



■ A big help – Nigel Tweed and Graham Herridge, president of the Lions, present their cheque to Inez Davies (left) from Haven, watched by staff and clients at the project
 Pictures: STEVE ARGENT BA30408_03

Haven closes in on its £60,000 target

By JAMES CALNAN
 james.calnan@nqe.com

HECTIC fundraising efforts by staff and clients mean a Colchester mental health project is close to raising the £60,000 it needs to retain one of its units.

The Haven Project offers support and therapy to 140 adults with personality disorders, from its base in Glen Avenue, Lexden.

In 2007, the Cabinet Office gave Haven three years of funding to set up a social inclusion unit, which has helped scores of residents gain qualifications,

□ Mental health charity needs to raise cash
 □ Social inclusion unit will close otherwise

such as GCSEs in maths and English.

With funding running out last month, the project unsuccessfully applied for grants from primary care trusts and Essex County Council.

In January, co-ordinated by treasurer Val Sach, staff and clients started the hunt for the £60,000 a year needed to keep the unit running.

Heather Castillo, Haven chief executive, said more than £50,000 had been donated so far. She said: "We will soon be fundraising for the next financial year."

"We've had a lot of small initiatives – we've raised £100 from loose change."

Clients visited and called hundreds of local businesses, and many have donated prizes for a raffle later this year.

Colchester Lions Club has donated £1,500 to the cause. Club member Nigel Tweed visited a number of organisations which asked for help, and was impressed by the Haven Project.

He said: "The organisation is focused very strongly on not only the needs of the people who use the service, but this seems to be a very listening place."

"I go to a lot of places and the people that speak to me are the people that run the service."

"But here, straight away I was introduced to clients and it was from them I got the biggest chance to listen really."

"We have contact with all sorts of organisations."

"A lot of them we think 'they're naive and there's not much future in what they're trying to do'."

"But this place is different."

'Another step on road to recovery'

MANY of the people at the Haven Project have led a chaotic life. Many left school with few or no qualifications.

Tutor David Provan spends two days a week at the project, helping people study for GCSEs in maths or English.

Chief executive Heather Castillo said: "David is crucial really, because it's not about intelligence with this client group, quite often they just missed out on vital schooling."

Mr Provan aims to not only get help people get the qualifications they want, but also to build their confidence.

He said: "You see the effects of your efforts, so it's very rewarding."

Sarah Salmon, 46, is study-

ing English and maths with a view to becoming a volunteer.

She left school with no qualifications, but took a GCSE ten years ago.

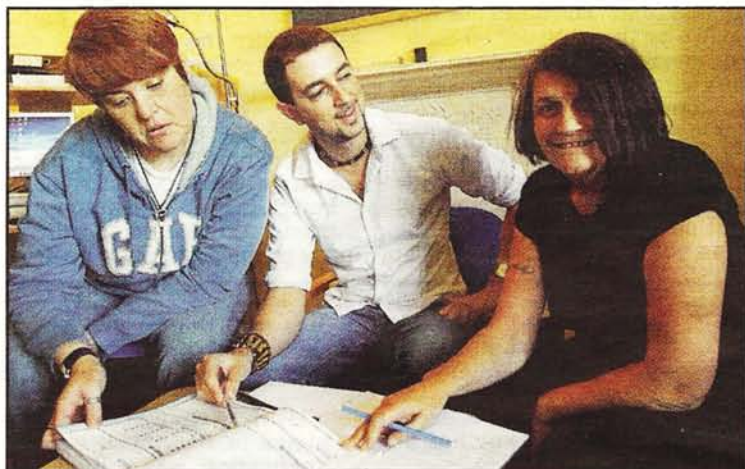
She said: "This helps my confidence – it has just rocketed."

"Apart from two years ago, I was in hospital every summer. I would be as high as a kite."

"I came here for a considerable period. I stopped coming and that was the biggest mistake I made."

"The best decision I ever made was to come back, because the real me emerged."

Heather Linkins, a recovering drug addict, is writing a book about five years at the Haven Project.



■ Study session – education officer David Provan teaching Sarah Salmon (left) and Heather Linkins
 BA30408_04

She said: "Social inclusion is a very important part of this project. It's another step to recovery. We'd be very disappointed if we lost it."

"When I first came to the Haven I was claustrophobic,

isolated and suicidal. I was in bed for nearly ten years. I used to sit and just cry all the time."

"Now my confidence is building a bit more. I'm starting to learn how to manage my crises better."