

Health Minister launches new health service for homeless and disadvantaged people in Swansea.

Edwina Hart, Minister for Health and Social Services, today (Thursday, 25 October) officially launched the new health service at the Cyrenians Community Centre in Swansea.

It is the first of its kind in Wales and offers health and medical support, careers training and advice as well as training in cookery and exercise to the homeless and disadvantaged in the area.

The health service at the centre is a partnership between the Cyrenians and the Swansea Local Health Board. This follows a pilot project, funded by the Cyrenians, which established a high level of need among people attending the centre who are not linked into mainstream health services. It comprises a registered nurse offering a service four mornings a week, and a local surgery providing a Local Enhanced Service for homeless and vulnerable adults.

In launching the partnership, Mrs. Hart applauded the new initiative and voiced the need for more attention to be given to the health needs of vulnerable people in the community. She said; *"I am delighted that we have been able to support this fantastic project and would like to pay tribute to the excellent work that is carried out by this facility in providing invaluable support to vulnerable people in our community."*

"I congratulate the work of Cyrenians Cymru, which has worked passionately for over 30 years to develop a caring and compassionate community."

Conrad Watkins, Cyrenians Director, said *'We are pleased to be in partnership with the Swansea Local Health Board to bring essential primary care to people who are on the margins of mainstream services. But this is just the start. We hope this partnership is going to develop over time so that we can offer dentistry, podiatry and mental health support; and within the framework of a centre that promotes all aspects of healthy living, including good quality food, training and health awareness.'*

Cyrenians Cymru purchased two thirds of St. Matthew's Church, which is grade 2 listed, to convert into a state-of-the-art community centre. The remaining part of the church was fully restored for the local congregation.

The site is historically associated with health support for the poor. The original chapel was built by the Knights Hospitallers around 1165 AD. To the rear of the building lie fields used for the burial of the cholera dead in the three severe outbreaks that hit Swansea in the 19th century.

Funding from the Welsh Assembly Government's Objective 1 programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund, enabled the Cyrenians charity to open the centre last year

The centre is also used in the evenings for a wide range of activities by community groups, and is becoming a thriving resource within the area.

- Ends -

Further information from Conrad Watkins
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Notes to Editors:

Pilot project

In the 12 month period to 30.9.07 the service has registered **50** homeless and vulnerable adults with the local surgery. Appointments have been provided with the doctor and referrals made to other care providers.

During the 12 month period from 1st October 2006, the GP has seen **154** patients at the sessions provided at the centre.

During the same period, the nurse has had formal consultations with **601** patients. **287** of these consultations were provided to patients registered with other GPs.

In the past year there have also been a number of health promotion days at the centre, including:

- No smoking
- Breast awareness
- 5 a day fruit and vegetables
- Vitamin C
- Sun awareness
- Hepatitis C awareness
- Healthy heart
- HIV and AIDS