

CHURCHES HOUSING ACTION TEAM  
(MID DEVON) LTD



**Annual Review  
2006/2007**

Patrons:

*The Right Rev'd Christopher Budd, RC Bishop of Plymouth*

*The Right Rev'd, Michael Langrish, Anglican Bishop of Exeter*

*The Rev'd F. John Carne, Chairman of the Methodist Church Plymouth and Exeter District*

Honorary President

*Sally Chapman*





## Chairman's Statement

There were two distinct sides to the past year, the operational side and the personnel side and I want to deal with each part separately.

With so many changes during the past 12 months and with changes still happening, I am delighted to report that the operational side of the organisation has continued working smoothly and efficiently. Reports from individual departments are dealt with later in this review. We have added a young people's mediation scheme as from June 2006 and this is gradually building in awareness and activity. We have been aiming at the 16-19 age ranges, but as I write this, we have just put in another funding bid to extend this to the 13-15 age ranges. This may sound like a small change, but the number of young people we will need to reach is really quite significant.

It is a constant theme for most charities that they could do more if there were more resources. We are no exception. There are additional projects we would like to start, not because we want to expand just for the sake of it, but because there are specific needs. Having said that, we are grateful to God for all that has been provided to support the charity for the past 12 months. A proportion of our income is from statutory funds via our three Supporting People contracts, but for the rest we are totally dependant upon donations, gifts and grants.

We are midway through the 3-year Supporting People contracts and these will be up for renewal in March 2009. Whilst this gives a certain amount of stability, there is also a measure of uncertainty as we do not know what will be happening regarding these contracts. We should, however, get a decision on whether these contracts are going to be renewed, in March 2008, which will give us some time to prepare for any changes.

The voluntary work of CHAT is important, even if it is not perhaps high profile. Some of this requires willing volunteers and we are blessed at having such dedicated people. We are grateful for all they do. Other charitable work stems from the day to day work of the departments; emergency bed & breakfast, meal vouchers, gifts of food, occasional money for hardship situations, to name a few. The Christian message is certainly partly about helping people less fortunate than ourselves and CHAT has sought to do this on behalf of the local Christian community.

On the personnel side, there have been a number of important changes. Sally Chapman, whose vision and drive have shaped CHAT over the 12 years of its existence, retired from the organisation on 31st March 2007. This is not, I hasten to add, because she is anywhere near retirement age, but that she wanted to do something different for the next few years. There are countless people who have benefited from her willingness to pioneer this project and we give her grateful thanks for all she has done and all she has been over the past 12 years. She will be sorely missed.

We have also had 3 other senior staff leaving. Jo Turner left in October 2006, Dave Leigh left in February 2007 and Stewart Mason was leaving in mid-April 2007. We now have Cathy Lelliott heading up the Housing Advice department, Jules McDonald and Heather Wickens running the Youth Housing project between them and Amanda Bealing joined to lead the Tenancy Floating Support department at the beginning of May 2007. That everything is still

running smoothly is a tribute to all members of staff and the overall strength of CHAT as an organisation.

Replacing Sally has proved a more difficult task. We did appoint somebody at the end of last year, but that did not work out. As Trustees we are ultimately responsible for running CHAT and so I made the decision in March, with the full agreement of all the Trustees, that I would come in to run CHAT whilst we worked out what the job description should be for our new Executive Manager. This has now been done, the position has been advertised both nationally and locally and the closing date is 18th June. We hope to appoint by the beginning of July.

Finally, Ian Brannam's time as Chairman ended at the last AGM and I took over in October 2006. Again we are grateful for all he has done and I am particularly pleased that he has stayed on as a Trustee so that his wisdom and experience is still available. We do appreciate all Ian has done during his 8 years as Chairman.

Whilst I trust there will not be quite as many changes over the next 12 months, change can be seen as an opportunity. There is still so much need and I have no doubt that CHAT will continue to adapt to changing circumstances in order to help alleviate the problems of housing and homelessness in our area.

Mac Bridger  
Chairman



## Youth Housing Project

We are still supporting 10 young people in 5 houses throughout Tiverton, including 2 young mums. The project is now in its 3rd year and since its beginning we have helped over 80 young people, housing 31 on the project and signposting the others to similar organisations. They come to us from various different places many from the local council, some from Social Services and some from other supported housing projects such as Amber. Quite a few self refer. In every case our first job is to ascertain that the young person is in fact homeless, and then check the circumstances surrounding their situation. In some cases we will use the CHAT Mediation team to try and help solve any problems between the client and their family, as we feel that a reintroduction into the family home is the best possible outcome.

When a young person is accepted onto the project they agree to maintain their tenancy, and to work with their key worker to ensure that they move forward in a healthy and positive way.

The number of clients claiming Jobseekers or Income Support in the last year has dropped dramatically to the point where we have only one client claiming today. All of the other clients are either working or at college, even our young mums! One client starts at Bristol University in September and we are very proud of her amazing progress.

Something that has also dropped considerably is the number of evictions, with only 2 in the last year. If an eviction is unavoidable then we will refer the young person back to CHAT housing advice, to MDDC, or to another housing project that would be more suitable should their support needs be more specialised.

We continue to have a good working relationship with housing services at MDDC. In February 07 they introduced their Choice Based Lettings system, with bronze, silver and gold banding. All of our residents start off with bronze banding. When we feel that they have managed their tenancy successfully, and have coped well with every aspect of independent living, than we will recommend them for move on. At this point they will be given gold banding, and are able to apply for any one bedroomed accommodation that is advertised by Homefinders Direct.

The number of voids (days when rooms are left vacant) has decreased this year with just one day being the average. This is mainly due to a constant waiting list, and new fast efficient income and outcome procedures.

The Youth Housing team has seen some changes in the past year and have said hello and goodbye to two managers. Thankfully this has not hindered its progress, and Jules and Heather have ensured its continued good work in their new role of Team Leaders.

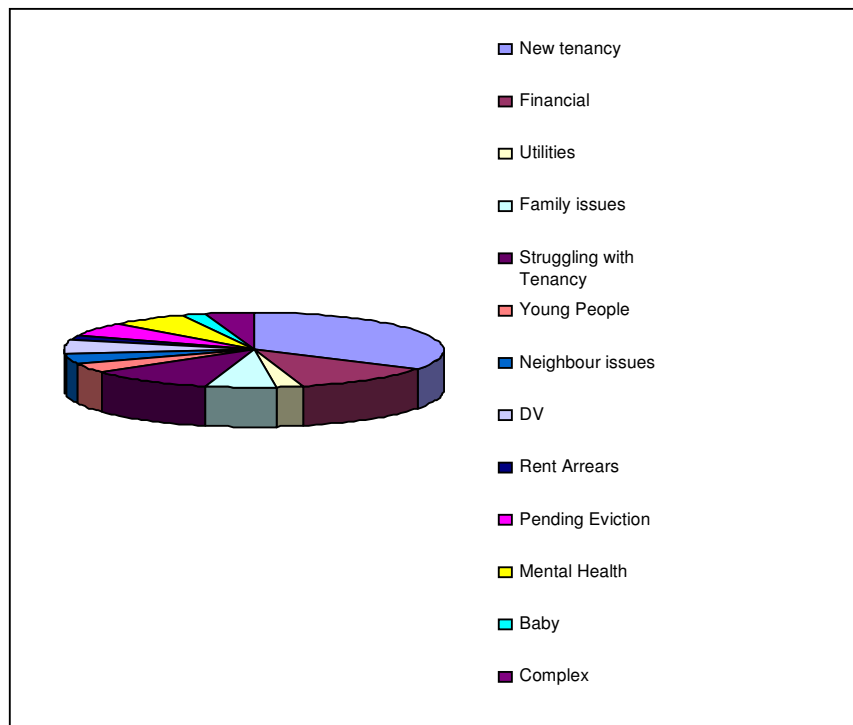
Jules McDonald



## Tenancy Floating Support 2006-2007

We remain contracted to support 30 clients who have a variety of different needs and levels of support. Of the new cases we have taken on, the main reason for needing support is requiring assistance to settle into a new property, followed by people who are experiencing difficulties maintaining their tenancies for various reasons, from rent arrears, to neighbour issues to needing assistance with debt / budgeting/ maximising their income.

### 1. Main reasons for all the referrals 2006-2007



Of the referrals we received, just over half continue to come from CHAT, yet we are receiving referrals from new sources such as the Prison Advice + Care Trust, and we continue to receive referrals from Mid Devon District Council, Housing Associations, Christians Against Poverty(CAP), the Learning Disability Team, Community Mental Health Team, Devon Advocacy, and The Prison Service.

The Amber Project and PORCH (Prolific Offender Resettlement through Coordinated Housing) are in the process of securing accommodation to house 6 clients, once this has been finalised we will then provide the tenancy support for all 6 clients, which will be an exciting project to be part of.

We continue to work closely with other agencies such as Mid Devon District Council, The Community Mental Health Team to help clients maintain their homes. We have continued to refer people to Wendy Brown at CAP in Crediton and have found her work invaluable to our clients. Our relationships with other agencies has grown and developed, which has had a positive effect on the service.

Looking towards the future, we will continue to work with other agencies and look to develop existing and new relationships. We continue to aim to reach even more people before their particular need reaches crisis point and to help them maintain a positive lifestyle.

Amanda Bealing

### **ANNA`S STORY**

When she was 17 Anna had a huge problem. What to do about her Mum who was drinking heavily and exhibiting ever increasingly dangerous and bizarre behaviour.

Anna arranged for her mum to be sectioned into psychiatric care. And so it was with a huge burden of guilt that she found herself homeless.

The council found a bed and breakfast room for her 15 miles from the town where she grew up, and where she was at college, in a block that contained people of all ages including alcoholics and drug addicts. All of the rooms on her floor had identical room keys! She spent most of her time trying to avoid going home to her room where the wardrobe was held together with sellotape. One day she returned to find her belongings thrown about and anything valuable stolen. She left that day and spent some time sleeping on her sister's sofa.

Eventually with the help of Connexions Anna got a place at a supported housing project,(still 15 miles from her college course.) Things were better for a while; however, constant sexual advances from one of the night time security guards soon had her fleeing back to her sister's sofa.

Around this time Anna found out that she had been given a place at University in Leeds. She moved into student digs and felt that at last positive things were happening. She moved to Leeds and started her course. A few months later Anna contracted viral meningitis.

Anna had to leave University in Leeds and moved back down to Devon where she was once again homeless. She stayed with her Connections worker for a while, who referred Anna to CHAT Youth Housing Project.

Anna now has a home; she's had the support and the time to decide what to do with her life. She has applied for a place at Bristol university and been accepted, she starts in September. In the mean time she's been busy volunteering with Young Carers and with Marie Curie as well as the Youth drop in centre.



## **CHAT Mediation Service**

In 2005 Sally Chapman had this wonderful idea that CHAT could do more to help young people aged 16 to 19 with a young person and family Mediation Service. Sally felt something more needed to be done to help families where conflict occurs as statistics revealed that this was the most common cause for youth homelessness.

Heather and Mary have undergone 6 weeks Mediation training and have helped Sally to design the service which took on their first clients in December 2006.

Having now started working with the general public we were surprised at how little people know about the service we offer and have faced some reluctance from people. We feel that this is maybe because it's very new and people think Mediation is something that is done to them and don't quite understand what it's about yet, despite having put posters and leaflets about at local doctors surgeries, youth clubs, colleges etc..

We have received a number of referrals or requests for information packs in the first 6 months, all of which are to do with parent/carers having got into conflict with the young person at home and are in a crisis position of feeling they have to ask their loved one to leave.

The referrals come from MDDC, Social Services, Police service amongst other agencies, who will have asked both parties if they would like to try Mediation before contacting us.

Having received the initial referral, we contact the parties to find out more and to invite them to have a single meeting. We continue to meet with the parties until such time they feel able to have a joint meeting to discuss their concerns with one another and hopefully come to an agreement, possibly improving relationships and conflict resolution skills.

Outcomes are very individual and are varied; there is no right or wrong outcome. Our aim is for the young person to continue to live at home harmoniously, however this is not always possible and we encourage move on in a supported way as an alternative to sleeping rough.

As the process is voluntary we do have some people who decline our help, but we have found that most parties have engaged well.

As more referrals are sent to us we are finding that there is also a need for 14 years olds and their families. As our aim is to try to help before crisis point we feel this age group should have the opportunity to access Mediation and we are currently working to make that happen.

We feel that when people have a better understanding of Mediation, perhaps with clients sharing their experiences of mediation with others, it will generate more interest.

Heather Wickens



## Housing Advice

During the past year CHAT's Housing Advice Service has offered face to face specialist advice to over 300 clients. We have seen an average of 26 new clients each month, whilst continuing to work with ongoing cases and repeat clients.

Up until May 2007 CHAT Housing Advice was working mainly on an appointment system. This system didn't allow for the particularly chaotic clients who present 'as and when' and quite often once they had reached crisis point. We are now offering a drop-in surgery 3 mornings each week, alongside an appointment and telephone enquiry system, which is proving to be very effective.

Over the past year we have noted an increase in clients who require debt/money advice. CHAT organised debt training for staff so that we are better equipped to deal with this specific area. We work closely with Christians Against Poverty who regularly accept our referrals.

We also have noted that a high percentage of our clients (23%) suffer from a variety of mental health issues. We are, more than ever, linking into services providing support and assistance in this very complex area.

One thing that has not changed over the last year is the fact that the average CHAT client remains a '**single, unemployed male aged between 18 – 24 years with no fixed abode**'. We have continued to do all we can to help these people.

Cathy Lelliott

## Volunteers

We remain reliant on our excellent volunteers in order to maintain the services we provide.

Our receptionists continue to assist with varying duties, not least, welcoming our clients as they arrive through our doors.

The faithful work of our furniture team enables us to assist clients who have no other way of furnishing their accommodation.

Others provide help when needed with gardening, DIY and giving lifts. We also now have help with some IT tasks which is greatly appreciated.

Should you have some spare time and feel you may be able to help in some way please be in touch.

Sharon Bradshaw

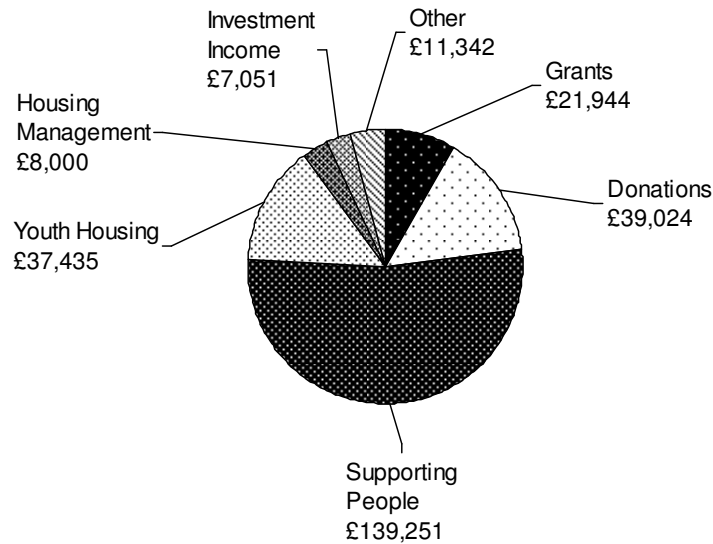


## Finance

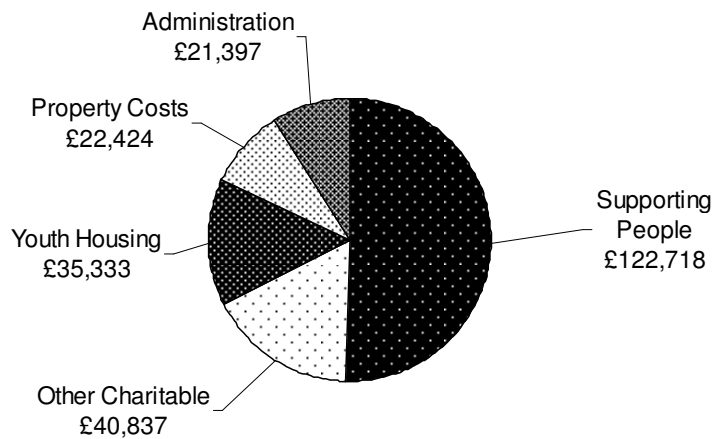
The charts below are a representation of our income and expenditure the 2006/07 financial year.

The Trustees are pleased to report a surplus of £ 21,336 for the year which has enabled CHAT to meet its reserves target of six months overhead expenditure. Please see the full annual accounts and report for details.

### Income



### Expenditure



Terry Norris, Hon Treasurer

## **Trustees**

Ian Brannam  
Anthony Appleby (appointed 3 October 2006)  
Lesley Bewick  
Malcolm Bridger (appointed 3 October 2006)  
Jean Clifton  
David Halestrap  
Adrian Richfield  
Alan Taylor (resigned 3 October 2006)  
Mark Venning  
Gordon Wadey

## **Employees**

Co-ordinator - Sally Chapman (left 31st March 2007)  
Office Manager & Housing Advice (left 27th October 2006)  
Office Manager – Sharon Bradshaw  
Tenancy Support Leader – Stewart Mason (left 13th April 2007)  
Tenancy Floating support Worker – Helen Tyliczszak  
Youth Housing Project Leader – David Leigh (left 8th Feb 2007)  
Youth Support Worker – Jules McDonald (Joint team leader from Feb 2007)  
Youth Support Worker – Heather Wickens (Joint team leader from Feb 2007)  
Housing Advice Team Leader – Cathy Lelliott  
Housing Advice Worker – Wendy Roden  
Mediation Team Leader – Heather Wickens  
Youth Support Worker and Mediation Worker – Mary Whitmore  
Cleaner – Maggie Crow

## **Volunteers**

Di Horne – Volunteer Coordinator  
Neil Babbage – Furniture  
Bob Pullen – Furniture  
David Halestrap – Furniture  
Jean Parkinson – Reception (left Apr 07)  
Shelagh Eastwood – Reception, bedding & foodstore  
Anthony Appleby – Reception  
Janice Kitchen – Reception  
Jono Wild – IT  
Jan Foxell – Prayer Chain  
Jean Clifton – Bedding & foodstore (left Mar 07)  
Lynne Lyddon – Newsletter  
Graham Pethick - Supervision  
Dawn Hampshire – Supervision  
Elizabeth Housego – Supervision

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*CHAT is a registered charity No. 1049478*