

Life improvements

As part of our programme of ongoing support, the 'Moving In, Moving On' scheme trains former homeless people to improve the homes of the recently re-housed – raising confidence levels and teaching job skills. **Thames Reach Bondway** – Ending street homelessness.



Thames Reach Bondway is a charity dedicated to ending street homelessness. We recognise that for formerly homeless people, reclaiming a place in society can be difficult, and we are keen to help them as they strive to leave homelessness behind, increase their confidence and make a contribution to the community.

We know that to end street homelessness we need to do much more than provide accommodation. That's why this edition of Reach Out focuses on the ongoing support offered by Thames Reach Bondway to people who have experienced homelessness.

It features articles on an innovative decorating project and other schemes which help people develop their skills and sense of worth.

If you want to help homeless people, we also have a client support fund which ensures that every pound you donate goes directly to meeting their needs. Please respond using the enclosed form.

Thames Reach Bondway is committed to helping homeless people rebuild their lives. This means not only helping them off the streets and into accommodation, but also providing them with the skills, confidence and motivation to stay there.

As part of the charity's programme of ongoing support, the innovative Moving In Moving On (MIMO) project trains formerly homeless people to renovate and decorate the homes of the recently rehoused.

Andrew Barker, project worker at MIMO, explained: "The project provides a major confidence boost and a chance to gain vital job skills for the scheme's participants and helps other former rough sleepers settle into their new flats."

Can re-decorating really change your life?

Millions of DIY fans up and down the country know that a lick of paint can transform a room. At Thames Reach Bondway, some of our service users are finding that painting and decorating can do much more than that. These skills could ensure that they and other formerly homeless people leave the streets behind for good.



Charles St Leger, a service user of the MIMO project, said: "I'd done a bit of decorating before but now I know about some of the more complicated techniques. Now I have some skills that I can use for the rest of my life. One of the best things though was making people feel happy when they saw the results of our work in their flats. We made those flats look really homely."

Andrew Barker believes the scheme has had an enormous impact on the lives of individual homeless people: "This project is much more than just teaching practical skills. We spend much of our time advising and encouraging people in order to build up their self-esteem and move towards a more independent lifestyle. Some of the scheme's participants live in hostels and MIMO provides a structured routine away from an environment of heavy drinking and listlessness."

He added: "For those whose flats are decorated, this scheme is an essential homemaking service. Not only do people who have just left a street lifestyle behind face issues about learning how to cook, budget, furnish and decorate, but many of the clients also feel isolated and unsettled. MIMO is important because it makes the flats of the formerly homeless feel like 'home'. This means that not only does the tenant want to invite people round but also happily spends time there alone."

Anybody wishing to help fund the project should contact Liz Duff on 020 7702 5654 or e-mail lizduff@trb.info

Down on the farm? A project building self-esteem

For the past decade, a unique link between Thames Reach Bondway and an organic farm in Sussex has helped hundreds of London's homeless men and women.

Boathouse Farm near Lewes has played host since 1994 to hundreds of the capital's former rough sleepers, who have travelled out in small groups twice a week to this idyllic rural retreat.

The Farm Project involves the scheme's participants in planting seeds, harvesting crops and even sheep shearing. In the process it helps people transform their lives.

Many of the participants have a long history of alcohol abuse, yet commit themselves to staying sober during their visits.

Bill Tidnam, manager of Community Support Services at Thames Reach Bondway, explained: "It's important for hostel residents or people who have only recently moved into their own flats after a life on the streets to get away from the capital, where many find it difficult to fill their time and to avoid the easy option of heavy drinking."

He added: "There is a small payment to the people on the scheme, but more importantly the project gives people who had been isolated and lonely the chance to be part of a community, and through this to develop their self-esteem and confidence and get a sense of achievement from their work."

The 1,200 acre farm is run by Martin Tebbutt and his family. They were joined six years ago by Pat Stewart, a regular volunteer on the Farm Project, who was invited to take up residence on the farm.

He said: "I spent eight years on the streets before I got involved in this Farm Project. Now I can say that it has turned my life around. Without this help I'm certain that I would be back on the streets."

Two new pilot schemes have now been set up to help homeless people get involved with conservation and gardening during the winter months, when weather conditions make work on the farm unproductive.

Thames Reach Bondway is now working with the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers and Putting Down Roots at a number of sites around London.

BELOW Personal growth at Boathouse Farm



The great and the good at Graham House Hostel wins over hearts and minds

Recent months have seen the residents and staff of Thames Reach Bondway's Graham House hostel winning over the hearts and minds of the public by highlighting many of the prejudices homeless people face.

In late November, Prince Charles visited the hostel in Vauxhall to meet a group of formerly homeless people who had been in the navy, army or airforce.

The visit gave the hostel's residents a chance to talk to the Prince of Wales about their experiences, problems and aspirations in a frank debate chaired by Thames Reach Bondway Chief Executive Jeremy Swain.

Prince Charles exchanged anecdotes with the ex-servicemen about their time in the armed forces and listened to their stories about how they had ended up on the streets.

BELOW Prince Charles meets residents of the hostel

Ted Miles, a Graham House resident who had served in the Royal Engineers, said: "I've never met a person like him and I shook his hand. I must be the proudest man on earth. He's done everything military-wise, but he was natural and genuine with us."

Staff and other residents also got a chance to meet the Prince in a walkabout after the debate.

The visit was organised in conjunction with Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH), an organisation set up to change the perceptions that companies have about homelessness and to enlist their help to assist homeless people into work.

Graham House staff also teamed up with BAOH in early December to host a visit by senior business leaders to the hostel.

The guests met up with staff and residents and heard for themselves how anybody, if circumstances conspire against them, can become homeless.

I'm Alright Jack

Thames Reach Bondway took the unusual step of allowing a film crew to spend a week with the organisation to follow the progress of a volunteer as he experienced life working at different Thames Reach Bondway projects. This was a volunteer with a difference. Andrew works in the city, earns



Changing rooms

Two formerly homeless people now living in their own flats received an early Christmas present from the training company John Matchett Limited when the firm arranged for a team of 20 staff to respond to a 'Changing Rooms' challenge.

On a frosty winter morning, with a budget of £1,000 for each property, the staff busied themselves with transforming two South London flats.

Each tenant was required to leave their flat for the day. They were anxious and nervous of a possible team of Llewellyn Bowns taking over, whose flamboyant inclinations might not quite match their own tastes. But both were happily overwhelmed by the transformation.

Elsewhere, KPMG, a leading provider of professional services, which include audit, tax, financial and risk advisory, branched off into a new field when 15 staff donned overalls for two days to repaint the charity's central office courtyard and boardroom.

Finally, thank you to everybody who supported Thames Reach Bondway's December fundraising appeal. Over £7,000 was raised to help our clients, many of whom who had only recently left the streets behind and have often lost contact with family and friends, have a Christmas to remember.

Absolutely fabulous VIPs open homelessness projects

Joanna Lumley

The renowned actress pledged an absolutely fabulous £30,000 towards a new resource centre for formerly homeless people in South London.

The co-star of one of the public's favourite sitcoms met up with staff and users of the Hudson House centre in Lambeth earlier this year to open the project. She praised the centre for its work with the formerly homeless and made her commitment to help fund it over the next year. "It feels like a home from home and has a lovely family feel to it. I'm so pleased to help this project go from strength to strength."

Joanna's special contribution is to ensure that the centre can open over the weekend in the New Year. She was very affected by service user Irene Littler who explained to Joanna that her weekends are dismal because the centre, with which she is heavily involved, only opens during the week.

Irene Littler spoke about how important Hudson House had already been to her: "Hudson House has been brilliant for me. Seven years ago I was sleeping rough around London. I used to be so shy but now look at me. I completed the centre's Peer Education programme and now I'm at college as well as getting involved in charity work myself. I'm living proof of the value of places like this."

Hudson House offers a place where vulnerable former homeless people, who may be living in a hostel or who have moved on into a flat of their own, can get support from Thames Reach Bondway staff, find companionship with others sharing similar experiences, and take part in training and education.

Also based at the centre is the award-winning Safe as Houses Peer Education Programme, which involves former rough sleepers developing and presenting workshops to other ex-homeless people to help them settle into their new homes.

Other services include a weekly café held once a week where formerly homeless people can meet, a comfortable training area known as the 'buzz room' where people can learn and develop new IT skills and a self-help group called Huge Move which arranges workshops and social activities.

The centre is owned by the London Housing Foundation which financed the building works and provided rent-free accommodation for the first year.

LEFT Joanna Lumley with service users of the Hudson House resource centre

Stephen Twigg MP

In October, the Minister for Schools opened a new housing project in Lambeth, hailing it as "something the Government should reproduce nationwide."

Managed by Thames Reach Bondway and owned by the Metropolitan Housing Trust (MHT), the Clapham Road Supported Housing project provides accommodation for vulnerable men and women with poor mental health and experience of sleeping rough.

Residents at the project receive support from Thames Reach Bondway staff who help them to maintain their tenancies, develop and maintain their social and life skills, and build up their self-esteem and confidence.

The £1.4m scheme consists of 11 self-contained flats which were converted from two four-bed Victorian houses.

Jeremy Swain, Thames Reach Bondway Chief Executive, said: "Many of the residents of Clapham Road have experienced sleeping on the street and we are delighted to provide them with permanent homes which we can all be proud of. Funding for this type of project is getting increasingly difficult to secure and without the support of all our partners, including Lambeth Council, it would have failed."

