

Save Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre

Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre to close on 31st March due to ‘disinvestment’ by the City of Edinburgh Council in this year’s annual grant programme to charities.

Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre provides a huge range of essential, accessible services to people of all ages – **from babies to residents in their 90s** - including people experiencing physical disabilities, mental health issues, learning difficulties, social isolation and poverty. Services are delivered by, for and with local people. Maintenance of this grant funding is essential to keep the Centre open and continue its work to help Drylaw thrive.

There are no grounds for ‘disinvestment’. This is a much valued and successful Community Centre serving as a local hub in an area of multiple deprivation and across the Inverleith Ward. There is no public building in the immediate area and the Centre operates as a contact and service co-ordination base during severe weather to help vulnerable people. It has received Council support since inception and has met all grounds and targets for grant funding. User satisfaction levels are regularly evaluated and range between 80 – 100%.

This year, the Council are proposing to offer grants to new, un-tested projects - including those run by private businesses - rather than local charities or voluntary/community groups who rely on Council funding. Without Council funding most other trusts and foundations will withdraw or refuse additional funding to charities which provide essential community services.

Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre is financially lean and efficient - but it delivers **big outcomes** for its hundreds of users each year, including running the essential breakfast club for Ferryhill Primary School.

Key Services include:

* The Ferryhill Primary School Breakfast Club - commended by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate and essential to children’s attainment levels. The Centre collects 20 children each day from homes where there is low attendance due to poverty, parental health and addiction problems or other issues. The children are given a healthy breakfast and help with their homework in a supportive environment. In September 2015 the Head Teacher stated that the “*crucial benefit the breakfast club is the minibus collection, without it many of the referred children would not make it into school* and that the “basic skills taught at the breakfast club stays with the child all their life and attendance levels excel”.
* Three older people’s groups – for many attendees this is their only opportunity to leave the house each week or month - directly tackling social isolation, loneliness and enabling Centre staff to flag up additional support or health needs.
* Adult Computing classes and a Job Club – enabling digital access in a digitally excluded area of the Capital, improving IT literacy and employment prospects. The Job Club allows people to search and apply for jobs online, write CVs and research benefits.
* A weekly cooking group with user led sharing recipes and cooking on a budget - skills are passed inter-generationally.
* Twice weekly gardening sessions, which support people with learning difficulties and their carers - sowing food crops, harvesting crops and cooking. This project helps people get in to or back to work. There is also a Green Gym for people to experience exercise in the garden.
* Happy Little Feet – a volunteer led group for parents/carers and children aged 0 – 4 years.

As Edinburgh struggles with limited funds and as demand for community services grow; it is essential that the local authority recognises the economic savings and best value charities such as Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre provide. Ironically the Council delivers some services from the Centre itself and - even more ironically - by withdrawing the Centre’s modest grant - the City of Edinburgh Council is increasing demand for its own services and failing in its duty of care towards all residents. This puts enormous pressure on the Centre’s newly strengthened voluntary management committee.

**By saving Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre the City of Edinburgh Council will enable the community to continue improving the quality of life for residents and families and – crucially - reduce the impact and cost on other Council services. These include City Council Social Work, Care Services, Community Learning and Development and Advice services.**

**We urge the Councillors to stand side by side with Drylaw residents, the Centre’s hundreds of users, volunteers and its very small p/t staff team to enable us to continue to work in partnership - building and help maintain residents’ health and wellbeing and reduce marked inequality and deprivation in Drylaw and surrounding areas.**

**Notes to Editors:**

Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre has received numerous independent awards for its work including;

Green Awards from Keep Scotland Beautiful in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011
The Royal Horticultural Society and Beautiful Scotland Award “It’s Your Neighbourhood Award of Thriving (level4).
In 2012 it received the “Green Heroes” Best Community Award by Conservation Scotland Volunteers.

In 2012, The City of Edinburgh Council awarded the Drylaw Neighbourhood the ‘Best Group Award’ in its Inspiring Volunteer Awards and Florence Atkinson received the ‘Best Volunteer Award’ for her commitment to the Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre.

The Centre was instrumental in securing funding and managing the Easter Drylaw Park Skatepark project (due to open in early 2016) – an initiative of three young people in the area.

 Details of how to get involved to help save the centre will be made available via our twitter account:-, @DrylawNC and our web site [www.drylawnc.org.uk](http://www.drylawnc.org.uk)

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