

# St Mungo's frontline

CHRISTMAS 2010



## Reaching out to rough sleepers this winter

- Do homeless people count?
- Public spending cuts: what do they mean?
- Reuniting families this Christmas

# Welcome



Typically it is during the cold winter months that the reality of homelessness is brought to the forefront of most people's minds.

As we approach the coldest time of the year we know that our services for homeless people will become more vital than ever. Our outreach teams will be working tirelessly to help more vulnerable people off the streets into safe accommodation.

But with cuts in public spending, there is serious concern that services for homeless people will be greatly affected or reduced, whilst the number of homeless people continues to rise. There were 3,673 people seen sleeping rough on the streets of London in 09/10 – up 6% on the year before.

At this time, your support is needed more than ever. **Thank you so much for helping us make a difference.**

Best wishes for the festive season!

Tanya English  
Executive Director  
Fundraising & Communications

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# Frontline news

## Do homeless people count?

The Government has announced changes to the way rough sleepers are to be counted. The Housing Minister, Grant Shapps said that **“For too long a supposedly national figure of rough sleepers hasn’t reflected the reality on our streets.”**

Until now, only councils with designated rough sleeping ‘hotspots’ had to conduct counts. But with the changes, all councils in England will have to provide information on rough sleepers.

St Mungo’s welcomes the new Government’s wish to build a more accurate picture of rough sleeping in the UK. To date counts have underestimated the number of people sleeping on our streets.

However, the Government is allowing councils to decide *how* they supply their information and will accept estimates rather than formal counts. We strongly believe that this will undermine the credibility of the count system, and could leave the Government open to charges of massaging the figures, particularly with their target of ending rough sleeping by 2012.

Mike McCall is St Mungo’s Executive Director of Operations, and says **“We’re concerned that carrying out a count is becoming optional, even in areas with suspected high numbers of rough sleepers.”**

**Nevertheless, the real issue for our outreach workers has never been counting, but rather the people we help and providing them with routes off the streets into housing, healthcare and work. Cuts, not counts, are the priority concern.”**

## Well done to our apprentices!

This October, 17 people successfully graduated from our Apprenticeship Scheme. We are delighted that seven have already gone on to permanent Project Worker positions and two have taken up short term contracts with St Mungo’s; one person has a job with another homelessness charity; two are going on to further education and several people have been taken onto our locum register. Our congratulations go out to everyone that took part.

And at the time of writing, we had 17 new people about to embark on their journey as an apprentice. We wish them every success for the year ahead and beyond.

## Emergency shelter

With last winter bringing the coldest weather in 30 years, we are now busy preparing our emergency shelters to ensure that we can bring more homeless men and women off the streets into safe and warm accommodation this winter.

Last year, we had to open our severe weather emergency provision a record four times, helping 182 homeless men and women in the process.

*Marie has just completed our Apprenticeship Scheme, read her story on page 12.*

## Congratulations to our trainee chefs!

Congratulations to our four trainee chefs who successfully completed the 'Can Cook, Will Cook' ten week training course, run by our catering partners, Caterplus. For their final challenge, they prepared a Greek themed banquet for 25 people, which was followed by a graduation ceremony where they were presented with certificates.

The trainees now have the opportunity to be selected for an advanced training programme leading to a paid apprenticeship with Caterplus. Trainee chef Alan, who has been living at St Mungo's hostel in Covent Garden for the past year said:

■ **"I have thoroughly enjoyed it – learning basic preparation skills, food hygiene and all about different foods. I'd love to do this in the future."**



Alan, Caterplus trainee

## St Mungo's at the Labour and Conservative party conferences

St Mungo's hosted fringe events with various partners at both Labour and Conservative Party conferences recently. With the proposed changes from the Coalition Government to the NHS and the forthcoming welfare reform, we felt it very important to raise political awareness of the social and financial benefits of addressing the health needs of homeless people and providing appropriate back to work support. We had two productive events with Grant Shapps, Housing

Minister and convenor of the Homelessness Working Group - a group made up of Ministers across eight government departments. We also met with Department of Work and Pensions Minister, Maria Miller and Shadow DWP Minister, Lord McKenzie. They all recognised the difficulties faced by homeless people and we will be following up with their departments back in London over the coming months.



## Written on the streets

St Mungo's residents joined together recently at our Endell Street recording studios to write, record and produce their own original track, 'Written on the Streets'. The song was written in just two days and features the voices of more than 20 people, drawing inspiration from their own personal experiences.

Music Production Trainer Matt Catlow said: *"We're very fortunate to have a recording studio in the hostel at Endell Street. It's one way we can connect with the residents and use music both as therapy and a way back into employment."* You can download 'Written on the Streets' for free at [www.mungos.org/WrittenOnTheStreets](http://www.mungos.org/WrittenOnTheStreets)

Keep up to date with the latest news from St Mungo's at [www.mungos.org/news](http://www.mungos.org/news)





# Spending cuts: what does it mean for the homeless?

When the coalition Government came into power earlier this year David Cameron underlined his party's commitment to the most vulnerable people in society.

He made it clear that there would be tough choices ahead but he also confirmed that necessary spending cuts shouldn't mean hardship for the most in need.

And, following the Government's spending review on the 20 October, there was some positive news. For example, increased investment in social care and joint working between health and local authorities. There will also be a £250 million investment in adult apprenticeships and a commitment to protect Adult Community Learning. And the Government reaffirmed its commitment to deliver back to work support to those furthest from the labour market.

But, despite the positives, funding for housing, homeless services and benefits have all seen heavy cuts. Local authorities, who are responsible for many homeless services, are to have their budgets cut by 28% over the next four years. Early estimates suggest housing services will actually be cut by 60%.

On top of this, 'Supporting People',

the Government's programme for providing housing-related support to vulnerable people, will see an estimated 11.5% cut in funding. And housing benefit will be cut further beyond commitments made back in June's emergency budget.

## Real concern

There is real concern in the homelessness sector about the effects these cuts will have on services and the thousands of people who depend on them. Local authorities are already cutting back on services not deemed as essential. Here at St Mungo's we are feeling the effects, with funding already reduced for some projects. In fact, we have just heard that our largest hostel, Cedars Road in Clapham, which houses 116 people, is at risk of closure.

The National Housing Federation has said that almost 438,000 vulnerable people could be affected by spending cuts that would lead to the closure of hostels and specialist support projects, a reduction in outreach services

helping people off the streets, the loss of home-based support for people at serious risk of homelessness and the closure of programmes helping people overcome alcohol and drug dependencies and mental health issues.

## Cost benefits

However, it has been proven that tackling homelessness actually saves the taxpayer money.

■ **Almost 438,000 vulnerable people could be affected by spending cuts.**

The Government's own 2009 CLG report calculated that the Supporting People programme has a net financial benefit of £3.41 billion against an overall investment of £1.61 billion.

Supporting people off the streets, helping them overcome health issues and providing dedicated skills and employment training to get them back into work is at the core of

St Mungo's work. Our research shows that getting just one of our clients back into stable work can save the state £45,000 a year.

Cuts in public spending may have short term cost benefits, but the long term effects will cost the Government, and therefore taxpayers, much more.

## Housing Benefit

In addition to public spending cuts, the Coalition Government has also promised to reform the welfare system. This includes housing benefit, which is facing £1.8 billion in cuts. St Mungo's, along with other organisations including Shelter and Crisis, has criticised the proposed changes to housing benefit.

With our commitment to helping people in their journey towards employment, we are particularly concerned with the

proposed cuts affecting those on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). The Government has proposed a 10% cut in housing benefit for those who have been on JSA for more than a year. But, with everyone still feeling the effects of the recession and unemployment still rising, this move could prove disastrous for homeless people, with evictions from temporary accommodation likely to rise.

Over a quarter of our clients are on JSA, half of whom have a mental health condition and nearly a quarter have a serious medical condition.

A majority of our clients have also been out of work for more than five years. Many face a long and difficult journey back to employment. It isn't just job training that they need, but support in other areas of their life, including housing, health and substance use.

Whilst we agree with the

Government's commitment to changing the welfare system to encourage more people back into work, it is vital that homeless people are given the time and support they need to make this possible. At St Mungo's we believe that homeless people shouldn't be written off; despite the challenges they face in life, with the right support people can and do recover from homelessness.

Charles Fraser, Chief Executive of St Mungo's; ***"Sanctions will never be enough to end long term unemployment. We must balance sanctions with support."***

***"These cuts are going to hurt. Our worry is that, as spending decisions are made by central and local government over the coming months, the people they end up hurting might well be the most vulnerable."***



### Frank's story

**Frank is in his 70s but he spent most of last year sleeping on the streets of Westminster.**

Originally from Liverpool, Frank joined the Welsh Guards at 18 and spent a couple of years in the army before starting a series of jobs in warehouses, farms and factories.

He slept out on the streets at that time of his life as well, and met his wife five years ago at a day centre near Trafalgar Square. They married

he moved to London. He stayed in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation before bedding down on the streets once again.

During this time, Frank was in regular contact with St Mungo's outreach workers.

***"I was mostly on my own those days. I did a lot of walking, down by the river. I like being out in open spaces."***

He was reluctant to go into hostel accommodation, he didn't feel

four years ago and moved to Brighton as both wanted to live near the sea.

Sadly, just over a year ago, Frank's wife passed away. His life fell apart, and unable to cope on his own in their home,

comfortable with the mix of people who might be living there, especially if some were tackling drugs and alcohol problems.

In May this year, Frank was offered a place in The Lodge, an innovative joint project between St Mungo's and the City of London Corporation. Based on the idea of a B&B, its aim is to support people like Frank, for whom a hostel might not necessarily be the best option.

He says it's 'like paradise'. ***"I can get on with my own life but then come back here and it's quiet in my room. You can't hear a sound at night. What I want is my own place again eventually but for now, this really suits me."***

With cuts in public spending, many homeless projects will be at risk meaning people like Frank will find it much harder to escape life on the streets.

# Reaching out to rough sleepers this Christmas

Gareth Davies, editor



Steve Watson, manager of Ealing Outreach team meeting a rough sleeper

With temperatures again expected to plummet this winter, reaching out to help those living on the streets has never been more crucial. St Mungo's Street Population Outreach Teams (SPOT) work tirelessly all year to find and house the men and women who simply have nowhere else to go and are forced to sleep rough.

**We live in difficult times, and the recession has already taken its toll: 3,673 people were seen on the streets of London alone in 2009/10 – up 6% on the year before. Nearly two thirds of these people were seen sleeping rough for the first time.**

With the Government cuts in housing benefit and public spending, things are set to get even tougher for hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people across the UK. So with all this in mind, I recently joined St Mungo's Ealing Outreach Team on one of their early morning shifts to see the reality.

## Early start

I met Jen and Alex shortly after 6am at Ealing Broadway. They are part of a four person team that covers the entire London Borough of Ealing.

Ealing is not normally a borough that you would associate with rough sleeping; traditionally, homelessness is seen as an inner London problem. But the reality is that it affects all areas of London, and indeed, beyond.

Alex and Jen go out to search for people seen sleeping rough.

Referrals can come from anywhere or anyone; concerned members of the public, support workers (from alcohol, drug or mental health services) or public services such as hospitals. When someone is referred to the team, Alex and Jen need to check that the person is sleeping rough, so they go out to find them.

## Hard to find

But it's not always that easy, as we found with the first referral that morning. The Acton Park warden had notified the team about a man in his

50s sleeping near the park's bowling green. Unfortunately when we arrived he was not to be found. Jen explained that this wasn't uncommon:

*“It can be really hard to find people sometimes; they can sleep in unthinkable places. On one occasion we couldn't find the person but when we called their name a head popped out from one of those big metal bins.”*

The team will continue looking for people so that if they are there, they will find them. However, out of 39 referrals from April to June, they were able to verify just 11. To protect themselves from the weather and the dangers of living on the street, people can make themselves very hard to find.

## Finding accommodation

So we moved onto the next referral, and this time we had more luck. A project worker from a nearby drug support service had notified the team about David. We found him at the bottom of a disused garden, using a derelict shed for what little cover he could get. He told us that he had been evicted from a private landlord two weeks earlier because of rent arrears.

■ **“On one occasion we couldn't find the person but when we called their name a head popped out from one of those big metal bins”**

Jen sat down with David and talked through his situation. She explained what would happen next and arranged to contact him in the next couple of days.

When the team finds someone sleeping rough they register them onto a

database, called CHAIN, used by all homelessness services in London and the hunt for suitable accommodation begins.

The first option is often an emergency shelter, such as St Mungo's Rushworth Street shelter in Southwark. There are other hostels in and around Ealing into which the team can refer people, although there aren't always enough beds available.

## Ongoing support

Michael is one of the team's biggest success stories in the last five years. They had known him for many years. He had lived in a guest house not too far away but when the owners sold up he had nowhere to go. He ended up on the streets and actually slept outside a doctor's surgery next door to the guest house. The team found Michael but he didn't want help, not even last winter, the coldest for 30 years.

*“I didn't want to depend on anyone. I didn't want to be a burden.”*

The team kept in regular contact with Michael however. Earlier this year he had a fall and ended up in hospital. Jen went to see him and again offered to help. This time he accepted, **“going into hospital changed my mind.”**

Six weeks ago Michael moved into his own flat with the support of Jen and the rest of the team, and they are still helping him settle into his new place. Ongoing support like this helps to ensure people can maintain their tenancy in the long term. In fact, nearly 90% of those who receive support when they first move into their own place are still there a year later.

## More than outreach

As well as Alex and Jen, the Ealing team includes Steve, the project manager, and Mohammed, who works with street drinkers and people with substance use issues. Together, they worked with 186 people in total last year.

As well as the outreach work, the team also runs a drop-in advice surgery twice a week, which means they can meet up with rough sleepers. A recent survey commissioned by Communities and Local Government (CLG) found that homeless people in Ealing had a positive view of the outreach work carried out by Steve and his team. It also identified a need for more alcohol and drugs support in the borough.

■ **“Six weeks ago Michael moved into his own flat with the support of Jen and the rest of the team”**

In response, the team started a monthly harm-minimisation session for rough sleepers and those living in local hostels, aimed at providing the support and advice people need to cut down their use and access detox and rehab. Although it's still early days, feedback for the session has so far been very positive.

## Not just statistics

It can be easy to get caught up in numbers and statistics when it comes to rough sleeping, and forget that real people, like David and Michael are at the heart of outreach work. Steve told me **“The focus of the Ealing Outreach team is to deliver measurable results. What cannot be measured however is the increase in self esteem and hope of the people we work with”.**

Isolation and fear often mean that rough sleepers find it difficult to trust people. But by offering support and encouragement, and gradually building trusting relationships, the outreach team is making a real difference to the lives of vulnerable people in Ealing.

See page 4 to find out how public spending cuts could affect homeless people.

## An update on our outer London projects

As St Mungo's continues to expand out of London, we are delighted to be able to offer our support and services to more vulnerable men and women.

We currently manage street outreach, housing and employment services for rough sleepers and homeless people in Reading, Oxford and Bristol. But more recently, we have opened three new projects in Oxfordshire and Bath, which are due to be up and running in time for Christmas.

■ **Mulberry House and Mews in Bath** will house and support 13 people with severe and enduring mental health problems. We plan to recruit local volunteers to run a range of activities for residents to become involved in and also hope to develop links with City of Bath College to help us offer a social enterprise scheme

■ In **West Oxfordshire**, we are providing emergency accommodation and support with recovery to 27 homeless people, at locations in Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton

■ In **Oxford**, we are managing a ten bed residential treatment service, in partnership with substance use agency Smart CJS, for homeless and vulnerably housed people with substance use and other complex needs. We will also provide support with move on to further accommodation.

Elizabeth Harper, St Mungo's Regional Director, said: *"Traditionally St Mungo's has mainly worked in London. Now we are actively extending our expertise beyond the capital. We have an excellent track record and believe we offer a very sound and high quality model of support for homeless and vulnerable people in a variety of locations."*



We will be holding our carol concert at St Bartholomew the Great in the City on **Tuesday 7 December**. And we're delighted to be sponsored this year by Newton Investment Management Ltd. Newton manages investments for a wide range of clients, including charities, pension funds and private clients.

*"As the largest manager of segregated charity assets in the UK, we are delighted to take the opportunity to celebrate the festive season with our clients whilst supporting St Mungo's valuable work for the homeless. This time of year is especially hard for men and women on the streets and we are thrilled that we can help St Mungo's make a difference to the lives of homeless people"* says Helena Morrissey, CEO, Newton Investment Management Ltd.

As well as the customary carols, there will be a number of readings by St Mungo's residents, and also a guest appearance by Tom Rob Smith, award-winning author of best-seller *Child 44*, who will be reading a self-penned piece, written especially for this event.

We hope you can join us. It promises to be a magical evening. To buy your tickets or to find out more, please visit [www.mungos.org/carolconcert](http://www.mungos.org/carolconcert), email [events@mungos.org](mailto:events@mungos.org), or call **020 8762 5582**



# Pet Therapy

Mark and Snub

They were filmed recently for BBC 1's programme Animal 24:7, which featured the work of The Mayhew Animal Home. Both dogs received a simple health check. Animal Welfare Officer, Carly Webber from the Mayhew said: *"Most of the owners we see at hostels like St Mungo's are good owners. They take care of their dogs well."*

Radha Sanhaie, deputy manager of our Clapham hostel also champions the benefits of allowing dogs into our homes:

*"We take dogs at St Mungo's because often they are the resident's best friend and they help in their recovery. A lot of clients would not take up a hostel place if their dogs couldn't come and that would leave them unable to access many of the services available to them. Clients do have to accept our 'dog contract'. This ensures the animal is fed and walked regularly and that another resident is nominated to take care of the dog should its owner be unable to."*

Although dogs seem to be the most popular companions, St Mungo's will allow most pets into our hostels (within reason!). One resident Barry, who lives at one of our hostels in Southwark had spent a number of years sleeping rough and found it difficult to adjust when he first came into our hostel. Through talking to Barry, staff at the project found out he loves fish and managed to get some funding to buy him a fish tank. Barry now enjoys the responsibility of caring for the fish and is starting to feel more at home.

Pets provide companionship - bonding with our pets gives us feelings of loyalty and stability, and it is well known that pets can help relieve stress.

For many people sleeping rough, a dog is often their only companion. St Mungo's has long recognised the importance of this bond and we were the first charity to allow dogs into our hostels. The majority of our hostels, emergency shelters and semi-independent homes currently accept dogs.

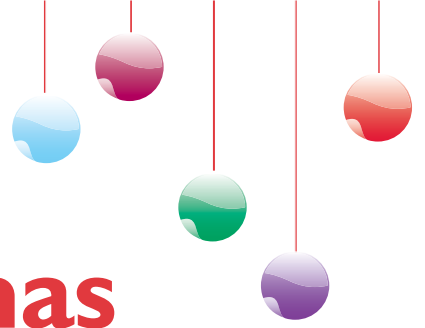
St Mungo's supports residents with their pets as we know that having a pet as a companion can help a homeless person's recovery. We work closely with the Dogs Trust, The Mayhew Animal Home and The Blue Cross to provide pet care for our residents' dogs.

Kiya, a shy alsatian bitch, and Snub, a boisterous two-year-old Rottweiler-Shikoku cross, live with their owners Harvey and Mark at St Mungo's hostel in Clapham. You may remember Harvey and Kiya from your last issue of Frontline.

■ **"I gave up places to stay because of Kiya. On the street there maybe the camaraderie but it is not the same as having your own pet. I couldn't live without her." Harvey**



Harvey and Kiya



# Bringing families together this Christmas

Christmas is a time for families. But this year, as many of us are opening presents with loved ones, the reality couldn't be more different for many homeless men and women across the country.

Relationship breakdown is a major cause of homelessness, and many of our clients may not have had the happiest of family backgrounds. At least one in ten were in care themselves - so the family support that many of us take for granted was just not there. Christmas is not necessarily a time when they can, or will be with their families.

The good news, however, is that 35% of clients have told us they do want more contact with their family. And since they have been with St Mungo's, almost a third of our residents have been reunited with someone in their family.

## Mother and child

Homeless women have told us that their single biggest need arises from their separation from or loss of children. Almost half of our female clients are mothers, and most have a history of childhood abuse and/or domestic violence.

Staff at our South London women's project are doing a lot of work to reconnect mothers with their children. Stella Wells is the manager at the project,

*“We are supporting women who have suffered loss or a traumatic separation from their children. We help reunite*

*them with their families, at a pace that is comfortable for everyone concerned.*

*We are currently supporting a mother, for example, who is moving into one of our community flats, and helping her to re-build her relationship with her teenage daughter - things are going really well. Another female resident had been sleeping rough on the streets. We supported her through the various stages of her recovery and she is now due to move into a place with her two youngest daughters.*

*Next year St Mungo's will be launching a women's strategy to allow our services to help reunite many more mothers and their children.”*

■ **“Almost half of our female clients are mothers, and most have a history of childhood abuse and/or domestic violence”**

## Young people

For young people, mistakes early on in life can have disastrous consequences that will affect the rest of their lives. One bad decision can lead to a cycle of crime and prison that can be hard to break, so early intervention is vital.

A year ago St Mungo's launched a Floating Support Project pilot at Feltham Young Offenders Institute to support young people before, during and after their release from prison. A key part of this support is helping to rebuild family relationships.

The number of young men in custody who are not in contact with any family members is surprisingly high. During the pilot year the Floating Support Worker established a weekly family surgery in the prison to provide support and advice to help reunite families.

This added level of support not only helps the young people at Feltham, but it also has a positive outcome for the rest of society. Just 23% of those who had accessed the Floating Support service have been convicted of new offences since their release, significantly lower than the national re-offending rate of 78%.

## Keeping in touch

If St Mungo's clients aren't able to see family members this Christmas there is at least one other way of keeping in touch. VoiceMail4All enables clients without a phone to receive messages on a private number. They can then listen to their messages free of charge from any payphone or landline.

Whatever a client's situation, St Mungo's is committed to bringing them closer to their families when and wherever possible this Christmas. Tanya English is Executive Director of Fundraising and Communications at St Mungo's:

*“We believe that everyone should have a decent place to live, something meaningful to do, and good relationships with other people – as well as the good health to enjoy them.”*

# In Good Company

## Why I support St Mungo's - Jack Fleming

Jack Fleming, age six, is one of St Mungo's youngest supporters

On Sunday 20 June, Jack Fleming from Wimbledon sent St Mungo's a cheque for £75 - the total raised at his sixth birthday party that day.

A couple of weeks before, Jack had met a homeless woman at Waterloo Station, an experience which stayed with him.

*"I saw the lady on the way to the train. I asked mummy why she was sitting outside and she said the lady had nowhere to go. I was really upset so we went back to give the lady some money for some food."*

Jack's mother, Nic, recalls

*"Jack cried pretty much all the way home after we explained what it meant to be homeless. We were on our way back from Euro Disney that night and it was a really good opportunity to explain how lucky he was and that there are people in the world who have no home to go to. In the morning we looked at some homelessness charity websites and Jack was really impressed by St Mungo's work, particularly during the freezing cold weather that winter."*



*Five minutes later with no prompting at all, Jack came downstairs with his Dr Who Tardis money box and emptied £15.08 on to the sofa – adamant that he send it to St Mungo's."*

*"The next week was Jack's birthday party and again, with no prompting, he asked that his friends donate money to St Mungo's instead of buying him presents. The other mums were really impressed. I can't tell you how proud I am of my son. He is a really special little boy."*

## Events

Get involved in our upcoming events...



**The Lapland Husky Trail:** March to April 2011  
**Bath Half Marathon:** 6 March 2011

For more information, visit [www.mungos.org/events](http://www.mungos.org/events) or email [events@mungos.org](mailto:events@mungos.org)

## Virtual gifts catalogue

You can give a unique gift to your loved ones this Christmas and help change a homeless person's life for the better. Visit our online Christmas Gift shop at [www.mungos.org/shop](http://www.mungos.org/shop)



## Christmas ecards

This year our talented residents will once again be designing St Mungo's Christmas ecards. Keep a look out for the winning designs at [www.mungos.org/ecards](http://www.mungos.org/ecards)



## Open door

Come and visit our Brent Dual Diagnosis project in January, (date to be confirmed), where you can meet the staff and residents and learn more about our work.

For more information, contact Claire Creighton on **020 8762 5677** or at [ccreighton@mungos.org](mailto:ccreighton@mungos.org)

## Fundraising opportunities at St Mungo's

Do you know anyone interested in joining our street fundraising team? St Mungo's is recruiting fundraisers to join our in-house street team. No experience necessary, full training provided. For a truly worthwhile job, contact Sarah Selby on **020 8762 5584** or email [facetoface@mungos.org](mailto:facetoface@mungos.org)

## Woolly Hat Day

Find out how St Mungo's first ever Woolly Hat Day went at [www.woollyhatday.org](http://www.woollyhatday.org)



**St Mungo's**  
 Opening doors for homeless people

# Moving on: Marie's story

Marie was one of the 17 successful recruits to graduate from St Mungo's Apprenticeship Scheme in October. Prior to this, she had led a difficult life having spent eight years being homeless.



*"I started drinking at the age of 14 when I was put into care. It carried on for years but really became a problem when my baby died. Then my children got taken into care and I began sleeping rough – in squats, parks, anywhere I could. In 2004 I ended up in hospital with only an hour to live. That was the turning point; I knew I wanted to do something with my life and was determined to get myself better. With the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, I stopped drinking and went into temporary accommodation."*

After she'd been in recovery for a couple of years, Marie decided she wanted to give something back but wasn't sure how.

*"I began doing some volunteering at St Mungo's projects and decided this is what I wanted to do. I'd already completed a 'Vulnerable Adults and Children' course at college when I heard about the Apprenticeship Scheme from one of the Activities Supervisors."*

With determination and a lot of support from St Mungo's staff, Marie got onto the scheme and spent her year as an apprentice project worker at our Endell Street hostel in Camden.

*"The staff were very supportive and patient and working one-on-one with clients was very rewarding. I could really empathise with their situation, which helped. I'm always honest about my background with clients; I think some found it inspiring."*

All in all, it was an incredibly positive experience for Marie: *"I've learned so much as an apprentice. I've completed an NVQ Level two in Health and Social Care, I'm more assertive and have so much confidence. This is the only job I've ever had, so getting that first pay cheque at the age of 43 was a fantastic feeling. I know it sounds funny, but I get such a sense of satisfaction from paying bills – knowing that I'm paying my own way."*

Since graduating from the scheme, Marie has got a job as a project worker at homelessness agency Broadway.

**"The idea of starting somewhere as a 'Project Worker' - not 'apprentice' or 'volunteer' – makes me feel proud. It's something I've been working towards for two years"**

Marie says she would definitely recommend the Apprenticeship Scheme to others:

*"It's a good way to get into this type of work, at your own pace. I got a lot of support and I wasn't expected to know*

*everything and could always ask for help. However, it can be tough at times - you've really got to want to do the work. But I've really enjoyed it and I'm grateful to St Mungo's for taking me on. They've given me a career."*

## About Frontline

Frontline is produced in conjunction with staff and clients at St Mungo's. The aim is to keep you informed of the issues that homeless people are facing today, and to show you how your support is making a difference. If you have any comments or suggestions about this or future issues, please send them to Gareth Davies at the address below.

## Make a donation

If you would like to support our work, you can donate online, over the phone or by post.

## Regular commitment

By far the most effective way to support St Mungo's work is with a monthly donation. It's easy to do, simply visit [www.mungos.org/monthlygift](http://www.mungos.org/monthlygift) or call **020 8600 3000**.

Frontline @ St Mungo's  
161 Hammersmith Road, London, W6 8BS  
**020 8600 3000**  
[www.mungos.org/donate](http://www.mungos.org/donate)

*St Mungo Community Housing Association is a charity exempt from registration*

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*Thank you to all the St Mungo's residents, volunteers and staff whose photographs and histories appear in this publication.*

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