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 Clydesdale Bank  Yorkshire Bank

Homes scheme for people damaged by alcohol

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LORETTO Housing Association in Glasgow has started work on a £4.7m development offering homes for people with alcohol-related dementia.

The first project of its kind undertaken by a housing association, the site, in the East End of the city, will house people with Alcohol-Related Brain Damage (ARBD) from early 2013. In all, 22 homes will be provided for people suffering dementia-type symptoms brought on by years of alcohol abuse. These will be located alongside four units of social housing for larger families.

ARBD causes a range of dementia-like symptoms, including memory loss and confusion but can have other distinctive elements. Sufferers often experience hallucinations and walking problems – with a distinctive shuffling or stumbling gait.

Many have additional physical problems, especially gastric problems, and mental-health issues. They may have suffered additional brain damage as a result of falls or other injury.

Crucially, staff at Loretto hope a proportion of residents in the new home will recover from the illness.

Martin Glackin, head of care at Loretto Care, explains: "ARBD comes about through misuse of alcohol and poor nutrition. If people stop

drinking and start eating properly there is a good chance a significant number are going to improve."

A vitamin deficit, particularly of thiamine, vitamin B1, is believed to be a major cause of ARBD.

However, there is an increasing consensus among researchers that the effects are not irreversible, Mr Glackin says. "We believe around one-quarter of those affected can make a full recovery, another quarter will achieve some recovery. Fewer than half will make no recovery at all."

The new homes will allow those affected – mainly men in their 50s, 60s and 70s – to live independently while benefiting from a high level of support.

The layout of the flats will be designed to support people with a high level of dependency, including principles of design pioneered at the Dementia Services Development Centre at the University of Stirling.

For the first time, Loretto Care will employ full-time nurses as well as support workers. Many residents are likely to have to overcome considerable self-esteem issues and may have become cut off from friends and family. Mr Glackin adds: "Nobody at primary school says 'When I grow up, I want to be a homeless alcoholic with ARBD'."

The scheme has been funded thanks in part to a £1.2m loan from Clydesdale Bank – which will also

help fund two other developments, in Dumbarton and Paisley.

It was commissioned by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's addiction service, with the backing of the city council's housing and social work departments.



SWITCHED ON: Homes will use designs by Stirling University dementia centre.