

Thames Reach Annual Review 19/20





Introduction

The year from April 2019 to March 2020 saw significant developments in the services we run to prevent, respond to, and help people recover from street homelessness. We don't have room in this review to tell you about everything we do, but the stories you can read here will give you a flavour of the work we've done over the last year.

Driven by the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, we have seen growth in our services which work with people who have experienced street homelessness. This includes the expansion of the Greater London Authority funded Rapid Response Team, which works across most of London to respond to StreetLink referrals, find new rough sleepers, and get them quickly into emergency accommodation. We know that, by doing this, the people we help stand a far better chance of escaping the prospect of living on the street long term.

We've also been working in new areas for the organisation, and this year saw our first commissioned service outside Greater London with our East Surrey Outreach Service.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team also now works with people housed in the private rented sector, a significant extension of help for those moving away from homelessness.

This crisis is not just about a lack of housing, street homelessness is isolating and lonely, and it can have a devastating impact on your sense of self-worth. We're excited about our Big Lottery funded Social Inclusion Project, which aims to tackle this problem by helping people build the confidence to get involved in social activities and make new friends — you can read more about it in the section on our Recovery services.

"This crisis is not just about a lack of housing, street homelessness is isolating and lonely, and it can have a devastating impact on your sense of self-worth."

It's far better, however, if we can prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, and we've seen growth in our Brent Reach and Deptford Reach services, which aim to achieve this goal. Brent Reach works closely with the local council to identify people who are at risk of losing their accommodation, and provides help early, when their problems can be more easily resolved. Deptford Reach uses paid staff and community volunteers to provide a combination of advice, social contact, practical support, and training — a community service that makes a real difference to the people who use it.

Alongside this, we recognise that training and employment are crucial — basic literacy and digital skills can allow people to take control of their own lives, whilst work can provide a sense of belonging and purpose, which is important in aiding someone's recovery. Finding and keeping work is also an important part of staying housed, particularly if, like many of the people we work with, you cannot claim help with benefits.

All this, though, is overshadowed by the events at the end of the year. The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, and the nationwide lockdown that followed in March, precipitated an emergency response to get everyone sleeping on the streets into emergency accommodation. While this huge undertaking was most welcome, the pandemic has also brought about massive growth in the number of people losing their accommodation

and needing help, often after losing work. It would be a tragedy if coronavirus led to the creation of a new generation of people living on the street.

One of the positives to come out of this difficult period so far has been the response of the people who work across Thames Reach, either as volunteers or paid staff, who have carried on working throughout to provide support to those vulnerable people who desperately need it. We are also hugely appreciative of the response we've received from our supporters and the people using our services. I'm so proud and grateful to work with such a committed, resilient, and positive group of people.

Bill Tidnam
Chief Executive



Our vision is of a society where street homelessness is ended and nobody need sleep rough on the streets

Our mission is to help homeless and vulnerable men and women to find decent homes, build supportive relationships and lead fulfilling lives

Last year, we helped over 9,000 people across London



Staff

355

Average number of employees during 2019-20

9%

Percentage of staff who identify as disabled

37%

Percentage of staff who are BAME

21%

Percentage of staff with personal experience of homelessness

6%

Percentage of staff who identify as LGBTQI+

49%

Men

51%

Women

Our mean gender pay gap last year was -4.1% (previously -1.89%), meaning that, on average, women are paid slightly more than men across the organisation. However, we are happy that this pay gap is minimal, and indicates that, in general, employees are paid equitably, regardless of their gender

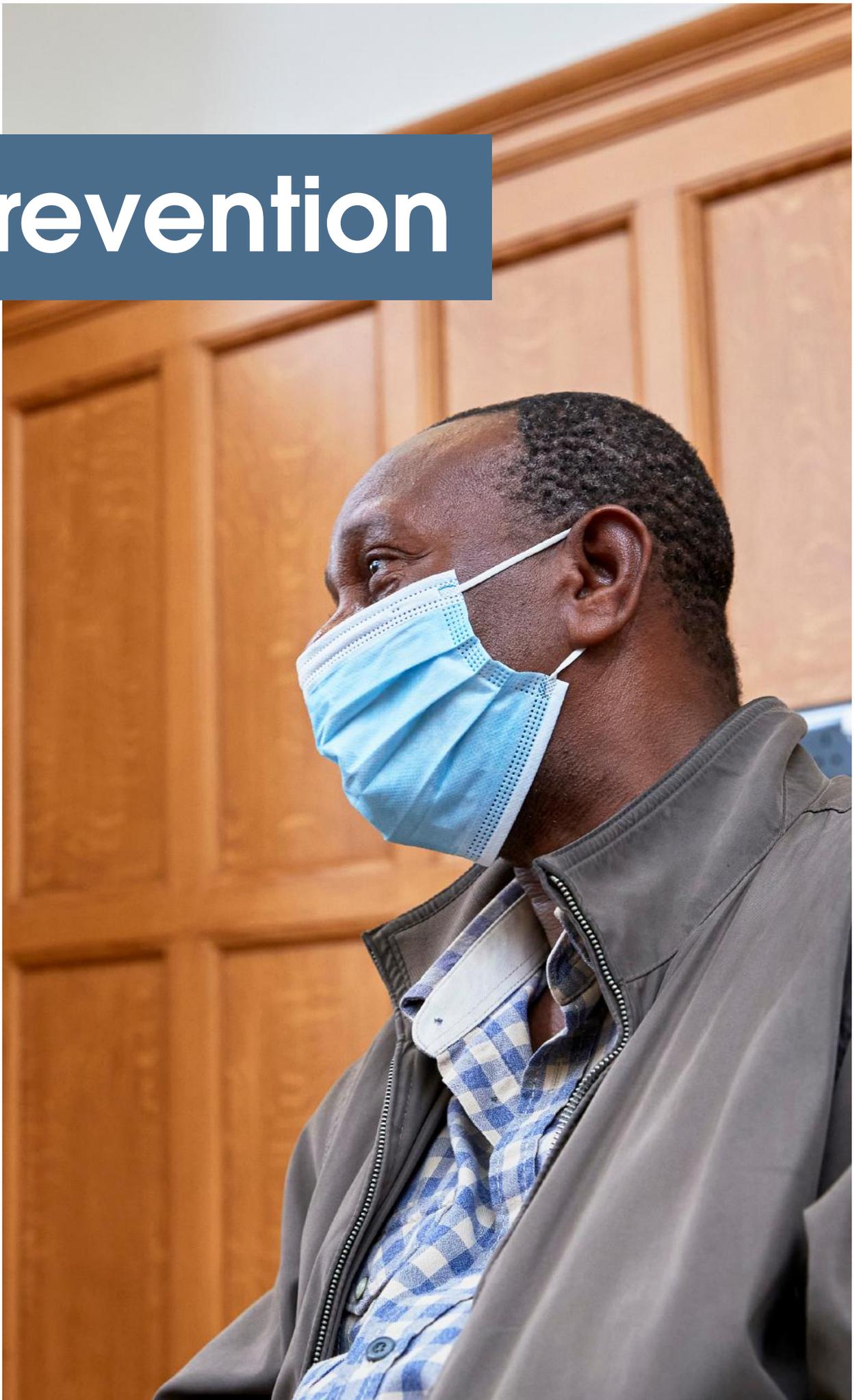
In total, 90% of people who enrolled on our traineeship programme last year went on to secure permanent jobs in the homelessness sector

Dreams

Services



Prevention



Our Prevention services work extensively across communities to stop vulnerable people from becoming homeless

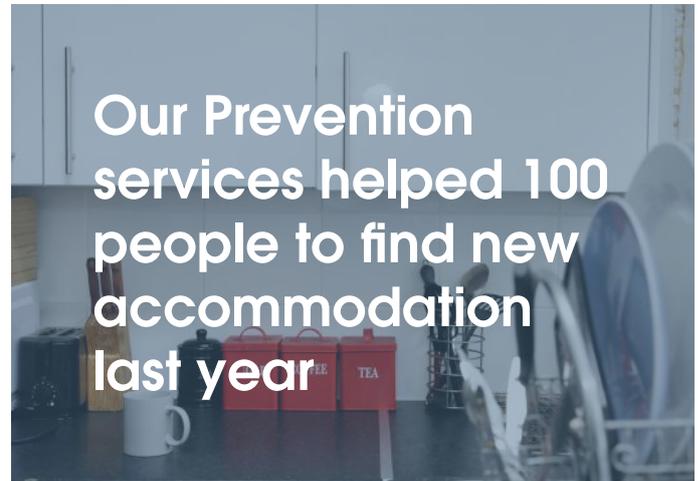
We see the damage that rough sleeping and insecure housing brings to individuals and communities, which is why we are committed to delivering prevention services that work to stop people from becoming homeless in the first place.

We work with local authorities to deliver services tailored to their areas, and we also source funding for our own services to pilot new approaches to preventing homelessness.

Throughout the year 2019/20, we've refined and developed how we deliver our prevention services, understanding that the crucial moment of intervention that removes the threat of rough sleeping will be different for everyone.

The increase of commissioned navigator roles, which can work with people at risk of sleeping rough and support them for a longer part of their journey, has given us great insights and helped us embed prevention in a range of other services.

Our floating support services work within specific geographical areas to reach people at risk of becoming homeless, meeting their needs and providing support before they end up on the streets. Our Employment and Skills services, such as Southwark Works, help people secure sustainable work, which we know also reduces the risk of street homelessness.



Our Prevention services helped 100 people to find new accommodation last year



Our day centres supported 1,820 people within their local communities last year



Our Prevention services helped 628 people to retain their home over the last year

A portrait of Yvonne Scott-Henry, a Black woman with short dark hair, wearing glasses and a dark blue cardigan over a dark blue top with yellow polka dots. She is standing outdoors in front of a brick wall and a black metal gate. A dark blue rectangular box with the name 'Yvonne' in white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Yvonne

Yvonne Scott-Henry, area manager for floating support and other prevention-based services, explains the work she does and what it's like working for us

Can you explain your role?

I'm an area manager at Thames Reach, responsible for overseeing the floating support services, including Brent Reach, and the social impact bond team, as well as our two tenancy sustainment teams (TST).

What does floating support do?

We help people get support in their own home or where accommodation has been identified for them. In addition to housing, we provide support around issues including mental health, as some people will have a range of support needs.

My services are preventative, so we work with people to maintain their tenancies and make sure they feel supported. We also work with people who may not be happy in their tenancies, and having previously been street homeless may still be engaged with street life. Making sure people stay housed is our main priority and we adopt different techniques to tailor this support to the client.

How do you feel Thames Reach is different to other organisations?

For us, as a service and an organisation, it is important to be actively listening and working with people, working with their priorities in mind

in a way that is inclusive and builds trust so that they can achieve their aspirations. Staff genuinely share the Thames Reach ethos, and strive to operate in a people-focused manner, communicating well with those using our services and being sensitive to different life experiences.

What has it been like working for Thames Reach?

I've been working with Thames Reach a long time; I started as a support worker and gradually progressed into the area manager role, which is my third or fourth management post, so I'm fully committed to Thames Reach. One of the things that initially attracted me was its reputation, the way the work is person-centred, flexible, and focused on clients' needs. The element of establishing positive working relationships with local communities and local authorities is really important too.

As an employer, Thames Reach is generally a supportive organisation; I've always been encouraged to undertake personal and professional development. If you say you want to develop in a particular area or develop a particular skill, managers are likely to embrace that. We challenge ourselves as professionals as well as challenging others in the sector. Our advocacy for the people we work with is also hugely important. It's definitely one of our strengths as an organisation.

Jorge



Jorge originally came to the UK in 2018 to improve his English, study, and work. Unfortunately, he soon found himself street homeless, sleeping on tube trains and in parks for a year before being picked up by an outreach team.

Eventually, Jorge was referred to Thames Reach and met Stella, who manages our Southwark Works service, which helps people in the borough to access training and employment. She gave him a travelcard and a voucher for food, and then focused on developing his skills. Together, they worked on finding Jorge a job.

“(Jorge's) support worker at Southwark Works, Giovanni, has helped with his CV and finding a job.”

The team were able to find him work at the Royal Festival Hall which he enjoyed, but when his contract ended he had no money for rent, and so went back to his home country of Spain.

When Jorge decided to return to London in February 2020 to pursue a career, he remembered the support he'd received from Stella and the Southwark Works team and immediately got back in touch with them. The team were able to provide the support necessary to help Jorge prevent a repeat of his previous experience of the UK. Jorge does not have access to a computer in his flat, so his support worker at Southwark Works, Giovanni, has helped him with his CV and finding a job.

Giovanni helped Jorge to get a cleaning job, and when that contract ended, he was helped to get a job in a high street food store, where he is still working now.

Jorge is presently looking to go to university in London to study Human Resources and improve his knowledge within his current company, and is also applying to apprenticeship programmes in the meantime. He has two university offers to study his degree, and is excited to meet new people and improve his career prospects in London.



Stella

Stella Ezeh, who manages Southwark Works, explains how her service has been helping vulnerable people

What is Southwark Works?

The project is funded by Southwark council to help Southwark residents find employment. Our service users are either experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless, whilst others are in low paid employment.

How do you get referrals to your service?

We do outreach in the community and make connections with other local organisations, as well as with job centres, night shelters, libraries, and community centres. We are starting to use social media to engage with new groups, and we deliver to groups with different support needs, such as helping people with mental health issues through South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

What kind of people do you help?

Most of the people we help are usually aged between 30-60 and are predominantly male. We don't have many younger people accessing the service at present, so we're looking at how to engage better with them. We do support a large number of Spanish-speaking people from South America, who at present have no recourse to

public funds, and so will have to work for six months before being able to access benefits.

How have you been helping people?

We provide a highly personalised, tailored service, so the kind of support we offer can vary depending on the needs of the person in question. For example, a recent service user with no English skills approached us for support, so one of our team members worked closely with him using a translation app to identify his needs. He was street homeless and had no money, so we started by providing a grant from our client welfare fund along with food vouchers. Together, we helped him improve his English skills, and were able to get him into a night shelter, and also helped him to get work as a kitchen porter. We also provide in-work support over the phone and can help with certification, such as DBS checks, and with getting necessary documentation.

We don't give up on anyone, and we're lending support to help people live independently, in a job that works for them. We're still developing the project and we want to be able to give more support with housing; I want to be able to offer deposits for clients who can't afford them.



Intervention

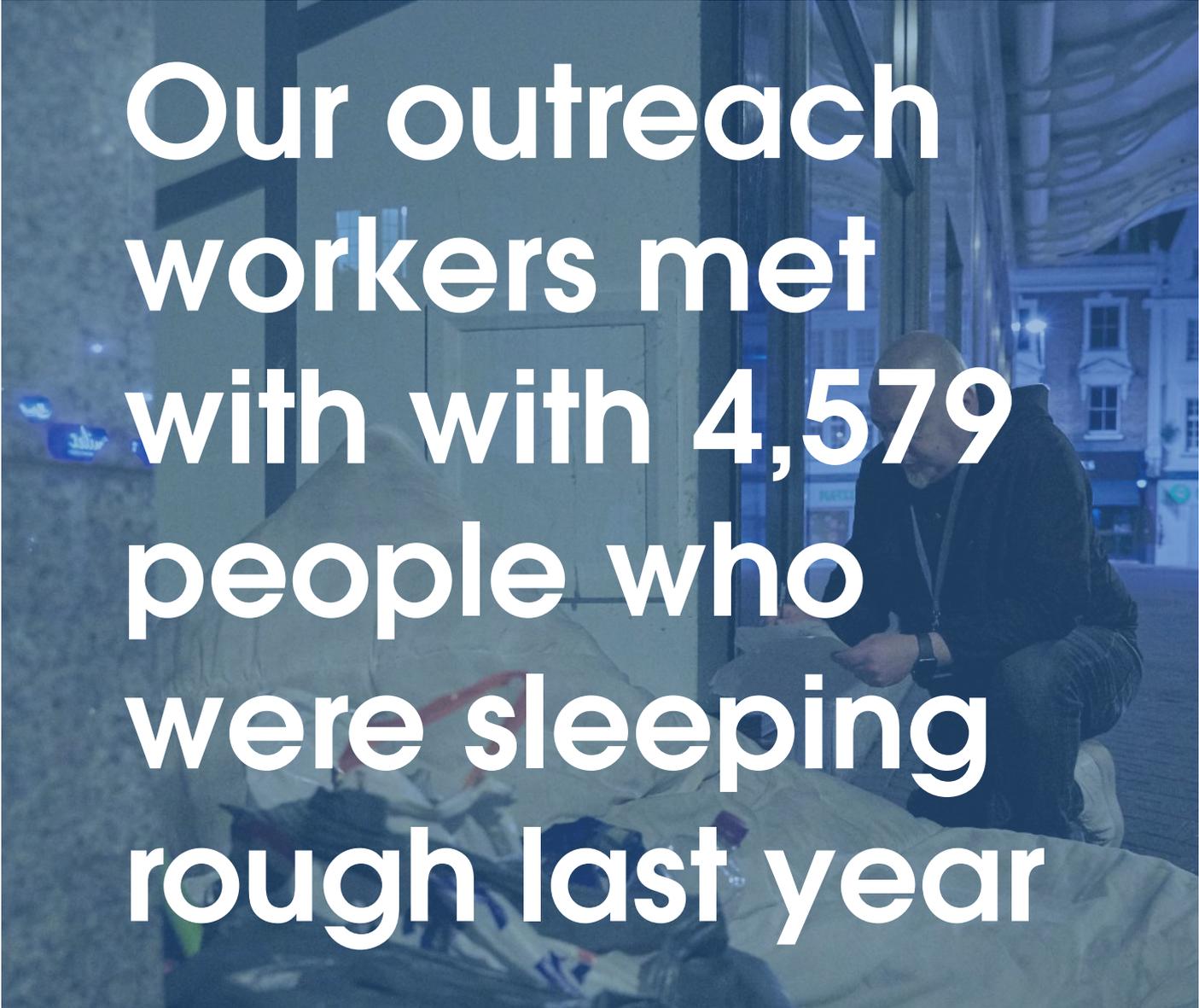
Our Intervention services get people off the streets and into safe environments where they can be given urgent, comprehensive support

We know that sleeping on the streets is harmful, and that the longer people stay there, the more difficult it can be for them to rebuild their lives. Street outreach services work to support rough sleepers to quickly move away from the street and get into accommodation, giving them the best chance to escape from sleeping rough long term.

Our outreach workers need to be able to rapidly access accommodation that people who've been sleeping rough can move in to, and then receive a more complete assessment of their needs, which is why we work with local authorities to deliver effective hostel and assessment centre services. We then agree a plan of action with them to begin addressing these support needs.

Hostels such as Robertson Street in the London Borough of Lambeth provide accommodation and specialist support for people who have previously slept rough. Robertson Street specialises in supporting people over the age of 40, as living on the street for a prolonged period of time can have a debilitating effect on people's health, especially as they get older.

The Waterloo Project is another of our hostels supporting people who have previously slept rough. The hostel provides accommodation for people with complex support needs and is part of our innovative scheme Psychology in Hostels, run in partnership with South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, which sees psychologists based full time at the site to support residents.



Our outreach workers met with with 4,579 people who were sleeping rough last year

Maureen



Maureen has been at the Waterloo Project since February, and believes that the support she has received there has changed her life. She has moved between lots of hostels in the past couple of years, often struggling to settle and move forward in her recovery, but here she feels she can get on with staff and communicate her feelings.

'I can trust the staff here. Before that I couldn't trust anyone, but the staff here do a hell of a lot for you,' she says.

Maureen's relationship with her husband broke down after he cheated on her and had children with other women. The impact of this was compounded by her bipolar disorder, and the resultant emotional difficulties meant that she felt that she was unable to be the mother she wanted to be to her children. Family life proved very difficult and eventually she received a court order saying she had to leave her home.

Finding herself street homeless as a result, Maureen slept in people's houses, in car parks, in cars, and in a 24 hour Tesco, which is where she was first picked up by an outreach team. At the Waterloo Project, though, she has found somewhere where she feels able to take steps forward in her recovery.

'I left home with two suitcases and I've come a long way from that,' she says.

'Oh trust me, she has a lot more than two suitcases now,' says staff member Estelle.

Her support worker, Haroun, says that the staff worked to build trust with Maureen when she arrived through engagement with her interests, particularly art, always making sure that she had art materials available so that she could express herself, as well as getting her a phone to allow her greater independence.

The staff also made sure that they were there to listen when Maureen's emotions were running high, and this sense of emotional trust was further enhanced by the tailored support she has received from the on-site psychologist, Winnie, who operates as part of the innovative Psychology in Hostels project, working full time with residents at the hostel to better address their needs.

Haroun and others have also helped Maureen with getting the right medication and hospital appointments, helping to educate her on her own health so that she can better self-advocate. She is also currently getting support and treatment for crack cocaine addiction at Lorraine Hewitt House in Brixton. Haroun prepares her before each session and sits in on the meetings, helping make sure that she is able to take on board the support being offered. She is also currently going through the application process to move into her own accommodation, which is only being held up due to the pandemic.

Now, Maureen is about to start our Moving In Moving On painting and decorating course, and hopes to eventually start her own painting and decorating and cleaning business, and to start seeing her children again.



Mark arrived at our Robertson Street hostel in January 2020, having struggled for a long time with alcoholism.

He had spent many years working on production of long running ITV show *The Bill* as a driver, transporting light and sound equipment, as well as working on *Eastenders* and a number of films. The job was intensive and he would often be working seven days a week. When production of the show ended in 2010, though, Mark found himself at a loss and struggled to find new work. 'When production finished on *The Bill*, that's really when I started drinking,' he says.

Whilst working on the show, Mark rarely used to drink, as he would often have to be up to start work at three or four in the morning, but after the show finished, he lost contact with a lot of people, and began to feel isolated.

Then his mother and brother both sadly passed away, and Mark began to drink heavily.

'When you're drinking the first thing you do in the morning is run to the toilet and you're heaving up but there's nothing there to come up. You can't eat, you can't drink, you can't even drink water. You get the shakes, bad nightmares, sweats, you don't look or feel good,' he says.

Since arriving at Robertson Street, Mark has received a lot of support from his key worker, Alison, who told him that getting a place of his own was possible once he'd gotten help for his drinking.

Alison has been amazed by the progress Mark has made.

'He's become so resilient,' she says. 'The difference we've seen in him from when he arrived to now is huge.'

'The people here actually care,' Mark says. 'The staff are absolutely amazing. Alison has been such a great help to me.'

Nine months into his stay at Robertson Street, Mark is doing well and is spending lots of time in the gym. Alison has helped him get the backdated Personal Independence Payments he was owed, and he has now saved up some money, which he intends to use on furnishing his new flat.

'I know if I touch the money I'll spend it on booze and lose everything,' he says. 'So instead I'm focusing hard on just saving everything for the flat.'

Mark is also hoping to get a job soon, and to save up further for a car and a holiday. 'Having something like this to aim for is helping me stay sober.'

Andrew



Andrew has been a resident at Robertson Street for two years. Before he moved into the project, he was living on the streets in the Camberwell area, and sometimes slept on people's sofas.

He was eventually helped off the streets by a church in Victoria, where he still volunteers every Saturday morning doing outreach work, as well as helping with online church services during the pandemic.

From the church, he found his way to Robertson Street and now spends much of his time working in the garden, where he has recently grown snapdragons and tomato plants. He also volunteers every Wednesday as a gardener at a local park.

Andrew has recently undertaken assessments to find some suitable supported housing, and now both he and staff are confident that he will be moving into his own place soon.



Recovery

Our Recovery services help people who have previously been homeless to move forward with their lives and build better futures for themselves

We know that the journey away from homelessness is about more than finding a home. We make sure that the people we're helping get the support they need to address the issues that have led to their becoming homeless. We work to help them maximise their independence, improve their physical and mental health, build supportive relationships, access training, and develop the experience needed to find long term, sustainable work.

We work with commissioners and landlords to make sure that those accessing our services are able to find good quality housing. We then provide tailored, personalised support to make sure people sustain their tenancies, and continue to

get the necessary support in order to better move forward with their lives.

Our recovery services include the TST Social Inclusion Project, which helps people moving away from homelessness, and who may struggle to participate in social activities and interactions, to build their confidence, forge new connections, and escape feelings of isolation.

Another way in which we help people recover from homelessness is through access to training, volunteering, and employment opportunities, often via our Employment and Skills team, equipping people with the skills and experience they need to live more independently.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a teal long-sleeved top, is sitting on a green cushioned chair. She is looking out of a large window to her left, with her hand resting on her chin in a thoughtful pose. The background outside the window shows green foliage and a building.

**Our Recovery
services helped
1,669 people to
move away from
homelessness
last year**

David



David has been working with support worker Lorraine for the past year as part of the Social Inclusion Project. David doesn't much like to leave the house and for much of his life has struggled with feelings of isolation, and has issues connecting with, and trusting, the right people.

David moved into his current place having previously lived in a flat in New Cross. He befriended some people who would often come round and take advantage of him, regularly breaking in and stealing from him. Seriously struggling with this situation, and having difficulty with looking after himself, David ended up in hospital with pneumonia and septic shock, where he was in intensive care for 35 days. Whilst in hospital, these people even came to the ward to steal his belongings.

David calls himself a bad judge of character, although he trusts Lorraine. 'I mistrust people and I don't really go out anymore. I do when Lorraine comes. I like Lorraine, she helps me a lot.'

'Regular and consistent visits with David has helped us build a trusting relationship,' says Lorraine. 'We can discuss his life, past and present, what holds him back, and how to move forward, as well as more general conversations.'

He and Lorraine often go out to a café to have a coffee or to the park when the weather is good. He says that her visits help him get out and feel more like a 'normal person.'

He spent much of his childhood in care homes and other institutions, as he didn't get on with his mum. As a young adult, he spent a lot of time in and out of prison due to drugs. Through his adult life he has moved around a lot and never really settled anywhere. 'I don't regret it, it's only life,' he says. 'I'm just trying to do a bit better now. I'm in touch with my daughter and my grandkids. I'm hopefully going to go up to Ipswich to see my daughter at the end of the month.'

His other daughter and grandson are now just down the road in Sydenham and he's seeing them too. 'It's all looking good, I'm just trying to get things a bit more normal.'

David is also now looking forward to moving into a more supportive environment, and paperwork has been submitted allowing him to move on into supported housing from the temporary accommodation he is currently staying in.

'I tend to trust the wrong people. They see that you're vulnerable and they take liberties. I'm just trying to ignore them and keeping myself to myself. I trust Lorraine.'

'I'm hopeful that this move will help David to continue recovering his physical health and developing social connections,' says Lorraine. 'We're looking at him joining some groups and activities within the community and at the supported accommodation, and from there he'll hopefully move on to independent living when he is ready.'

Lorraine



TST Social Inclusion Project worker Lorraine Lysons talks about her project

How does the Social Inclusion Project work?

We are funded by the Big Lottery and designed to work with people engaged with our TST service, who get referred to me if they are socially isolated and would like to address this. We work to help people feel less isolated so they can start to recover from their former situation and move forward with their lives; we build their self-esteem, get them involved with their communities, and help them build support networks.

The whole aim of TST is to provide people with two years of support when in their accommodation after experiencing homelessness; we are helping them live independently and move forward. Our work helps vulnerable people live happier and more fulfilling lives.

What might the support on offer look like on a practical level?

It will look different for each person; for example people who have moved to a new area will want help integrating into the community; if someone is recovering from substance use we will help them build a new way of life. People may struggle with confidence for a range of reasons, often including low self-esteem, or poor mental or physical health. Initially, we might help them with getting outside, maybe for a walk or a coffee, or visiting local attractions, then eventually some people will want to get into volunteering or training. Referring to other services is a big part of it too, such as peer support and befriending. We have also helped people get in contact with lost friends or family.

How long has the project been running and what changes have you seen?

We've been going for just over a year now, and it has ended up looking quite different to what I had originally expected. I work alongside each individual's TST support worker to make sure we're providing the best service, in a person-centred way. I myself visit each individual once a week.

How do you work with volunteers?

We have a small team of volunteers, who are committed to one full day a week; we provide lots of training and shadowing, and each volunteer has a small number of individuals they support. Our volunteers want to work with vulnerable people integrating into communities. One of our volunteers was lacking in confidence after having a child; after volunteering she went on to get a job in a care home and is now training to be a nurse. Another member of the team is doing it as part of a placement for her social care course.

What's your greatest success story since the project began?

I think our greatest achievement is setting up a counselling service through EVOLVE Housing for people to access free of charge. EVOLVE initially provided the service as a pilot whilst we provided the physical space. The partnership has been very successful and between the two organisations we have agreed to continue this at a very low cost. We will soon be able to offer counselling to other people using our TST services too.



Ann

In 2011, Ann split from her partner, which led to a string of insecure and precarious living situations, as she regularly moved between friends and family. When her friend had to have their flat refurbished, Ann was forced to leave. Finding herself without anywhere to go, she ended up homeless on the street.

Ann slept rough for almost three months, much of it in a tent, before she was found by an outreach worker. She was then placed in the hostel that she had originally applied to before becoming street homeless. Since then, she has been able to rebuild her life, and eventually moved into her own flat. She then began seeing a worker from our Tenancy Sustainment Team, who suggested volunteering with us.

'I remember my interview with Michael from the Employment and Skills team,' she says. 'We talked about the volunteering opportunities he had. I told him you will definitely see me soon.'

Ann has now been volunteering with the Employment and Skills team at our Employment Academy community resource centre for over a year, supporting people who are unemployed.

'I enjoy the work. I really want to help people. I've been homeless and so I want to give something back and say thank you for the support I've had.'

She would now like to go into peer support work and help people currently using homeless services more directly. She is also currently making use of Step Up, one of our Employment and Skills services, which helps people improve their career prospects and gain access to better paying jobs. She has also participated in the Work Ready Programme, a week long course run in partnership with McKinsey & Company aimed at improving people's chances of finding work. Ann is interested in enrolling on Thames Reach's traineeship scheme next year, and has been studying for a Level 2 qualification in business administration.

When she isn't studying or volunteering, Ann loves anything to do with art. For two and a half years she took part in an art group for wellbeing, which inspired her to study for a BTEC Level 2 in art and design. She is also passionate about poetry and has taken classes in writing poems. Last year, she displayed her artwork at an exhibition called 'Home and Belonging', co-run by University of the Arts London.



Partnerships

We've been fortunate to have worked with some fantastic corporate partners this year. Organisations which aspire to do more than just tick a corporate social responsibility box, who believe they can genuinely contribute to the wellbeing of people marginalised and excluded from society, and whose amazing staff give up their free time to help out or raise money.

Some partners have donated significant sums to enable us to deliver vital services to vulnerable people, services we wouldn't have been able to provide without this support. The Berkeley Group, Willmott Dixon, Dexters, The Can Factory, The Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, and Barclays have all contributed to help us deliver services like our Information, Advice and Guidance service; Moving In, Moving On painting and decorating course; and the Basic Skills Programme, including our iReach computer literacy course. Thanks, too, to McKinsey & Company, who continue to drive forward our groundbreaking Work Ready Programme.

However, a corporate-charity partnership can do so much more than just raise money. Sharing

expertise and resources allows us to progress projects and services without having to pay high market rates, saving both money and time. Staff time and ingenuity allows us to offer a different perspective to our training courses — a CV writing course led by a specialist from the corporate sector creates a different relationship between the trainer and the trainee, building self-worth and confidence amongst those using our services. A great example of these gifts in kind is the work done earlier this year by the Good Eating Company, who, realising they might have to dispose of thousands of pounds worth of frozen ingredients when lockdown started, cooked up around 2,000 meals that were then distributed to vulnerable people isolated in the community.

A big thank you to all of our amazing partners, we couldn't have done all that we have in the past year without you.

We would also like to thank all the companies and individuals who took part in the World's Big Sleep Out in December, which raised a significant amount of money and also highlighted the issue of street homelessness on a global scale.

Thank you to the following partners:

Willmott Dixon

Berkeley Group

Barclays

The Cornerstone Church

PIMCO

The Can Factory

Amazon

Dexters

Ecovis

Rosling King

F45 Gym

McKinsey & Company

Anglestar T/A Hunza

MGA

Intertek

PCC Church

Sunley Holdings

Governance and finances

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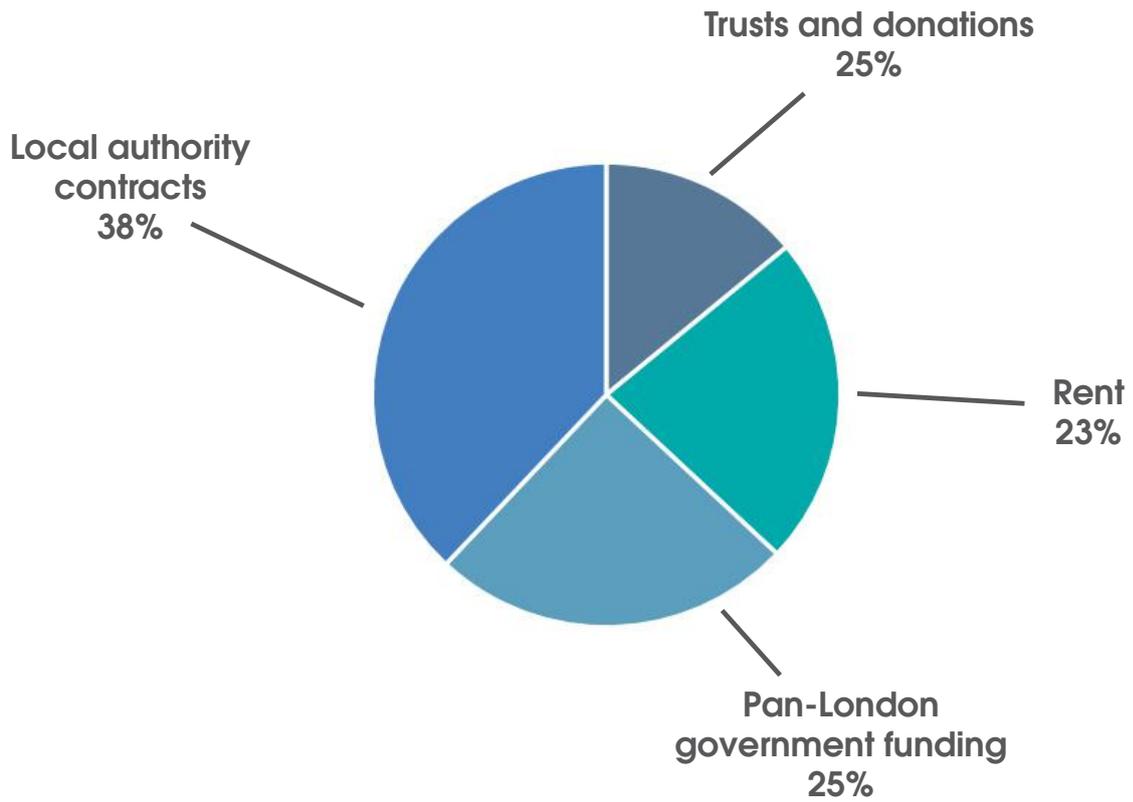
Olukemi Jeboda (Joined Sept 2020)

Louise Wilson (Joined Sept 2020)

Simon Rawson (Joined Sept 2020)

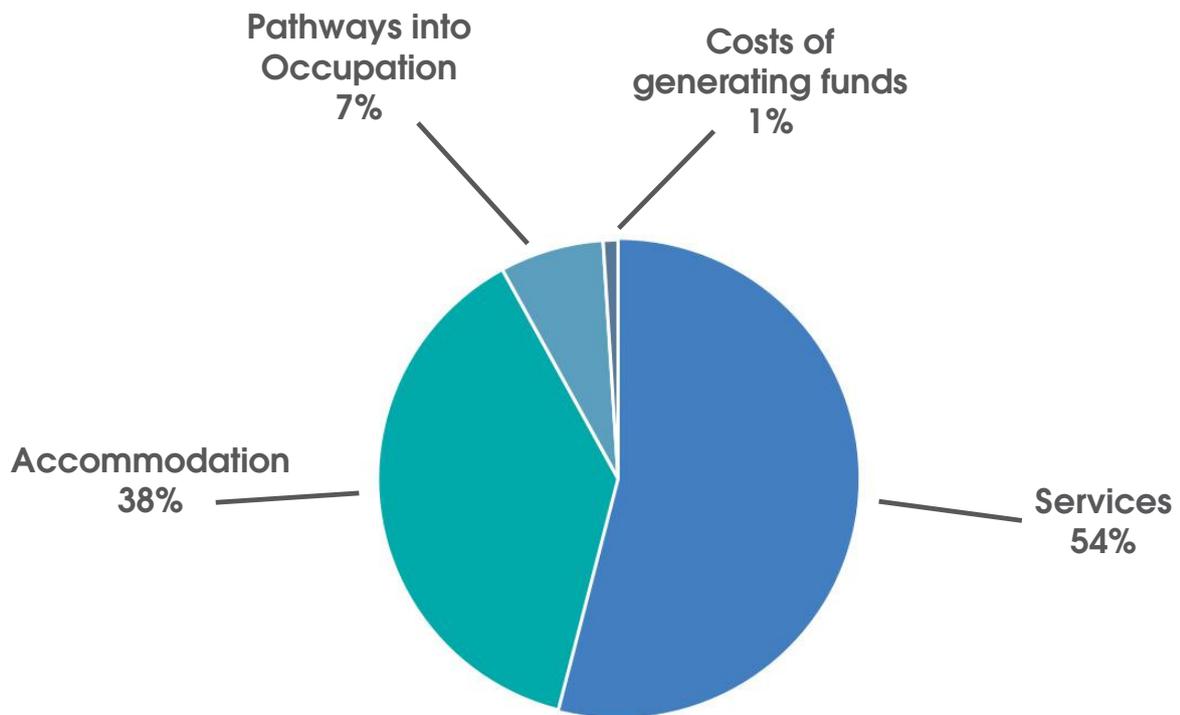
Income 2019-20:

£19,034,760



Expenditure 2019-20:

£18,081,693



**Thames
Reach**