

# EMMAUS PROJECTS

*“Empowering homeless young people to achieve independence”*

## MILLS HOUSE ANNUAL REPORT April 2004 - March 2005



*‘You get the chance to try and live a normal life and still have the support when needed’  
(D Fazakerley @ Mills House)*

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**May 2005**

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## Introduction

This report evaluates the development and work of the Mills House project between April 2004 and March 2005.

The project is owned and run in partnership with Hyde Housing Association Supported Services under a Management Agreement. Emmaus Projects are the managing agent. The project consists of 7 self-contained flats based in Redan Road in North Town, Aldershot, close to local amenities.

Tenants are fully responsible for all of their cleaning, cooking, shopping and utility bills (including TV license, council tax and water costs). Flats are partly furnished, (white goods, carpets & curtains), and there is a communal security entrance and shared laundry facilities. Young people are supported in acquiring other furniture needed, usually through the Fleet Lions Community Store.

Mills House provides independence and support for clients on assured shorthold tenancies. This is the penultimate stage of Emmaus Projects, which works towards empowering young people to live within the community before moving onto dispersed flats within the local areas (community flats) or alternative accommodation. Emmaus Projects continuously aims to provide accommodation and support whilst remaining viable by maintaining high occupancy levels and working within the resources allocated.

During the year the tenants have all been transferred to assured shorthold tenancies (previously assured tenancies).

The project is supported by a Tenancy Support Project Worker, who is line managed by the Project Coordinator.

*'This will be a great opportunity for me to push myself harder in the right direction.'*

*(J Tigg @ Mills House)*

## Aims & Objectives

### **Aims -**

1. To provide access for young homeless people aged 16-25 years, through referral only, to units of mid-long term accommodation at 18-24 Mills House, Redan Road.
2. To provide high standard accommodation at a fair rent.
3. To provide low level support enabling tenants to manage their tenancy successfully and to live independently at the end of their tenancy.
4. To encourage tenants to integrate into the local community.

### **Objectives -**

#### ***For Aim 1:***

- To accept referrals from other Emmaus Projects schemes and outside agencies, who meet the referral criteria for Mills House.
- To set up a waiting list of all eligible referrals.
- To provide complete confidentiality to all referrals, whether accepted or refused.

#### ***For Aim 2:***

- To provide a safe and secure environment in which tenants can develop and prepare for independence.
- To provide single person units of accommodation under Assured Tenancy Agreements to each tenant.
- To ensure the good and proper upkeep of the property at 18-24 Mills House, including communal areas and facilities.

#### ***For Aim 3:***

- To provide a Project Coordinator to support tenants in matters of tenancies, maintenance, security, household management, and safety, and to arrange access to other support services, (e.g. counselling).

- To work with tenants to ensure they are able to access suitable permanent move on accommodation, in liaison with the Local Authority (Rushmoor Borough Council), and to assist in the resettlement of tenants.

*For Aim 4:*

- To encourage tenants to be aware and mindful of the needs of other people living in Mills House and the surrounding Redan Road properties.
- To encourage tenants to forge links with the Project Coordinator and other tenants of the property.
- To encourage tenants to build up their support networks (including friends, family, professionals), to prepare them for independent living after moving on from the accommodation at Mills House.

## Hostel Profile

Mills House accommodation varies in size between studio and 1 bed roomed flats, situated on a private road in North Town, attached to a general needs section of flats, also maintained by Hyde Housing Association.

There is a communal front door, which has a security code, a communal laundry facility and private parking. The flats are provided with gas and electricity via meters, kept in a locked room with a security entrance code. There are 3 flats on the ground floor and 4 flats on the first floor.

Recently the communal areas have been re-decorated as part of the 5-year plan implemented by Hyde Housing. There have also been 4 new showers fitted in the flats, new bathroom floors and extractor fans.

Tenants have been encouraged to have a sense of pride in the decorative condition of their flats and several of them have made every effort to improve their home environment. The majorities of tenants decorate their flats upon move in and are justifiably proud of the end results.

Once again we have to acknowledge the big part that Fleet Lions have played through their Community Stores Project, in enabling our young people to furnish their flats from day one. Tenants have also been successful in obtaining community care grants from the DWP. With staff support, 2 tenants who were originally rejected for the community care grant, successfully appealed their cases.

Rent arrears are high at Mills House and the staff recognise that many residents have high support needs around budgeting and financing. To address these issues, residents who have accrued debts have agreed to rent repayment plans and these are updated regularly.

*I think Mills House is a pretty good place to live because you get the chance to try and live a normal life, which I think is good because you don't realize how hard it is in the real world.'*

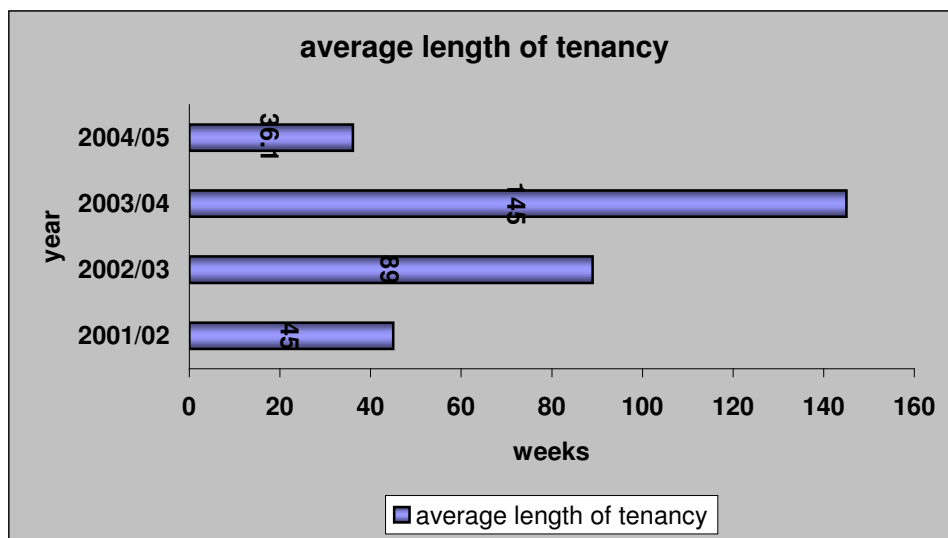
*(Tenant @ Mills House)*

New residents are supported fully through the initial few months of a tenancy, as many are unfamiliar with paying utility bills and managing gas and electricity meters. Staff support is provided with changing all relevant paperwork to the new tenant and with how to access local resources, and at present, the tenants at Mills House are arranging a welcome pack for new tenants about living at Mills House and the local area.

Two tenants have received compensation from Hyde Housing for inadequate work carried out and delays in repairs being undertaken. The tenants instigated these issues during key working, with the staff member providing the evidence. Following a written complaint to Hyde Housing Association both tenants received vouchers to put towards decorating their homes, empowering the tenants to take action and consult with staff.

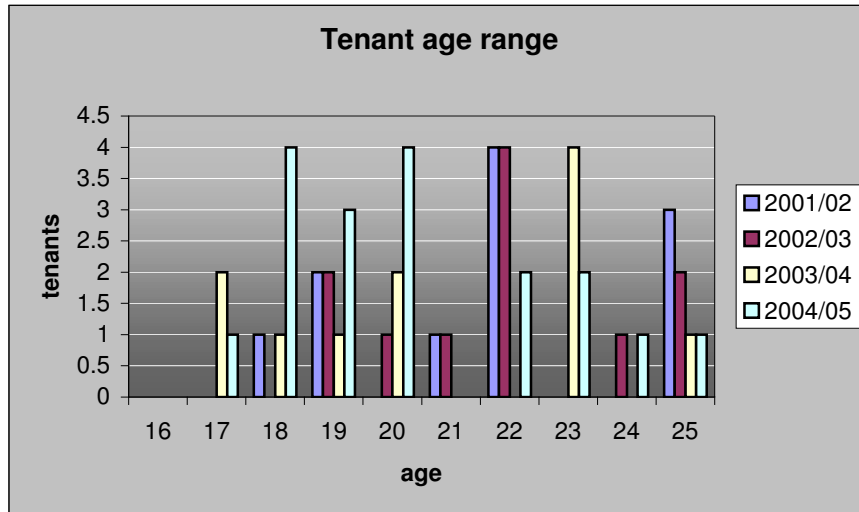
Tenancy Support are in continuous correspondence with Hyde Housing Association to improve the working relationship and develop a more efficient system for reporting maintenance issues. Both parties are working towards providing the residents with more involvement and responsibility in these areas, with tenants providing their personal phone numbers to be contacted directly in response to their maintenance requests. This improves tenant independence and self-confidence.

The graph below shows the average tenancy length in comparison with previous years. For the reporting period 2004/05, the average tenancy length is 36.1 weeks (9 months) taking into account the tenants who moved in pre April 2004 and those currently holding a tenancy post March 2005.



As displayed above, there has been a massive reduction in the average length of tenancy; due to the opening of the community flats (and their move ons) the turnover of admissions to Mills House has increased causing a decrease in tenancy length. The gender split of average length of tenancy is 44.8 week (11 months) for females and 32.5 weeks (8 months) for males.

The graph on the following page shows the tenant age range of Mills House in comparison to previous years. For the year 2004/05 there has been an increase in 18 - 20 year olds accepted into Mills House, whereas previously the majority of tenants settled into the 21 - 23 years old grouping.



This has had an effect in the average age range of tenants at Mills House, which has been decreasing throughout the years. This reporting year the average age is 20.3 years old, in 2003/04 21.7 and in 2002/03 21.9.

*'Mills House is a good place to live because we have other people from the community living here so we have to learn to respect them as well our neighbours'.*

*(D Fazakerley @ Mills House)*

We have successfully completed our first full service review by our major funders, Hampshire County Council Supporting People, and it is pleasing to report that we have met all required targets for availability, utilisation and staffing levels. We were however, found to be above the hourly rate agreed by Supporting People during the period and have now agreed to a slightly reduced contract value, to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

## Referrals and Admissions

The referrals and admission figures reflect the success of Mills House and the need for the project.

The procedure for referral to Mills House is as follows: -

- The young person decides to make a referral and discusses it with their key worker
- The young person requests a referral form through either the tenancy support team or their key worker.
- Once filled in by the young person, the key worker will complete their section and forward to the tenancy support team.
- The young person will be invited to an interview to discuss their suitability for Mills House.
- Following this, the young person will receive a letter either stating that they will be placed on the waiting list or to explain the reasons for decline with the areas highlighted that they need to develop via their key working sessions in order to be successful in the future.
- The young person is then placed on the waiting list and may be re-interviewed when a place at Mills House becomes available.

*'Last week I made a referral to mills house...I had to fill in a form, which was then also written in by my keyworker... this is when I had my interview where my support needs and my support network were discussed. Tenancy support came back to me with a letter accepting me to mills house and shook my hand.'*

*'I found the referral process easy and stress free; Hayley and Helen made it so there was no complications at all. I think that the referral works really well.'*

*(J Tigg @ Mills House)*

### Statistics

Throughout the year April 2004 – March 2005 there have been 18 referrals, a huge increase on last years figure of seven. Out of these 18 referrals, 5 were female and 13 were male, this is an increase in the amount of male referrals in comparison to last year. There were seven 16-18 year olds and eleven 19-24 year olds referred.

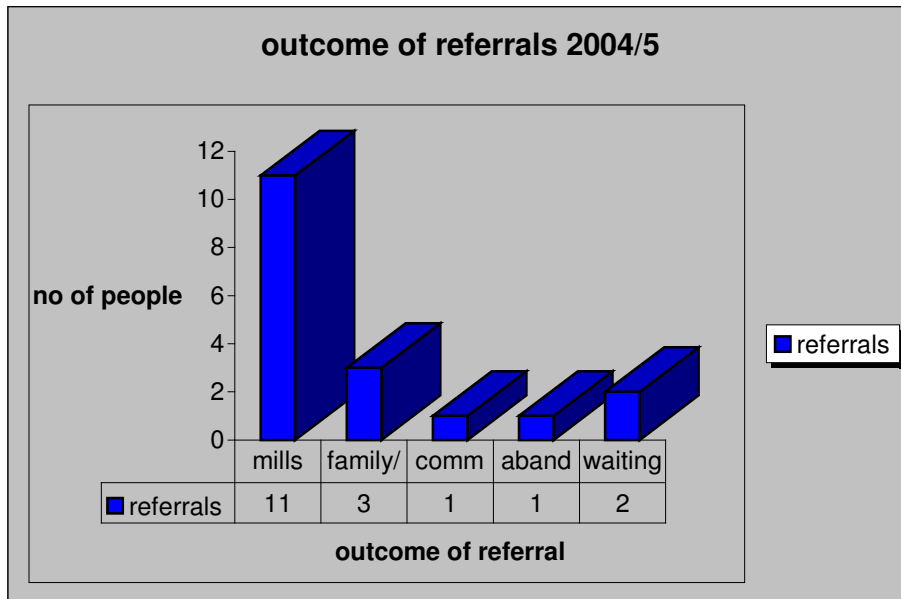
One young person was referred from 63 Victoria Road and 17 from 61 Victoria Road. The support needs for these 18 young people focused on budgeting, employment, debts and healthy eating.

I believe that the increase in referrals reflects the success of the community flats as move on accommodation from Mills House, and the need for the project within the area.

We have accrued bad debts of 10.61% against a target of 6%, highlighting the need for improved debt management strategies for the coming year.

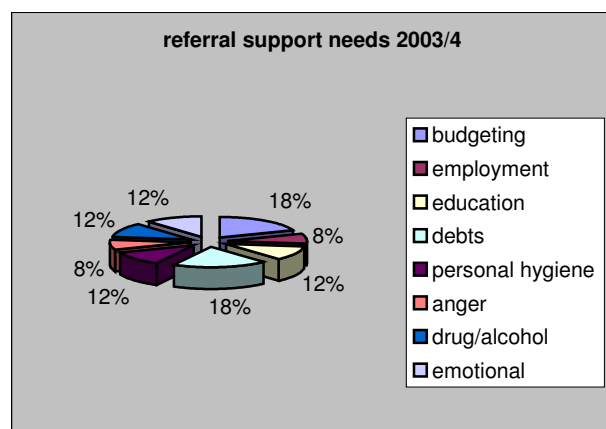
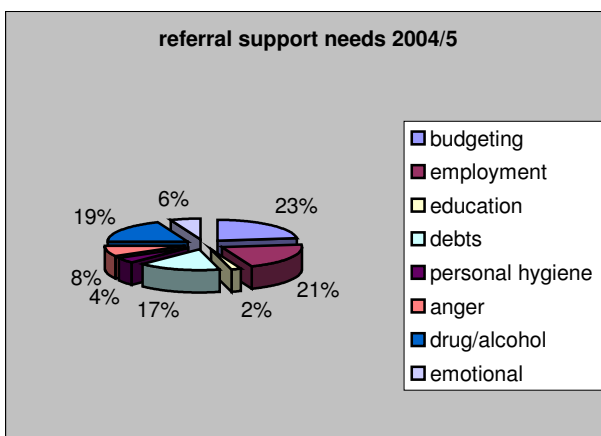
The bar chart below displays the outcome for the young people who have made referrals over the reporting year. As you can see the majority of young people were accepted and

moved to Mills House, a minority choose to move in with family and friends, others moved straight to the community flats, one young person abandoned their tenancy and 2 remained on the waiting list for Mills House.



On referral a young persons details are placed on the Mills House database, including the support needs at the time the referral was made. These are taken from the referral form completed by the young person and from liaison with the young persons key worker, these support needs often change and/or reduce throughout the stay at Mills House.

The following pie charts display the diverse range of support needs in comparison between referrals made in 2004/5 and 2003/4. Both show the percentages for each support need in relation to the referral figures for each reporting period.



As can be seen from the charts, the most significant needs for referral in 2004/5 were budgeting, employment, drug / alcohol and debt support. The following section reflecting upon key working provides examples of the outcomes from supporting tenants on these issues. In comparison to the referral support needs 2003/4, there is a reduction on debt support, personal hygiene, education and emotional (with support for anger being equaled). I believe that this reflects the effort invested by both staff and clients in Emmaus

House and the Victoria Road accommodation projects, preparing the clients for independent living at Mills House.

### **Move Outs & Occupancy Rates**

There have been 11 moves from Mills House, of these, 9 have been planned moves to the community flats, 1 planned move to friends / family, and 1 abandoned tenancy.

There have been 11 moves to Mills House, supporting a total of 23 young people over 2004 - 2005 (1 move in pre-2004 and move out post 2005). This is slightly higher than last year's statistics.

The effective management of a reserves list has maintained high occupancy. A cumulative occupancy of 97% was achieved against a targeted occupancy of 95%. This shows an increase on last year's occupancy of 96%.

## Key working

On entrance into Mills House, each tenant is provided with a care plan and a support agreement to tailor the support provided to their needs. The aim of key working is to achieve independence and successfully maintain a tenancy agreement, with the main aspects of key working focusing on budgeting, employment, debts and drug/alcohol.

Each tenant signs and agrees to a support agreement, which highlights support provided to: -

- Assess support needs and goals
- Agree a plan to meet these goals
- Support the young person to meet the goals identified in the plan by providing support or identifying other agencies who can provide support
- Agree regular meetings with the young person to review and revise the support plans.
- Keep records of the meeting and provide the young person with a copy.

This agreement also covers confidentiality and the correct use of support within Emmaus Projects, names the keyworker and contact details.

As Mills House is part of the move on accommodation the support levels are lower than in the early stages of accommodation projects, therefore key working occurs fortnightly for the majority of tenants.

*'It is good because we still have the help and support when we need it so that we are not on our own'*

*(D Fazakerley @ Mills House)*

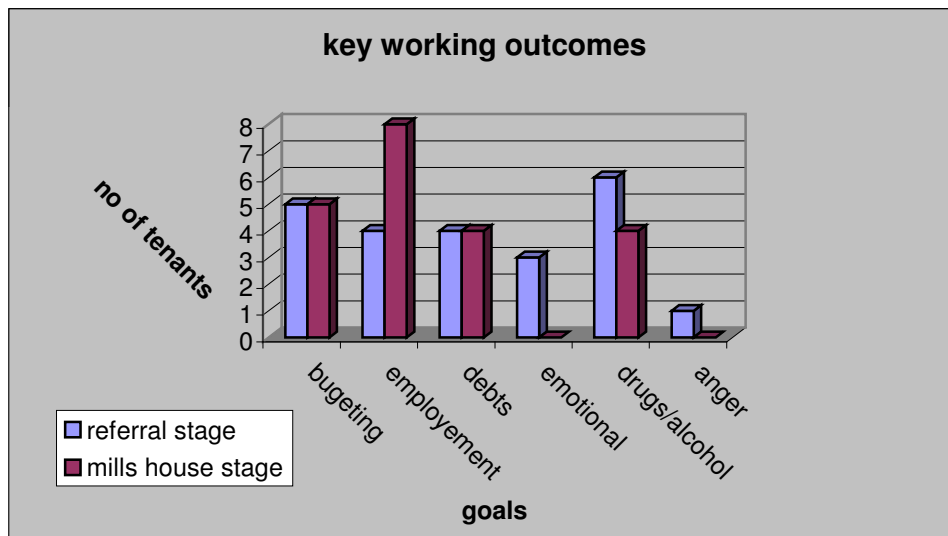
A new development has been the introduction of tenancy reviews, which occur four months into the tenancy to review progress made at Mills House and discuss future goals and move on accommodation.

Tenants meetings occur on a monthly basis, an agenda is placed in Mills House for tenants to provide topics for discussion. Issues discussed have included maintenance, personal safety, disturbance and noise / nuisance.

During this reporting period there have been 117 planned key working sessions. There were 30 appointments residents failed to attend (26%) and 12 sessions were cancelled and rearranged (10%). In addition to these, 6 tenancy reviews have been conducted this year attended by the Tenancy Support Project Worker and the Tenancy Support Project Coordinator.

Of the 11 young people admitted to Mills House during the period, 3 were working previous to being housed at Mills, and 5 obtained full time employment whilst residing at Mills House. In relation to support needs outlined by referrals, 3 tenants have accessed counselling through Emmaus Projects, and 2 tenants have made referrals through their key worker to DnA (drugs and alcohol team) to focus on drug/alcohol dependencies.

The bar chart below shows the support needs of tenants accepted into Mills House and the outcomes of key working towards those support needs.



Budgeting and debt management issues remain equal, as these are the main issues addressed via key working. A significant outcome of key working is that 4 tenants were employed at the referral stage, whilst 8 tenants were employed at the end of the year or when they moved out. The reduction in emotional and drugs/alcohol issues are due to tenants working with DnA, by self-referral or key worker referral

For those tenants who are not in employment or education, a few over the year have been regular attendees of HELP training projects, and volunteered at the community stores on a weekly basis.

There have also been personal victories; 1 tenant was successful through to the final stage of the homeless world cup, though unfortunately did not make the final team. Another tenant has become a member of the Hyde Housing residents committee and travels to Southampton on a regular basis to provide tenant participation.

## Summary & Conclusion

The targets on occupancy this year were achieved and are an improvement on previous years. The standard of accommodation has improved due to the communal areas being redecorated. An effective communication system has developed with Hyde Housing Association, via named contacts and improved procedures for the reporting of maintenance issues.

There have been incidents of noise nuisance and disturbance from the neighbouring community and other tenants at Mills House. This was during a settling in period for a few new tenants adjusting to the different lifestyle. Through the warnings system, tenancy reviews, key working and tenants meetings, all problems were resolved and Mills House has remained incident free for several months. All complaints from tenants were informal and resolved by staff. With all tenants now on assured shorthold tenancies, this provides more flexibility for the organisation and for the tenants, especially in regards to move on accommodation. With assured shorthold tenancies there is an automatic right to repossess the property when the tenancy comes to an end, this can reduce the involvement of the courts to gain possession of a property and avoids expenses and bad feelings.

There are significant arrears accrued by both current and ex-residents, and action is now being taken to recover these debts, both by increased use of court action and by investigating debt recovery agents. As the young people who are moved into the community flats have demonstrated an ability to manage both their financial situation and tenancy issues, there is a degree of accountability with regard to rent payment. We would be setting a poor precedent if these issues are not addressed and we see this as an opportunity to educate clients on their financial responsibilities.

In comparison to previous years, the tenants that have moved in are much more confident in their ability to live independently, and strive to achieve as much as possible (homeless world cup, Hyde representative, client rep). This can be evidenced by their attitudes in constantly applying for employment, finding out their rights to complain and request compensation, I believe this is a reflection of the benefits of reduced support, bringing empowerment to the residents. This is reaffirmed by tenancy reviews, developing tenants maintenance request procedures and meeting agenda's, which place more control with the tenants.

The aims of the project as defined in the business plan were met throughout the year.

- The project is playing an important role in helping Emmaus Projects achieve its mission on behalf of its clients to “empower young people to achieve independence”
- We successfully provided access for homeless young people aged from 16 - 25 year. This was achieved through the referral process from our Victoria Road project to units of mid to long-term accommodation at units 18 to 24, Mills House, Redan Road, Aldershot, and onwards to the community flats.
- We have managed the occupancy level and budget to plan.

- Through the management of the maintenance process we have successfully provided high standard accommodation at a fair rent.
- With minimum support the tenants have demonstrated their ability to move on to independent living via the community flats and agency referrals. Those that have had planned moves have remained in contact through the tenancy support scheme.