

# News Reach

Thames Reach's publication for friends and supporters

Autumn/Winter 2018



ThamesReach  
power





## A message from the chief executive

As the new chief executive at Thames Reach, Bill Tidnam discusses the charity's plans going forward and the importance of working together with partners, commissioners and donors to achieve sustainable outcomes for service users.

I'm proud of the work that we do to reduce rough sleeping in London, not just the critical task of getting people off the street, but in helping people to rebuild their lives after homelessness, as well as intervening to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place.

Over the next year we're keen to focus on three issues that have a particular impact on rough sleepers and rough sleeping in London:

1. Poor health can be both a cause and a result of street homelessness, and we know that people who are homeless don't always get the help that they need from the NHS. We're keen to build on the excellent work we already do with the NHS to make sure that homeless people can access the support they need to improve their health.

2. The introduction of Universal Credit, and particularly the complicated application process and evidential requirements, can mean that people spend longer on the streets.

3. We want to think about what we can do to help EU rough sleepers get off the streets. Around 25% of people who sleep out in London are from other countries in the European Union. They do not have any entitlement to government help, and often have very significant health problems and other related issues. Where possible, we help people to get into work and find accommodation, but not everyone is able to take this route, and we have become increasingly concerned about their wellbeing. We recognise that this is a controversial area, and we feel a debate is needed about how best to respond.

Throughout this, the support of our partners is crucial to the work that we do, whether they are corporate partners, commissioners or donors.

I hope you enjoy reading News Reach, and learning more about the services we provide and the differences they have made.

**Bill Tidnam**

# Martha Jones House opens

Martha Jones House, Thames Reach's new hostel for rough sleepers, opened this September, replacing the old Graham House hostel in Vauxhall.

The project takes a new approach to supporting hostel residents, with larger rooms, a reduction in numbers, and more focus on personalised support.

The hostel includes self-contained flats with kitchen and washroom facilities, encouraging residents to become more self-reliant and independent.

Monica Geraghty, lead manager at Martha Jones House, said: "The transition from Graham House to Martha Jones House went really well, and all residents have now moved in.

"The building has been developed to a very high and sustainable specification. The ultimate aim for our residents is for them to move away from homelessness and move on to leading more fulfilling lives, and the new hostel encourages self-sufficiency and development in a nice, comfortable environment," she said.

Martha Jones House



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Deptford Reach

This summer, Thames Reach agreed to enter into partnership with community charity Deptford Reach, who run a day centre supporting over 2,500 people each year who have been affected by homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues and social isolation. The partnership means Deptford Reach will be better placed to expand their services in South East London.

### Robertson Street

Earlier this year, a £1.9million refurbishment of Thames Reach's Robertson Street hostel in the London Borough of Lambeth was completed. The refurbishment means that hostel residents now have a greatly improved living space, with all rooms enlarged and completely refitted. New facilities also mean additional support can be provided to residents who have care packages, making sure that all those living at the hostel have their needs met in the most comprehensive way possible.

### Senior Management Team

New Thames Reach chief executive Bill Tidnam has been joined on the Senior Management Team by former area director Catherine Parsons, who takes over as new director of operations, and former head of finance Paul Jackson, newly appointed as director of finance and central services. Bill has been with Thames Reach since 2000, and has been responsible for a wide range of projects aimed at helping rough sleepers off the streets, tenancy sustainment, employment-focused services, and mental health support. Catherine first started at Thames Reach in 2014 as an operational manager before a brief spell at Crisis, returning in 2016. Paul, a chartered accountant, joined Thames Reach in 2009 after a number of years working in the corporate sector.





# Working hard to end rough sleeping

Thames Reach's London Street Rescue service works every night of the year helping people off the streets, but there are still huge challenges.

Last year, 7,484\* people slept rough in London. The scale of this problem is enormous, but, as part of Thames Reach's efforts to end street homelessness, outreach teams are working every night of the year, trying to help people sleeping rough to escape the streets for good.

Thames Reach outreach teams helped 2,127 to move off the streets last year, helping them either into accommodation or to return to an area where they had close ties and could access greater levels of support.

This good work is in part due to new assessment hubs, working in conjunction with services like No Second Night Out, which seek to reach people new to the streets and bring them inside as quickly as possible.

Despite the excellent work being done, though, there are still numerous major challenges to overcome in order to get more people off the streets for good. Three issues in particular stand out.

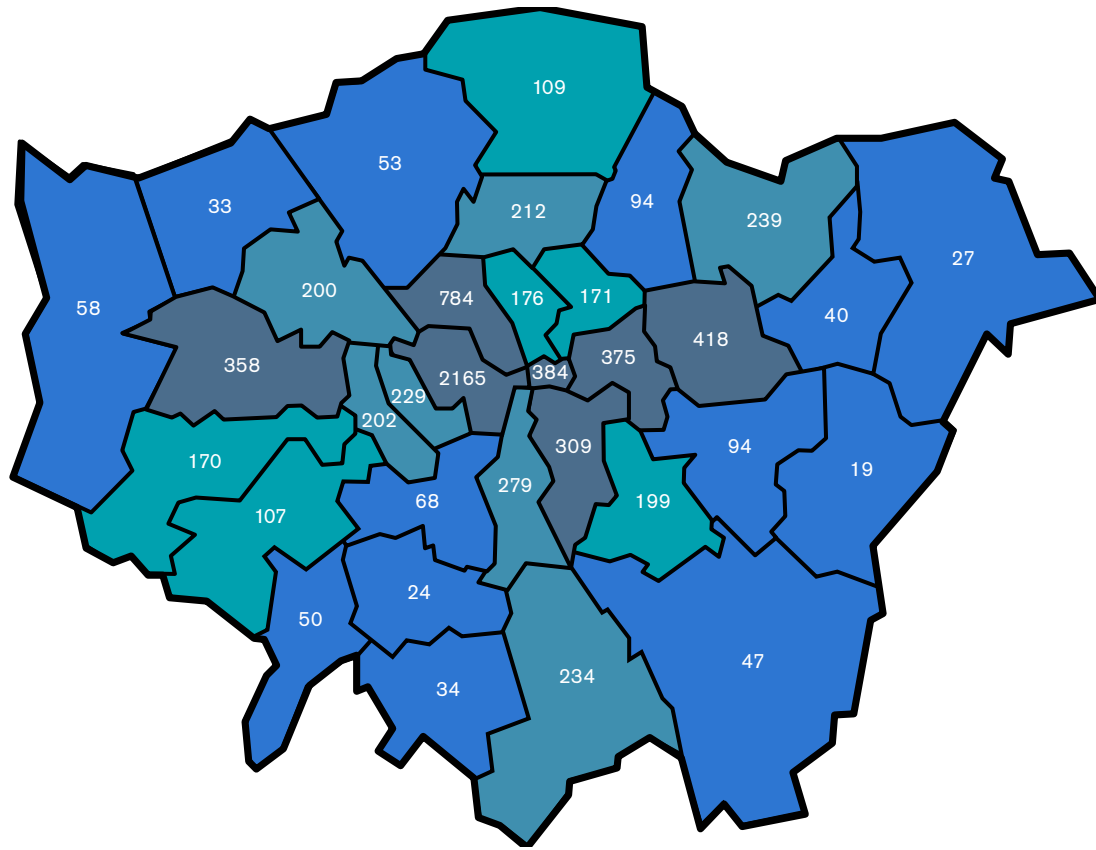
People from Central and Eastern Europe still represent close to a quarter of all rough sleepers in London.\* There are very few support options available to this group to help them off the streets. It is vital that new solutions are devised.

Too many rough sleepers are also struggling with debilitating physical and mental health issues, and these people are often unable to access the vital support services they are entitled to. 50%\* of people sleeping rough in London have poor mental health. It is important that statutory services work in a more flexible manner to provide the necessary support.

Finally, a lack of available accommodation is impacting the ability of outreach teams to get people off the streets. In many parts of the capital there simply isn't enough bedspace.

Addressing these issues is key in the fight to get people off the streets and to end rough sleeping in London.

## Number of rough sleepers by London borough between April 2017 – March 2018\*



\* Statistics from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network Greater London Report 2017/18



## How to help in severe weather

The past year has seen the capital hit by severe weather conditions. Last winter saw London battered by freezing winds, with snow and ice coating the streets. This was followed by the hottest summer on record. Extreme weather can be life threatening to those living on the streets. Most people are aware of the dangers that rough sleepers face in snowy and icy conditions, but extreme heat can also present significant dangers, with dehydration and sunstroke being particular risks.

The public can help. In cold weather, please consider buying someone hot food, and contact an outreach team, as emergency shelters can provide a warm place to spend the night. In the heat, please consider giving out bottled water and sunscreen.

Whatever the weather, you can help people to escape the streets by contacting Streetlink via [streetlink.org.uk](https://streetlink.org.uk).

*Photo: neiljs*



# Work Ready Programme

The Work Ready Programme, designed in collaboration with the management consultancy firm McKinsey & Company, is a unique project providing vulnerable people with the chance to take huge steps forward in their lives

This challenging week-long programme asks participants to take risks and involve themselves in group activity to grow their confidence and find greater self-belief. The programme consists of a team-building weekend outside of London, followed by four days of workshops and workplace visits, allowing participants to get a real taste of a work environment, and to help them develop the skills and attributes needed to find long-term employment. On completion, service users are assigned a mentor to provide ongoing support and assistance for up to a year to help them look for work.

The Work Ready Programme, and the partner organisations helping to deliver each course, are having a remarkable impact.

Claire Merrett, who completed the course earlier this year, spoke to Thames Reach about her time on the programme: "On the morning I was due to start I questioned going and I asked my friend if he thought I should go. I didn't know what people would think of me."

**"I pushed myself, and I'm glad I did because it turned out to be a huge stepping stone."**

Claire slept rough on the streets for four months upon returning to the UK after spending ten years working as a DJ in Tenerife. She was found by an outreach team, after which Claire stayed at a central London hostel before being helped into supported housing by the Thames Reach Tenancy Sustainment Team.

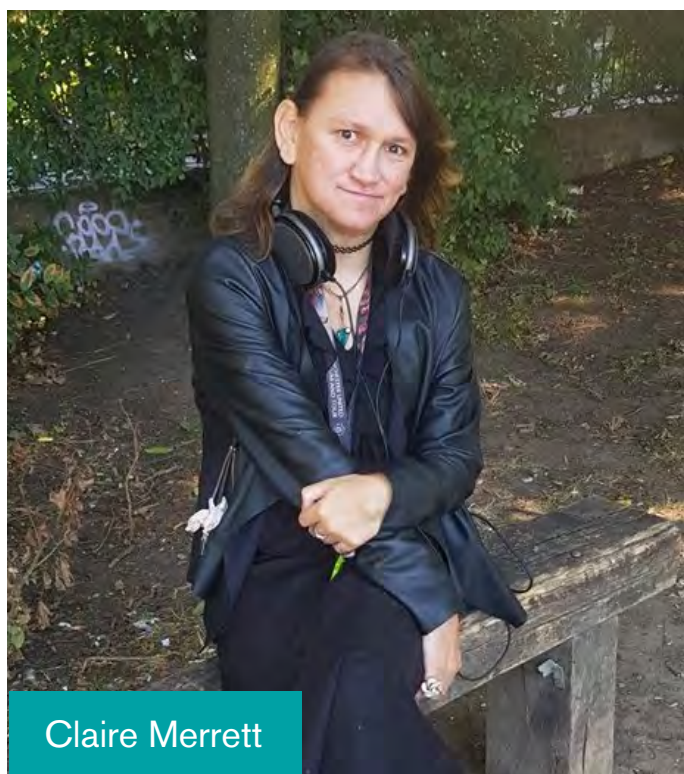
Motivated to move forward and leave the past behind her, Claire talked herself into attending the programme. "I pushed myself, and I'm glad I did because it turned out to be a huge stepping stone," she said.

"I tend to sleep in shifts as I don't have much of a routine, but on the programme I found myself going to bed early in the evenings as I had a little more structure to my days with all the work we were doing.

"I liked the range of activities on the weekend away best. It teaches you various different ways of doing things, as well as introducing you to different people who you might not have met otherwise, all who have had similar experiences of homelessness. I felt confident by the end of the week and was really glad I attended," she said.

Between January 2016 and December 2017, 95% of participants reported feelings of increased confidence, self-esteem and belief in their abilities, with 87% going onto either volunteering or long-term sustainable employment.

*A key element of the Work Ready Programme is the support of Thames Reach's corporate partners. If your company is looking for an opportunity to engage in a meaningful, socially beneficial activity, this might be just what you're looking for. Please email [fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk) for more information.*



## Work Ready Programme participants between January 2016 – December 2017

Increased feelings of confidence,  
self-esteem and belief in their abilities

95%

Progressed into volunteering or  
sustainable long-term employment

87%



The Work Ready Programme (WRP) was co-developed by Thames Reach and global management consultancy firm McKinsey & Company. The programme is now run in partnership with other organisations, including NHS Trusts, construction companies and corporates.

Young Kim, a business analyst at McKinsey and a member of the organising team for the WRP, told us how his work on the programme helped him to find a new perspective.


“Five years ago, a group of colleagues in our London office decided they wanted find a way to help address the issue of homelessness.

“Thames Reach struck us as an impact-oriented charity that strives to solve one of the toughest problems the UK is facing as a nation.

“After exploring the different ways McKinsey could help, we agreed to put our problem solving and capability building skills to use and design an employability skills trainings programme for the formerly homeless, which became the Work Ready Programme.

“When the programme ended, I myself was rewarded with an immense sense of purpose, and found that the skills I thought I was learning for my day job could be applied to make meaningful differences in other people’s lives.”



A photograph of a man, Kevin, sitting on a green metal park bench in a grassy area. He is wearing a grey jacket over a blue shirt and light blue jeans. He is smiling at the camera. The background shows trees and a fence.

Kevin slept rough and spent six years living in a shed. He recently performed in *Pericles* on stage at the National Theatre as part of the Public Acts initiative.

## The next stage

After sleeping rough on the streets of London for almost a year, Kevin never imagined himself taking centre stage at the National Theatre.

Kevin grew up with his dad, brother and two sisters at their family home in Peckham and worked as a delivery driver until the age of 45. When their father passed away, the family decided to sell the house. Just as the house was sold, Kevin's company went into liquidation leaving him unemployed and homeless.

"My siblings all had plans for their future, but I ended up taking a wrong turn," he said.

Without a stable place to live, he began using drugs. He slept rough for almost a year, in parks and in doorways. Occasionally, he would sofa surf with friends or family for short periods of time.

During this time, Kevin noticed his breathing was unusually heavy and his heart was beating rapidly. Eventually, he was diagnosed with pneumonia, brought on by an underlying heart condition. As a result, he was fitted with a pace maker. With his health now at risk, Kevin found that his employment options deteriorated.

Kevin stayed with his brother and then at a hostel before securing his own private rented accommodation in Lewisham, where he spent the next

six years paying £800 a month in rent to live in a converted brick shed in his landlord's garden.

The property was small with thick, dark glass obscuring outside views and shutting out ventilation, resulting in damp conditions which left a very pungent and unpleasant smell throughout.

Kevin accepted this lifestyle but felt ashamed and so isolated himself from his friends and family. He never spoke about his feelings and struggled to find employment.

"It was hard. I hit a low point and to be honest, I didn't see the point of being here anymore."

It was then that Kevin was referred to Thames Reach's Employment Academy in Camberwell.

After speaking with Kevin about his professional and personal history, Thames Reach staff set him up on a series of workshops to build up his basic IT and literacy skills.

Kevin met support worker Denise, who spoke with him about how isolation had been affecting his life. She introduced him to Public Acts – a new partnership between charities, community groups and the National Theatre, using participatory theatre to help people reflect on their personal history and build confidence.



Through this initiative, service users were invited to attend weekly rehearsals, meet new people and be part of a large scale musical production of William Shakespeare's Pericles on stage at the National Theatre.

**“Theatre has opened me up more than ever before. It's changed my perception of people.”**

Kevin said: “At first, I didn't really want to do it. Never in my life have I ever imagined myself doing theatre work.

But after taking it upon himself to attend a few taster sessions, he soon changed his mind. “It was nice to be mixing with people again and having a new routine gave me a sense of purpose.

“I felt my confidence growing and it really felt good to be part of something. Theatre has opened me up more than ever before. It's changed my perception of people.”

After ten months of weekly rehearsals, learning lyrics, dialogue and choreography, Kevin performed a solo part on the National Theatre's

Olivier Stage, in front of audiences of over 1,000 people for a three-night run.

“My family came to watch on the opening night and loved it.”

Kevin continues to make remarkable changes. He has moved out of the shed and now lives in a project that provides accommodation with meaningful volunteering opportunities, where he is gaining valuable skills, experience and confidence.

“It's a thousand times better than where I was living. I can't thank Denise at Thames Reach enough for helping me out, and I'll keep saying that no matter how much I annoy her.”

He is also receiving support through Thames Reach's Jumpstart project. He will continue working directly with Denise to explore his opportunities and take part in a range of Thames Reach employment and skills programmes.

“A year ago, my situation was very different and I wasn't sure about my future. I'm in such a different place now and I know I have some real options moving forward.”

Public Acts saw staff and service users from Thames Reach and other charities perform at the National Theatre. It will take place again in 2019.

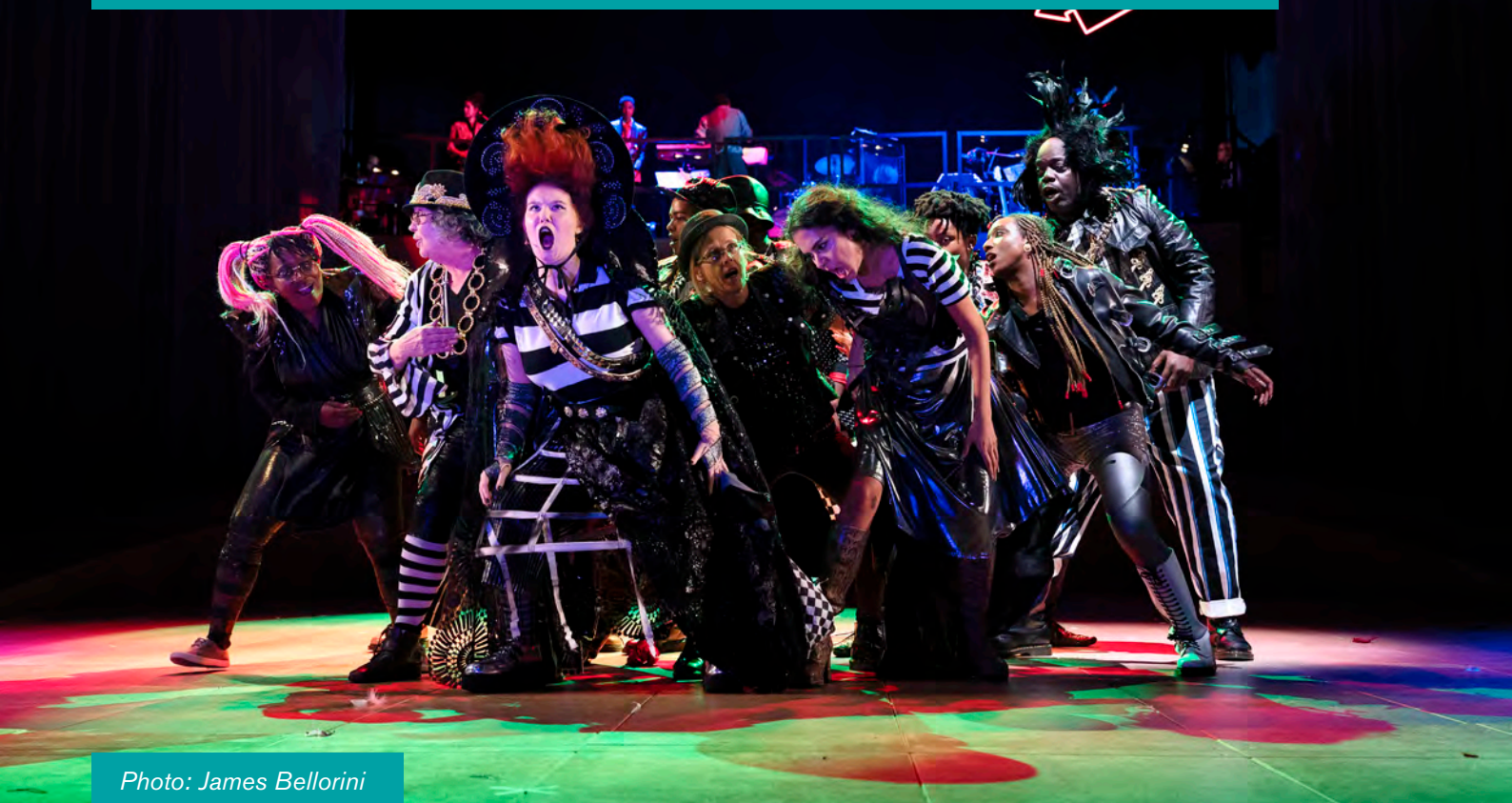


Photo: James Bellorini



# Hard to Reach fund

How small grants have been making big changes to the lives of Thames Reach service users.

The Hard to Reach fund is a pot of money available to help service users overcome obstacles preventing them from moving on in their lives. This can be a practical intervention like clothing or toiletries, but it can also be used to help people overcome personal barriers. The funding can be utilised at short notice, allowing Thames Reach staff to respond quickly when a need arises.

Not too long ago, Charlie\*, a long-term resident at a Thames Reach hostel, was looking through photos of his hometown on the internet. Charlie left home over 25 years ago and hadn't returned since. He struggled when he left home, and eventually became homeless in London and slept rough on the streets.

Reminiscing about the area where he grew up, recalling the local chip shop and even his old school, Charlie mentioned with regret the friends and family he'd lost touch with. Listening to his stories, a staff member at the project asked if he would like to go and revisit his hometown, with Thames Reach paying for a ticket through the Hard to Reach Fund.

With a bit of encouragement, Charlie agreed and started to become excited at the prospect. He tried to make contact with family. After so much

time apart, he knew it would be challenging, but with persistence and some help from the team, Charlie managed to track them down.

Over a meal back in his hometown, Charlie started to rebuild his relationship with his family. It was an emotional occasion, and there were difficult moments, but the family reconnected, and, eventually, Charlie decided it would be best if he moved back to where he could be close to his loved ones. With the support of Thames Reach staff and his family, Charlie moved back home.

**“With the support of Thames Reach staff and his family, Charlie moved back home.”**

Charlie's prospects if he had remained in London were not great. Once he was ready to leave the hostel, he would have had little in the way of a support network.

Through a combination of his own determination, encouragement from staff at the hostel, and, importantly, support from the Hard to Reach fund, Charlie moved back home and now leads a much more fulfilling life.

**\*Name has been changed.**



# London to Paris

A long distance bike ride is just one way you can challenge yourself while raising funds for Thames Reach.



Last year, employees at planning consultancy firm Boyer embarked on a gruelling challenge, attempting to cycle from London to Paris within 24 hours – all in aid of Thames Reach.

A team of seven set off from their London office on Blackfriars Road at 5.00pm on a Friday night, heading towards the port of Newhaven on the Sussex coast. After navigating the rush hour traffic, they crossed the picturesque Surrey Hills and South Downs, embarking the ferry for Dieppe at 9.30pm after 95km of testing climbs and winding country roads, much of it in darkness.

The team set off again at 5.00am the next morning along Avenue Verte, a famous cycling route, in close to freezing temperatures. At 10.00am they arrived in the Normandy market town of

Gournay-en-Bray, where they were warmly greeted by the local mayor. Powering on through aches and strains, the Boyer team completed their 280km journey, arriving at the Eiffel Tower in 21 hours and 20 minutes, raising a fantastic £2,650 for Thames Reach.

*Do you want to help end street homelessness? A bike ride to Paris isn't for everyone, but if you fancy jumping out of a plane, running your first 10km, climbing Ben Nevis, or anything else you can think of, Thames Reach's fundraising team can help you design your own fundraising challenge. Thames Reach also has places available for a range of events throughout the year for all ability levels, including the Royal Parks Half Marathon and London Triathlon. For more info, please email: [fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk)*



# Corporate partners go all out for Thames Reach

Construction firms St William and St James hold charity cricket day at The Oval to raise funds to end homelessness.



Property developers St William and St James, part of the Berkeley Group, organised a charity cricket tournament this summer at the world famous Oval cricket ground in Kennington, raising £28,500 for Thames Reach and Vauxhall City Farm.

The organisers invited their suppliers and contractors along for the day and emerged triumphant, beating Stanmore Building Services in the final.

The event provided an opportunity for those involved to spend a day playing at a historic sporting venue, with lunch and drinks served in the 19th century pavillion. This was followed by a prizegiving ceremony where artwork and signed

football, rugby and cricket shirts were raffled, raising further funds for the chosen charities.

Henry Chadwick, assistant land manager at St William, spoke about why his firm chose to fund-raise for Thames Reach: "Being a London-based housing developer, there's a strong connection between what we do and the issue of homelessness in the capital. We feel we have a duty to help as we understand the importance of people having a roof over their head.

"We are aware of the excellent work Thames Reach carries out helping some of London's most vulnerable people," he added.





Edward Callander, St William's graduate development manager, said: "The day itself was certainly a success and was very well received. Having a charity cricket day is a novel way to fundraise and the teams enjoy a whole day out of the office."

"We're thrilled to have raised as much as we did, it's an excellent effort from everyone," he said.

**"Our corporate partners play a pivotal role in supporting our work."**

Thames Reach's corporate fundraising manager Catherine Hickey said: "Our corporate partners

play a pivotal role in supporting our work, their donations fund some of our most important services, directly benefitting hundreds of vulnerable and homeless people.

"We are extremely grateful to St William and St James and to their partners for putting on such a memorable and worthwhile event at such a prestigious venue, helping us to work towards our vision of ending street homelessness," she said.

*If you would like to find out more about becoming a corporate partner with Thames Reach, please contact Catherine on 0203 617 6055 or email: [fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk)*





Having completed Thames Reach's TRaVEL volunteering course, Ben has been volunteering with London Street Rescue and hopes to work full time as an outreach worker.

## Volunteer progressions

Ben, 37, was living in residential rehabilitation in Camberwell when he was recommended Thames Reach's TRaVEL course – Thames Reach Volunteering and Employment for Life – a scheme which helps people build confidence and develop basic skills through volunteering opportunities and work experience.

Just over two years ago, Ben had tried to take his own life. Struggles with drug and alcohol addiction, combined with the pressures of trying to get by, resulted in him losing his home and girlfriend. He ended up sleeping rough in a park. One night, he walked into a lake.

A man out for a 2.00am walk with his dog saved Ben, pulling him from the water. The next morning, for the first time in his life, Ben asked for help, and started on the path to recovery. He went into

detox and eventually ended up on the Thames Reach TRaVEL course, where he started to see a change in himself.

"I developed a new perspective. All my life I've been a taker, but I realised I had a lot of empathy for people," he said.

**"I want a career helping to get people off the streets, it's what I want to do."**

After he completed TRaVEL, Ben was looking for a way to put his newfound confidence and desire to help people to good use. He applied to become a volunteer with London Street Rescue, Thames Reach's outreach service which operates across the capital every night of the year, working to bring rough sleepers in off the streets.



"I did my first shift with outreach worker Gerry, we went to Newham, trying to engage with people and encouraging them to come to an assessment hub," said Ben. "It was tough but, towards the end of the shift, we found a girl who was sleeping rough in a block of flats. When she agreed to come with us I felt so proud, I just thought that this was for me. This is what I want to do."

"I've been volunteering now for eight months. It can be challenging with some of the places we go to, but I'm able to share my experience and talk people round."

"There's been such a change in my life and it's all down to Thames Reach. The TRaVEL course and volunteering here has transformed me. Lisa, who runs TRaVEL, has shown me how to be the person I always knew I could be deep down."

"I'm 22 months clean, I feel more confident, I'm moving out of my temporary house and I'm applying to become a full-time employee with London Street Rescue. I want a career helping people to get off the streets, it's what I want to do. It works. I've seen it first hand," he said.

Thames Reach's volunteering programmes, including TRaVEL, play a huge part in helping people work towards long-term employment, which is a vital step away from homelessness. These programmes have produced outstanding results with many of the participants going on to work both with Thames Reach and elsewhere.

Thames Reach recently received new funding from the Big Lottery Fund, which will finance the charity's volunteering programmes for the next five years. It will help those, like Ben, who have completed programmes like TRaVEL, to take the next step towards achieving their goals.

Lisa Hallam, who runs the TRaVEL course, said: "As a tutor, I can see how our volunteering programmes can transform lives. It really is like watching winter melt into spring."

"The workshops teach people what is expected in the workplace and the volunteer placements give learners the opportunity to put that knowledge into practice. These programmes not only open doors, but also give participants the confidence to walk through those doors."

If you are interested in partnering with Thames Reach, please contact us via [fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@thamesreach.org.uk)



