



**GREENWICH
HOMELESS
PROJECT**



Impact report 2025-26 a year in the life of a CEO

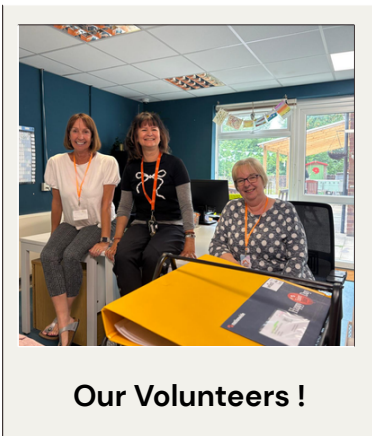


Georgia's maternity leaving party was in full swing when I arrived.

At least fifty people crammed into the day centre. Balloons and bunting festooned the walls. A couple of people were banging out Ronan Keating hits on the karaoke machine. Others were chatting in groups, clutching soft drinks and plates of sandwiches.

As I gazed around the room my first thought was: who here is experiencing homelessness, who is a volunteer, staff member or trustee? And my second thought? Isn't it fantastic I have no idea?

On my first day as interim CEO I had to ask a very pregnant Georgia how the night shelter works. I couldn't figure out how the place operated with no overnight staff.



Our Volunteers !

It's pretty simple, Richard. Volunteers. Three for the evening shift, two overnight and two for breakfast.'

'Every night? From October to March? That's over... 1,500 shifts!'

'Don't forget the day centre volunteers as well.'

By the time I'd finished my calculations, it was obvious: this place runs on people giving their time, again and again, quietly and reliably.

People like Miran, who organised every single shift this winter, Susan who welcomes guests when they arrive or Trish who helps around the day centre with things like laundry and lunch.

During the winter, volunteers completed almost 2,000 shifts – every day and every night



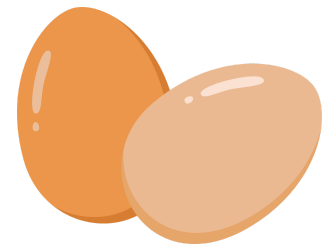
A typical day at GHP..

I enjoyed arriving early to chat to the volunteers on the morning shift and check in with the guests.

Whether it was Marilyn or Una at the stove cooking eggs and baked beans, I'd always get the download on the night before.

For the most part there was little to report. Apart from the time the front door fell off. Or when our neighbour upstairs left the bath taps running and flooded a couple of guests' rooms on New Year's Eve, just for good measure.

Shout out to the fire brigade for their help on that incident...and to our trusty trustee, Hugh, who proved to be a dab hand with a mop and bucket.



**In 6 months volunteers
boiled, scrambled or fried over
7,000 eggs !**



Every morning, before the day centre opens, we meet to plan the day. On Fridays, Joe reads out a quote from Khalil Gibran that encourages us to reflect deeply on our work. Later, there are gales of laughter from the kitchen as he and Marilyn prepare lunch while Charmaine, like some magical fairy, shows up with sprinkle cake she made at home. Every volunteer goes above and beyond.

This year Mandy has set up our very first Volunteer Advisory Group to ensure volunteer voices shape and inform our work. Alongside that, we have a new training and development programme all volunteers can benefit from.

Especially heartening is the fact that we have also attracted a lot more young people this year and I believe our volunteer workforce is truly representative of the community where we're based.

**97
VOLUNTEERS
RECRUITED
THIS YEAR**



Who we help

Arriving in the middle of our Christmas party wasn't ideal for Andy. He was overwhelmed by the noise and the laughter so we stepped out into the garden where he could have a cigarette. We talked. Later that day, he moved into the night shelter. Andy had been sleeping rough for several weeks.

*'I forget the exact date. And to be honest with you, days become irrelevant. You just wake up, and usually in the bush, nobody's attacked you, carry on. You walk around, 15 hours thinking, where do I get rid of this bag of sh*t?' Yeah, which I still did. I still clear up. It's my bush.'*

Andy is sharp as a tack. Worked for years in insurance. Does the cryptic crossword in the time it takes him to drink a cup of tea. Clears the rubbish in the garden thrown out by one of our neighbours upstairs. Always helping out, always chatting. Within a few weeks, our casework team had found Andy a place, somewhere local where Andy was brought up and felt at home. He still comes to the day centre and is one of our most active garden club members.

'I can say this, can't fault this place. Can't.'

Over the winter, our casework team handled close to 100 referrals – each one a person trying to find a way out of an impossible situation. We know the number of rough sleepers in London has been rising steadily since 2021; in Greenwich alone, there were over 600 rough sleepers recorded over a 12-month period, almost half of whom were new to rough sleeping. To make matters worse, almost half have unmet mental health needs. What's harder to gauge are the 'hidden homeless': the sofa surfers and others on the edge of homelessness.

**600 rough sleepers were recorded
in Greenwich in a single year**



This winter, our night shelter supported 37 guests with an occupancy rate of over 95%

Most guests came as the result of 'no-fault' evictions, others because of relationship breakdowns or unresolved immigration issues. While the age range of guests were between 35-65 – consistent with national averages, we had twice as many women as other night shelters, probably because we were able to accommodate them in a women's wing where they felt safe.

One of our guests was Chioma, who had been sofa surfing and was then referred to us as a rough sleeper. For her, the shelter felt like a haven.

'It was okay for me because sometimes, considering where you're coming from... it was really a big relief for me. Everybody was nice. Yeah, we were like a team. Even the men, not just the ladies, even the men. We would talk, you know, it was good when we came to meet at the dining area both morning and evening, we talked about our day, things like that. It was really good.'

Three weeks later, the casework team found somewhere comfortable for Chioma to stay.

'So, it was Catherine, Jane and Bliss, got me this place, and they really helped me. They were the ones to liaise with the landlord. It was well coordinated; I tell you that for sure...'

Now settled in her place, Chioma has started a job as a carer, and her life feels well and truly back on track.

We support twice as many women as other night shelters around the UK

I'll be honest, not every experience is as positive as Andy and Chioma's. We accepted a woman into the shelter whose life was far more chaotic than she had been willing to let on. She struggled with her mental health and with addiction issues. After a particularly challenging incident, we had to ask her to leave.

These are the toughest moments—recognising the limits of what we can do and learning to sit with that.

Every week I sat with the casework team, reviewing the progress of our guests. At the end of each meeting, I always came away awed by the strength and resilience of the team. They regularly dealt with guests who, for lots of complicated reasons, weren't always able to act in their best interests. It takes a lot of patience and a lot of persistence – qualities the casework team members have in spades.



Who'd have thought our pottery sessions would be such a success? Fiona Veacock ran these throughout the year, each with a new theme. I sat in on one session while Fiona and the guests examined the idea of luminaries (jars with carved shapes and piercings that allow light to emit from a candle source).

While crafting these exquisite creations, the group explored ideas of celestial bodies, the light inside ourselves, festivals of light such as Diwali and Halloween, and how light can bring happiness, positivity and good fortune.

The session ended by looking at and appreciating everyone's work as they shared some moving and powerful thoughts about their experience .

'I have no home but built one here. My holes would provide insect homes or represent lights in a block of community.'

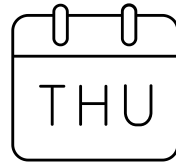
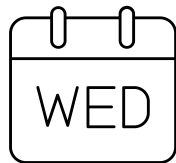
'I was inspired by light in nature, particularly the moon in the night sky. The moon can only shine as it reflects the light of others.'

This was one of the most powerful examples of art as a healing force as I've ever witnessed.





The day centre has 40 – 50 guests coming each month, representing well over 300 unique visits



The day centre expanded this year to four days a week (from three) and the numbers of guests using the centre has risen throughout the year. We regularly have around 15-20 guests a day attending, showing just how important the centre is to those experiencing homelessness. And while guests appreciate a hot shower, laundry facilities, Wi-Fi or a hot meal, it's also the companionship and connection they enjoy – I always looked forward to a bit of banter over lunch prepared by our volunteers or donated by our good friends at the Felix Project and Cook, teasing Daniel about Spurs' decline, or planning which vegetables we'll grow in the Garden Project raised beds with Kevin.



Led by our caseworker, Bliss, we're excited to expand the range of activities we run at the day centre. The programme was co-designed with our guests, so we can feel confident the sessions we schedule are ones they want – from practical skills like DiY, creative outlets like pottery, and vocational skills like English as a second language.

Mental health and wellbeing, as well as access to health advice is something we are fortunate to have on site. Our counsellor, Paul, who visits every Friday, sees about a dozen guests each month and helps them work through issues they're facing. Oli, our nurse, saw a similar number of people each month, dressing wounds and providing basic health care while Dr Nabil continued his surgery in the centre.



Although most of our guests are registered with a GP they face barriers preventing them from using these services, which makes the support of Paul, Oli and Dr Nabil so incredibly valuable.

'I love coming here,' Oli tells me, 'it always has such a peaceful, calming atmosphere.'

This was a sentiment shared by the assessment team from Housing Justice who undertook a 'Quality Assurance Mark' as spring finally broke through after the long, dark and very wet winter months. In their report, the team commented,

'The night shelter run by Greenwich Homeless Project is effectively and safely run by an invested team of staff and volunteers, which include the trustees. The dynamic between staff, volunteers and guests is exemplary. The overall effect is congruent to providing a psychologically informed environment. There is a calm, inviting atmosphere at the shelter and day centre where humour and camaraderie abound. Clearly, the charity is true to its mission and values.'

The quality assurance mark represents a wonderful and well-deserved validation of what we do here and is testimony to every single volunteer, staff person and trustee who has done so much to contribute to making Greenwich Homeless Project such an inspiring place to work.

'The dynamic between staff, volunteers and guests is exemplary.'





Open all year round...

The 27th April 2026 will be remembered as an historic day in the annals of Greenwich Homeless Project. For the first time in our history, we opened our doors to people experiencing homelessness all year round – not just in winter.

This is something we've wanted to do for years. It pained us, knowing our rooms lay empty over the summer while homelessness persisted.

Thanks to the amazing support of Louis Colley and the sub regional rough sleeping team, we were awarded funding to make it happen.

That day, Shana arrived, tired but happy with her rucksack and a few bags, followed by Frank, Pearlita and Tony. Everyone helped carry luggage into rooms, made cups of tea, and ensured our new guests felt at home. By the end of the day, twelve of our fourteen rooms were full.

There's a difference to this programme in that most of our guests weren't rough sleeping but were at risk of being made homeless. What we're trying to do is prevent people from rough sleeping in the first place by catching them earlier on and working with them to find long term solutions without ever having to spend a night on the streets.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of our guests were women. Although their stories were unique, many were caught in precarious housing situations and terrified at the thought of rough sleeping. It's a real honour to have been selected to take part in such an innovative new approach and we can't wait to find out how well it's worked. So far, things are looking promising as there is clearly a need out there...

With 12 of our rooms filled on the first night, there's an obvious need for us to operate all year round

Leaving organisations is never easy. You believe in the cause, feel you're making a difference. For me, stepping away from the interim CEO role will be especially hard as it feels like leaving a family.

Thinking back to Georgia's leaving party, what stays with me is a sense of belonging—people from completely different walks of life connected in ways that felt natural and unforced.

In a world that often feels divided, places like Greenwich Homeless Project remind us that something quieter and stronger is also at work: people showing up for each other.



Richard Graham
Interim CEO, 2025-26



Thank you for your support!



www.greenwichhomelessproject.org.uk