now so we have a vast number of resources. Every single member gets a copy of our Wise Guide which is *amazing* – I’ve used it myself.”

The large print publication is filled with advice and contact details, including many 0800 helplines which have proven to be useful to members.

“We are different from other age-related services,” Anne states, “because we have members. We’re not just an information service; we’re supplying – as far as we can – a visitor, a friendly face.

“I think, what would *my* needs be? And I know what my mother’s needs were, when she was 92, and that was for people to drop in, to phone up, and to ask her ‘how are you?’”

Pictures courtesy of Independent Age

## Contact Independent Age

[anne.carmichael@btinternet.com](mailto:anne.carmichael@btinternet.com)

[www.independentage.org](http://www.independentage.org)

Anne is keen to speak to potential volunteers and to organisations whose clients or members may be able to benefit from Independent Age’s support.

# Sport Aberdeen

**In July 2010, newly formed charity Sport Aberdeen took over the running of what had until then been the City Council's sports facilities. "I think there's a perception in Aberdeen that we're still council," states Interim Managing Director, Steve Russell, "We're not. We're not operating that way."**



Sport Aberdeen receives a management fee from the Council, however currently around fifty per cent of its income is self-generated and the intention is for this share to increase over time. "Everybody wants that," Steve states. "The less reliant we become on the public purse, the greater flexibility we have to try new things."

Transferring their sports facilities to a charity had financial benefits for the City Council, but Steve is keen to stress that this was not the only reason for the change. "It was about making ourselves more nimble. We're a customer focused marketplace; we need to be quick to respond to customer and non-customer needs."

Sport Aberdeen is not alone in offering Aberdonians a place to exercise; in addition to several private gyms and RGU: Sport, Aberdeen University's Sports Village opened less than a year before Sport Aberdeen got up and running. "Should we be able to cohabit in the same city?" Steve asks. "There are times when you think not, but we, Sport Aberdeen, are unique in that we are

multisite, multidiscipline and inclusive. We are open a range of hours at a range of facilities – wet, dry, indoor and outdoor."

Having worked in the private sector previously, Steve is able to state, "If you are an experienced gym user there are many options, but for many people the sheer ability to cross the threshold is too much for them. There may be a perception that they're not good enough to go in. We are non-threatening in that way.

"The end result, the high performance stuff, is what gets people interested, but if it exists in isolation and people don't achieve that it turns them off. We focus on mass participation; we focus on getting people into and excited about exercise and activity."

Steve explains that, while people will travel to get to specialist venues like the Linx Ice Arena or to enjoy a family day at the Beach Leisure Centre, when it comes to everyday exercise many potential customers can be put off by a



need to travel. Sport Aberdeen offers facilities within local communities throughout the city, from sports centres to swimming pools to football pitches.

Outdoor sports centres are one area in which Sport Aberdeen engages with volunteers. "This year we took an opportunity," Steve explains. "We recognised that sports at seasonal outdoor centres had apparently seen a reduction in their usage. We approached local communities and gave them the opportunity to input into the running of their community's facility. I'll use as an example Albury, where – following conversations with ourselves – a volunteer group has been established. It's great. They've seen phenomenal success just by being able to be a little bit more creative, to think outside the box. They've made it a real community hub." Sport Aberdeen hopes to support similar success stories elsewhere in the city next year.

Sport Aberdeen also work with volunteers through their Active Schools programme, recruiting people to help with specific sports activities and after school clubs, and it is keen to help charities to promote themselves. "If I can use the Baker Hughes 10k as an example," Steve explains, "a charity could provide, for example, the water stop personnel. Everybody who comes for a race runs through the water stop and sees their branded T-shirts. It helps those organisations to get their message out."

Sport Aberdeen can also work with charity organisations, clubs and schools to provide low cost sports venues during off-peak hours. Steve explains, "Our challenge is not 'how do we get busy?' Much of our use is going to happen anyway; that's between the hours of 4-8:30pm in most sites." However there are opportunities at other times, as the buildings are often staffed anyway; it benefits both Sport Aberdeen and the organisations they support to have schools and other groups

come along and make use of their venues.

"One of our key priorities is to increase our participation and therefore our value," Steve states. "We hope to evidence the social return on investment. If we get more people more active, the health and wellbeing of the community will improve."



"I believe we provide a phenomenal opportunity for the community to get better, to heal, to improve their physical health, to improve their mental health, to improve their ability to accept some of life's other challenges."

"We work on improving people's self esteem by their participation, by enabling them to accomplish things which are a long time coming."

"We can increase the overall health of Aberdeen. That's what we're about."

### Contact Sport Aberdeen

01224 578700

[http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/xsl\\_sportsrecreation.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/xsl_sportsrecreation.asp)

Third Sector Aberdeen is written and designed  
by ACVO's Communications Unit

If you would like to be featured in future issues,  
please contact Sarah McGarva  
at [communications@acvo.org.uk](mailto:communications@acvo.org.uk)



**ACVO-Volunteer Centre  
Greystones House  
Gallowgate  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1LU**

**[enquiries@acvo.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@acvo.org.uk)**

**01224 686058**

**[www.acvo.org.uk](http://www.acvo.org.uk)**

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