

## **AN APPEAL FOR DOUGLAS HOUSE**

### **(Following on from Helen House)**

Many of you will have heard of Helen House, the world's first children's hospice which opened in Oxford 18 years ago and which continues to give day-to-day love and care to children who face life-threatening illness as well as offering support and friendship to the whole family. Advances in medicine and feeding techniques mean that many of these children are now living longer than they might have done a few years ago.

For some in their late teens and early twenties the environment of a children's hospice is no longer suitable or appropriate to meet their varied and special needs. Sister Frances Dominica, the founder of Helen House, therefore intends to build Douglas House, a purpose-built hospice/respice care centre (a respice) for young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions who are beyond the age of using a children's hospice, but for whom there is presently no other suitable provision.

Douglas House, like Helen House, will be the first of its kind. Douglas House will seek to add life to days, even when days cannot be added to lives, and to offer the best quality of care to every young person according to his or her needs and wishes. It will be an occasional home-from-home, where young people will not only receive love and care from experienced staff, but also where they can develop social relationships with people their own age outside the family circle. Whilst they enjoy relatively good health they may wish to take advantage of the opportunity to study, take up new leisure pursuits or just to relax in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

There is immense pressure on those who care for young people with life-limiting illness and they too deserve a well-earned rest: some may like to stay close-by in the family rooms to be provided within Douglas House, whilst others will prefer to take a short holiday in order to recharge their batteries. However, when the time comes, staff at Douglas House will be there to help young friends to die with peace and dignity and to help families come to terms with the death of their dearly loved young relatives. Douglas House will be built across the garden from Helen House within the confines of the convent walls.

So, we have the land, and we have the planning permission. The task now is to raise the £4 million needed to build and equip Douglas House. Sir Trevor McDonald, already a supporter of Helen House, has very kindly become Patron of our fund-raising appeal, and over recent months we have received considerable national and local media coverage, all of which is helping daily to bring us closer to our target figure. There is, however, an urgency to the situation in which so many young people find themselves. Sadly, for some Douglas House will come too late: for others you could make a significant difference.

If you can help in any way, or if you know of an organisation willing to raise funds for Douglas House, please contact Valerie Mather, Douglas House Office, 110 St. Mary's Road, Oxford, OX4 1QD