



BANFFSHIRE JOURNAL

Team rises to challenge of drugs menace

By **George Boardman**

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THE blue mini-bus regularly seen parked in Banff's Castle Street is helping to fight the drugs menace in our communities.

The Teen Challenge outreach bus brings Christian faith to the problem: and the bold statement emblazoned on the bus is 'Offering freedom from addiction.'

The bus itself is fitted out quite simply, as a comfortable meeting area, with a TV and DVD player, and coffee-making facilities.

The Teen Challenge charity has links with the Riverside Church, and parks outside their Harvest Centre base in Banff every Tuesday afternoon from 2.30-5pm, as a drop-in centre for 18 to 35-year-olds with substance misuse problems, and their families and friends.

Local volunteer Christine Chinchin, from the Riverside Church, said: "There is a real need in the area.

"We've been coming for a couple of months, trying to get established, so people see you're there all the time."

The bus is a place to relax and chat about their problems.

Senior support worker Andrew Marjoram added: "Drugs don't just affect the individual, but whole families.

"Parents go through nightmares, and to see relationships restored between children and their parents, and family life restored, is hugely rewarding."

Teen Challenge is now a world-wide organisation celebrating its 50th anniversary. It has strong links in the North-east.

At their supported housing base at Sunnybrae, near Fyvie, there are 20 beds available for young men trying to live free of substance misuse.

The residents are able to spend 12 months living there on a recovery programme – the sort of long-term measure needed by some to change their lifestyles.

After that, they receive further follow-up support for six months, and the charity also runs a landscape contracting, shed-making and grass-cutting business, TCNS Ltd, to give them work experience.

There is also a support group for parents which meets regularly in Banff. For information, contact Christine Chinchin at the Harvest Centre on 01261 815790.

She said: "I came to this through personal experience; it has been very helpful."

The charity also runs the Solid Rock Café in Fraserburgh.

Teen Challenge maintains close links with the Aberdeenshire Council social work service, particularly their substance misuse team.

If you, or someone you know, has a substance misuse problem and would like more information about the service which Teen Challenge offer, you can visit the bus or telephone the charity on 01651 891627.

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Taking to the road to tackle the drugs problem are the Teen Challenge team outside their blue bus, a regular visitor to Banff. Left to right are support worker Andrew Marjoram, recovering user Brian McGregor and local volunteer Christine Chinchin.