

## Training Dates

**30th April**  
**RACE AWARENESS & EQUALITY**  
Norwich

**2nd May**  
**PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT OF**  
**AGGRESSION & VIOLENCE**  
Norwich

**7th May**  
**INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING**  
**LAW & HOMELESSNESS**  
Norwich

**14th May**  
**INVOLVING SERVICE USERS**  
Norwich

**23rd May**  
**SUPERVISION & APPRAISAL SKILLS**  
Norwich

**6th June**  
**WORKING WITH PSYCHOSIS**  
Norwich

**13th June**  
**DEALING WITH STRESS IN THE**  
**WORKPLACE**  
Norwich

**20th & 27th June**  
**MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING**  
Norwich

**All training, unless otherwise**  
**indicated, costs £75 members**  
**and £125 non members.**

**FURTHER INFO**  
**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING**  
**OUR TRAINING PLEASE PHONE KERRY ON**  
**01603 617299.**  
**OR BOOK ONLINE @ [www.vhg-east.org](http://www.vhg-east.org)**

## A day in the life of...

Thursday 10th April was a fairly typical day for me. I got to the Julian Housing offices in Norwich at about 8.30 and began following up things that had cropped up for clients during the previous day. I have just started working as part of the Northern Team, providing community mental health outreach support across North Norfolk. As a team we support around 120 people across the area. The previous day I'd been to a Section 117 meeting with a client who has been living independently since coming out of hospital four months ago. Due to the chronic lack of housing in the region, she has not been able to secure a transfer from the East of the county to the West to be near her son. She rents in the private sector and although happy with the flat, her housing benefit doesn't come close to covering the rent and her tenancy only runs for 12 months. We talked about other options and submitted an application to the council for re-housing, I wrote to various members of her care team for letters of support.

I then had supervision with my team manager. One thing that impressed me about Julian Housing when I first joined as a social work student on placement was the level of support from management. Supervision is a valuable way of discussing issues in order to

work most effectively for the client. It's also a great opportunity to offload. At lunchtime, wherever I am, I try to get out for a fifteen-minute walk. I'm often lucky enough to be near the coast, and a walk by the sea is a great way to think clearly.

I had three client visits in the afternoon. One thing that never ceases to amaze me is the strength people have to carry on in the face of adversity. So many of our clients are subject to abuse: verbal, physical and financial. I met with a client who has been

**Dominic Tidley - Outreach Worker,**  
**Julian Housing Support (Northern Team)**

systematically exploited financially for years and it can be very frustrating knowing there is little that can be done. The police take adult abuse very seriously, but it's ironic, the public perceives people suffering from mental health problems as a threat, when in fact the opposite is true. But despite this exploitation, the client is cheerful and pleased to see me.

The drive home is always a good time to reflect on the day, and I usually make up a 'to do' list for the following day. Covering a large rural area involves a lot of driving, but there are a lot worse places to drive through than North Norfolk.

## VHG Welcomes New Chief Executive

VHG's Board of Trustees would like to announce the appointment of Emma Daniel to the role of Chief Executive. Emma previously VHG's Member Services Co-ordinator took up the appointment on the 1st April. Gary Barnes, Chair of VHG said 'Emma has always been a great asset to VHG and we are absolutely delighted to welcome her to the role of Chief Executive.'

The Board would also like to thank Joan Kinnings-Smith for her past hard work in the role and wish her every success in the future.'



# raising the roof

the bi-monthly publication of **VHG** MAY 2003 Issue 10

# VHG



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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## 86% of housing providers deny access to homeless people with dogs

*Eighty-six per cent of housing providers are refusing to give homeless people with dogs a bed for the night, according to a new survey issued by the NCDL. This leaves the majority of dog owners who are homeless or in housing crisis without the support and shelter they so desperately need.*

In a bid to end this no-win situation, the NCDL, the UK's largest dog welfare charity is today launching a campaign to persuade housing providers to reconsider their policies on dogs, with an information pack entitled 'Welcoming Dogs'. The pack contains guidelines for accepting dogs as well as model dog policies and case studies.

NCDL Chief Executive, Clarissa Baldwin, explains: 'Sadly, many homeless dog owners are forced to decide between accommodation – and the first step towards a safe life in settled housing – and their beloved pets. The reality is that many homeless dog owners then choose the love and companionship of their pet over essential shelter and support. Over 22% of housing providers refusing to allow dogs do so simply because of 'hostel policy'. Yet, in many cases there is little reason for them to refuse. Our new 'Welcoming Dogs' pack provides guidelines and essential policies to help hostels, day centres and shelters make an informed decision about whether or not to accept dogs.'

Only 2% of those housing providers interviewed cited dogs being a nuisance as the main reason for denying access to homeless people with dogs, only one hostel referred to past problems. St Mungo's is London's leading service provider for the

homeless and has accepted pets into its hostels for the last ten years. John Barker, Deputy Manager of one of St Mungo's central London hostels explains: 'St Mungo's accepts pets because if we didn't their owners wouldn't come in. Personally, I find that allowing dogs and other pets into the hostel I work in helps staff to enhance relationships with residents. Pets make the place much more like a home.'

The NCDL has found that dogs provide real comfort to their homeless owners, helping them to cope with a tough lifestyle by boosting self-esteem, providing emotional stability and giving them a purpose. As a result, homeless dog owners are less susceptible to depression or drug abuse than those who do not have a pet. The dogs themselves usually enjoy lots of regular exercise and the company of many other animals and people. Consequently, most homeless dogs are healthy, happy and loving.

## NCDL

### Pathway & Hope Project

#### What is Pathway?

Pathway is a pets and housing workshop group, which was formed in 1995 with the intention of promoting responsible pet ownership and providing housing providers (both public and private) to develop positive pet policies. Pathway includes representatives from most of the major animal welfare organisation, the veterinary profession and housing associations. As well as being a member of Pathway, we provide the secretariat for the group.

#### What has Pathway achieved so far?

In January 1996 Pathway launched 'Pets and Housing – Guidelines for Housing Providers'. These guidelines were produced to encourage local authorities, housing associations and landlords to develop a more positive approach to pet-owning tenants. They were well received and have helped many housing providers recognise the importance of adopting a more positive approach towards pet policies in their organisations. Pathway has also published 'Pets and People' aimed at pet owners, this resource acts as a companion publication to Pets and Housing. It covers such topics as 'How to choose a suitable pet for your type of accommodation', 'Pets and the Law' and 'Your Pet's Health'. A useful pet directory is also contained in the guidelines.

#### Chairman of Pathway

##### Roger Gale MP, comments:

'Owning a pet can bring great happiness and studies have shown that pet animals can contribute significantly to general good health and reduced stress. In communal housing, such as retirement homes, pets offer companionship and friendship. We want to make sure that pet animals are welcome and well cared for and that their owners are aware of their responsibilities to their animals and to their neighbours'.



Pictures courtesy of Isabel Hutchison

# VHG

providing help where needed most

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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## Newsinbrief

### Private Sector Landlords

An evening reception aimed at all private sector landlords is to be held at the Assembly Rooms on Wednesday 7th May 2003. The reception is being hosted by the Eastern Landlords Association together with Norwich City Council and heralds the beginning of a new working partnership to the raise standards and availability of private sector accommodation.

If you are a landlord with accommodation in the private sector, or are thinking about buying to let and would like further information about this event then please contact Nicky Galwey on 01603 212835 or e-mail [NicolaGalwey@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:NicolaGalwey@norwich.gov.uk)

### Certificate in Interpersonal Skills for Volunteers

As an introduction to its voluntary studies programme, the University of Wales, Lampeter, is offering FREE enrolment in its Certificate in Interpersonal skills for Volunteers. The course is open to all EU citizens with at least 3 years' residence and 6 months' voluntary involvement. Run as an online distance learning programme, the course covers confidentiality, equal opportunities, communication skills, counselling and dealing with aggression. On completing students are awarded 40 credits at university level 1. For further information contact the Department of Voluntary sector Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter. E-mail: [enquiries@volstudy.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@volstudy.ac.uk) or Tel: 01570 424 785 website: [www.volstudy.ac.uk](http://www.volstudy.ac.uk)

### VHG's new online resource

The VHG website has undergone a makeover and is now more accessible and easier to use. Provision has also been made for downloading all existing VHG publications in PDF format. Those interested in membership can also fill in a submission form online to join.

## Newsinbrief

# CAN YOU HELP HOMELESS DOG OWNERS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE NCDL?



Are you working in a hostel, day centre, night shelter or outreach organisation with homeless people in Aberdeen, Bath, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Brighton, Bristol, CAMBRIDGE, Canterbury, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, NORWICH, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Swansea or Truro?

If so the NCDL needs your help! The NCDL currently runs the Hope Project, a unique free veterinary voucher scheme for dog owners who are homeless or in housing crisis across the UK, the first and only scheme of its kind. Eligible dog owners pick up vouchers at participating homelessness organisations in their area, which they can then redeem at local veterinary surgeries for preventative care, such as vaccinations and neutering.

Research has found that dogs provide a real comfort to their homeless owners, helping them to cope with a tough lifestyle by boosting self-esteem, providing enormous emotional stability and giving them purpose. As a result, homeless dog owners are less susceptible to depression or drug abuse than those who do not have a pet ('A dog's life - Homeless people and their pets', Blue Cross, 2001).

The veterinary voucher scheme provides the homeless dog owner with peace of mind that their best friend will receive free preventative veterinary treatment...a great comfort for the owner who has so many other issues to deal with each day.

The NCDL would love to hear from homelessness organisations that come into contact with clients who own dogs and who would consider being part of this innovative scheme.

Please contact Clare Kivlehan, Hope Project Manager on 020 7833 7671 or e-mail [clare.kivlehan@ncdl.org.uk](mailto:clare.kivlehan@ncdl.org.uk) for further information.

The NCDL is working towards the day when all dogs can enjoy a happy life, free from the threat of unnecessary destruction.

## Government promises white paper on lottery funds distribution

The government is to publish a white paper on the proposed merger between the Community Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. The decision follows pressure from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) over concerns about the amount of money that would be available to the VCS following a merger and independence from government.

In response to a parliamentary question, Minister of state Richard Caborn said there would be a 12-week consultation period 'before determining the

nature of the new body', in accordance with the Compact. He said proposals emerging from discussion would be included in the white paper to be published later this year. But NCVO chief executive, Stuart Etherington, said he was concerned that consultation with the sector should include the opportunity to examine in detail the business case for the merger itself, as well as the form of the proposed new body. 'The merged fund represents a material change in lottery distribution that will be of major

significance to thousands of charities. It would be entirely inappropriate for any further moves to be made by the government in the development of a newly merged body before the proposed white paper is published', he said.

Helen Bush, Voluntary Sector, April 2003

Further information:

For NCVO's briefing paper on the proposed merger, or join its lottery policy network, contact Toby Jenkins. Tel: 020 7520 2473 or e-mail: [toby.jenkins@ncvo-vol.org.uk](mailto:toby.jenkins@ncvo-vol.org.uk)

## Landlords urged to adopt new arrears policy

Social landlords have urged to sign up to a joint statement aimed at cutting the risk of homelessness faced by tenants in rent arrears. A study by the Citizens Advice says the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Housing Corporation should draw up a statement of practice making landlords' compliance a best value review.

The statement would require landlords to adopt tenancy start-up procedures to maximise housing benefit take-up and identify vulnerable tenants. Landlords would have to make personal contact and liaise with housing benefit departments. It would also stop social landlords taking possession action where housing benefit issues were outstanding. The idea has been welcomed by the Chartered Institute of Housing.

A snapshot of CAB cases found little consensus among landlords over when to resort to the law. Of 244 cases, 6 tenants were facing possession for arrears of £250 or less, while 6 faced action for more than £2,500. The report coincides with a Shelter study calling for an end to record eviction levels and court action due to arrears. The charity wants government-funded independent advice agencies to provide arrears resolution services and says courts should be prohibited from possession orders where there is inadequate evidence of landlord action to resolve arrears.

National Housing Federation policy leader John Bryant, while welcoming the report, said a joint statement ran counter to a lighter-touch inspection regime. Many landlords approached the courts early because of delays in the legal system.

Inside Housing, February 2003

Possession action - the last resort? [www.ncab.org.uk](http://www.ncab.org.uk)

House keeping: preventing homelessness through tackling rent arrears [www.shelter.org.uk/publications](http://www.shelter.org.uk/publications)

## Norwich Furniture Re-cycling Group

Norwich Furniture Re-cycling Group needs willing volunteers to join its Management Committee.

No experience needed just enthusiasm, a commitment to the cause, flexibility, a plethora of ideas, patience and a sense of humour.

Training will be provided.

For more information please call Emma Daniel on 01603 617299

or e-mail [vhg-east@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:vhg-east@tiscali.co.uk)

Furniture Re-cycling Group

## VHG Treasurer

VHG are seeking a person with financial qualifications and experience. Ideally the applicant will have experience of dealing with charity accounting and funding.

VHG board meetings are held every 6 weeks. If you are interested in this vacancy please contact VHG's Chairman, Gary Barnes by email at [vhg-east@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:vhg-east@tiscali.co.uk)

or write to:

VHG, 1st Floor, 36 St Giles street  
Norwich NR2 1LL

## VHG Trustees

VHG, an umbrella organisation, is a vibrant charity at the forefront of promoting inclusion. VHG are looking for some additional trustees (unpaid appointments) to join the VHG Board to enable it to meet the development challenges ahead.

We are looking for at least two, but preferably more, additional trustees to widen our skills and areas of expertise and knowledge, in particular in the following areas:

■ Financial expertise, with a willingness to be Treasurer

■ Local knowledge of social inclusion issues in East Anglia outside of the Norwich/Norfolk area.

If you are interested please contact Emma Daniel Chief Executive at VHG on 01603 617299 or email [vhg-east@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:vhg-east@tiscali.co.uk)

VHG Trustee Vacancies