



3 April 2014

LAUNCHPAD – A PERFECT TRANSITION SOLUTION

Avondale House is sited in the heart of the Byker Estate, Newcastle, within walking distance of the city centre. It comprises 34 one-bedroom, self-contained flats, with communal areas and facilities¹, being let at affordable rates only to veterans of the Armed Forces. It provides the perfect environment for a responsible transition to civilian life, especially as public and private sector organizations in Newcastle are helping resident veterans to find jobs, houses, training and other support, as required. Avondale House is managed by the charity AF&V Launchpad, on a lease from the Byker Community Trust (BCT).

Avondale House is now providing veterans with affordable and effective accommodation that they rent and from here they become involved with, and contribute to, the local community. The residents live in Avondale House for up to 2 years, after which time they are expected to have established alternative accommodation elsewhere in the city to match their employment and personal circumstances. Whether they choose to re-train or seek employment, the resident veterans could not have a better start than Launchpad as there are also employment opportunities and premises for business start-ups on the Byker Estate.

Avondale House has a resident manager, a veteran who is providing links for residents to other agencies and who is also responsible for the smooth-running of the House. Everyone who has served in the Armed Forces, and their spouse, is eligible to become a resident, but we have a straightforward assessment process to ensure the right people come to Avondale House to benefit from Launchpad's support. The priority is being given to people just leaving the Services including Early Service Leavers, some of whom have been under the guidance of the Future Horizons Programme (<http://www.futurehorizons.org>). Other residents already include those referred to us from charities such as Norcare and the Royal British Legion. Due to the size of the flats, children cannot be accommodated there but other arrangements can be made elsewhere on the Byker Estate for families.

The Byker Community Trust (BCT) was awarded a prestigious £250K Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant to help refurbish the structure of Avondale House and BCT has contributed a further £690K for this work. Launchpad has also gained support from the Service benevolent funds, the Armed Forces Community Covenant LIBOR fund and, we hope, the Big Lottery Fund. This development is breathing new life into the very heart of the Byker community and it demonstrates the optimism and improvements that are being brought to

¹ TV lounge, games area, IT suite, laundry, large garden / patio area with pond and conservatory.

the whole estate through a much-needed £24.5M programme of work. However, the business model for Launchpad relies on rental income and so residents' furniture and other essentials in the House need to be funded through grants and other charitable support.

The initiative became fully operational on 1 August 2014 and veterans have already filled Avondale House, however, there is a transient population as people get jobs and permanent accommodation – so there is room for new residents.

BCT and AFV Estates could not have developed Launchpad without the help of many partners including:

- The Future Horizons' Programme
- Your Homes Newcastle
- Newcastle City Council
- NHS (North of Tyne)
- Building Futures East
- About Turn / Forward Assist
- Job Centre Plus
- Local suppliers and contractors
- North East Chamber of Commerce
- RFEA, The Forces' Employment Charity
- Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
- Career Transition Partnership

Launchpad has a website at www.afv-launchpad.co.uk and the Byker Community Trust's website is at www.bykercommunitytrust.org.

Please contact me if you would like to visit Avondale House or the Byker Estate, or to find out more about this exciting joint venture. Finally, we do hope you will do all you can to support the initiative.



David Shaw
Chairman, Launchpad