

The Robes Project Winter Night Shelter Annual Report 2015

A small charity
doing a big job
for the
homeless

Charity registration number: 1132622

robes
project

Details of how to donate

If you would like to give to the project you can use the JustGiving website or send a cheque. Please go to the website www.justgiving.com/robes
Or you can send a cheque payable to "The Robes Project" to:
The Robes Project, Bermondsey Central Hall, 256 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UJ

Details of how to get involved

Please see our website www.robes.org.uk for details of how to get involved in the project.



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Bermondsey Central Hall,
256 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UJ
Tel: 0207 407 5623
Email: robes.adviceworker@slm-bermondsey.org.uk
Email: robes.coordinator@slm-bermondsey.org.uk
Website: www.robes.org.uk

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A Guest's Story (told by the father)

My son and I found ourselves homeless just before Christmas. With this misfortune came some good fortune. That is, we were introduced, interviewed, and accepted into the Robes Project. If this had not happened, we would of had a harsh Christmas on the cold streets of London. Through Robes we were admitted to a Crisis at Christmas centre, where we were given the basic necessities and more. When our time ended at Crisis we began sleeping at Robes warm night shelters. By warm I mean literally and figuratively. I was surprised by all the volunteers. They would give us clothing, dine, talk and even play board games with us and they did this with such warmth and genuineness that some of my negative thoughts disintegrated. I didn't feel like a burden. My son and I were with the Robes Project for several months, leaving just before the night shelters closed. The volunteers went above and beyond to help us, especially to find accommodation (which was my main concern), spending hours just calling housing agencies, speaking to landlords on my behalf and actually visiting properties. I found their service and kindness overwhelming at times. I will be forever grateful. My son and I found accommodation because of Robes and I am still in contact with them.

"It is very refreshing, exciting and challenging to see how much can be achieved when we work together for the benefit of all. It also challenges us to ask if there is more that we can do before people reach this low point/crisis? Without all of us working together, it would not be possible." (Volunteer)

"It's not about want. It's about need." (Guest)

"Small contributions made together, making a difference to many." (Volunteer)

"How exciting to see so many churches, communities, corporate companies and individuals coming together to "love our neighbours as ourselves" to support those within our community who are marginalised." (Volunteer)

"Good, kind, humble. They clean the toilets and give their time. Because of the volunteers, I now believe there is a God." (Guest)

Every smile, every expression of thanks with their eyes shows how important our work is for the person helped and for us." (Volunteer)

"I walk around London. I ride the bus, as it's somewhere warm, looking out at London. If my legs kill me, and I have pain in my leg, I sit downstairs." (Guest)

"It's about having the opportunity to meet with people that you might not have done otherwise - and to learn about the very human stories behind homelessness." (Volunteer)

"I went to Spires Day Centre for a shower. Then I went to my GP as I have heart problems and then the library. Not all libraries let me sleep, but I know one where I can." (Guest)

"Guests arrive nervous and depressed and within a few weeks are part of a family of supportive peers." (Volunteer)

"Robes can be a starting point for a better future." (Guest)

Chair's Report

First of all I would like to thank my two predecessors in the Chair: Janet Corlett and Louise Delaye-Hand.

I should like to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken by Olivia Newington who left us in February after being our Project Co-ordinator for over 3 years and to wish her well. Heartfelt thanks to the dedicated work by Crispin Green, our Advice Worker. Many of our guests in accommodation realise how Robes has helped to change their lives. Huge thanks must also go to our invaluable volunteers without whom we could not operate.

We were delighted to welcome Canon Roger Royle as a new Patron who has already helped us in many ways.

Last winter was once again full of many challenges, not least that two Church venues pulled out without much warning. We owe a huge debt to St Matthews Church, Elephant & Castle and the volunteers who agreed to operate for 20 weeks. We welcomed St Matthews Church in Brixton who hosted for the first time.

A Strategy Review by Geoffrey Delaye-Hand on the way forward has just been completed and this has given us a clear vision on what we want to achieve in the next 3 years.

The fourth annual sponsored Sleepout in November 2014 at Southwark Cathedral was again very successful and we raised over £83,000. Special thanks to the Dean and Canons of Southwark Cathedral for hosting the event. This year's Sleepout will be on Friday 27 November 2015 and we would love to see you all!

We owe a great deal of thanks to many organisations and businesses that provided funds and to the catering companies that provided food.

As we look ahead to next winter, we are confident that we will continue to give our homeless guests a warm safe place to sleep, a hot meal and support as they start to rebuild their lives.

George Martin, Chair

Future Plans

Doubling venues 2016-2017

Robes's Trustees have long been anxious to put to best use the energy and dedication of its volunteers by welcoming and supporting a greater number of guests than has been possible to date. From the winter of 2016-17 Robes is planning to double its present number of venues across Southwark and Lambeth to enable many more homeless people to have a bed, hot meal and support over the winter months to rebuild their lives.

Pop-up Shelter

When the night shelters close at the end of the winter there are some guests of Robes who are not yet ready to resume independent living or who are still awaiting offers of re-housing. To offer ongoing support to these guests and to avoid their having to return to rough-sleeping, Robes will be offering for the first time in the spring of 2016 short-term, rudimentary accommodation in the form of a pop-up shelter after the closure of the winter night shelters.

KIRKLAND & ELLIS INTERNATIONAL LLP

Inn from the Cold

Generous sponsorship from international law firm Kirkland & Ellis LLP has enabled Robes and the Manna Society to move forward in establishing a new joint project "Inn from the Cold". This is to be a resource whereby tenancy-ready guests from Robes and the Manna Society will be linked to approved private sector landlords looking for reliable, properly supported tenants. The landlords gain a good-quality, commission-free letting and Robes and the Manna Society gain a means of moving tenancy-ready guests rapidly into their own accommodation, releasing places in the night shelters for new guests to take up. The guests will be supported in their preparation for tenancy and transition back into independent living by volunteer guest supporters trained by Robes and the Manna Society.

Mr L and how he returned to Brazil

Mr L is a professional welder from Brazil in his late 50s. He left home to work in Europe six years ago, first in Italy and then in the UK. Hampered by poor English and by lack of evidence of his skills he worked at a variety of jobs and began to send money home. Last year he worked for a restaurant owner and was paid at £4.50 per hour even though he expected to be paid £6.50. After a year he fell out with the employer over the conditions and lack of correct pay and asked for what he believed he was owed. The employer refused. Mr Lima lost the accommodation that came with the job, but stayed temporarily with people he knew in the Portuguese Community and was awarded Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). He paid a solicitor to prepare for an employment tribunal, unaware that he may have been eligible for free legal aid. A court date was set but when he was unable to pay a further fee he lost his solicitor.

Mr L became homeless and was referred to the Robes Project's winter night shelter. At that point his JSA claim was discontinued due to the recent welfare reforms. He did not pass the Habitual Residency Test and a reconsideration request failed. He again tried to take his former employer to court, after which he said he would be ready to return to Brazil. A volunteer agreed to accompany him to court as an observer and to give moral support. Surprisingly, at the court the judge invited the volunteer to speak and to question the employer. This led to the employer being ordered to pay unpaid wages and court costs totalling over £4,000.

The employer only paid half the amount but to avoid a protracted process the charity drew up a deed of assignment allowing it to pay Mr L what he was owed, leaving it to the charity to recoup the debt. Six weeks after the winter shelter closed, Mr L returned to Brazil with his earnings and was reunited with his family. The Project has since recovered the full amount due from the employer.

"Such a great experience - loved meeting and learning from both guests and volunteers." (Volunteer)

Independent Examiner's Report

The Robes Project Independent Examiner's Report for the year ended 31st March 2015 has been completed. Copies are available on request from the Robes Project office and will be posted on the Charity Commission website.

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March 2015

INCOMING RESOURCES	Total Funds 2015	Total Funds 2014
<i>Generated Funds</i>		
Donations and Gifts	£44,516	£40,833
<i>Activities to generate funds</i>		
Fundraising events	£104,030	£108,097
Investment income	£578	£787
TOTAL	£149,333	£149,508
<i>RESOURCES EXPENDED</i>		
Direct Charitable costs	£91,790	£86,899
Governance costs	£645	£647
Financial costs	£16	£31
TOTAL	£92,451	£87,577
Net Incoming Resources	£56,882	£61,931
Balance Brought Forward	£146,068	£84,137
Balance Carried Forward	£202,950	£146,068

Copies of the full statement are available on request.

The Robes Project Winter Night Shelter

A volunteer based charity with no statutory or government funding

There were a total of 3,500 volunteer "slots" taking part in the shelters from November to end of March (evening, night and morning shifts). The aim is that volunteers welcome and talk to guests, offering a listening ear as well as providing meals and general practical help within the shelters.

During 2014-2015, Robes was able to offer a total of 42 bed spaces over the winter (3 of whom were women). Bed and bedding for each guest, plus a towel is provided at each shelter.

Volunteers and guests eat a freshly cooked evening meal together every night. Each guest is staying in a Robes shelter is offered both a cooked breakfast meal and a cooked breakfast with as much tea and coffee and fruit as they like.

Robes endeavours to offer recreational and social activities at the shelters and this year guests were given Streetwise Opera workshops which were much enjoyed by both guests and volunteers. While the shelters are running the guests are offered a weekly midweek community lunch drop in.

Where reasonably possible, Robes provides advice and welfare support. In 2014-15 there were a total of 83 referrals needing varying degrees of support including finding longer term tenancies. The guests continue to be given support after the shelters have closed.

THE ROBES YEAR

- 1: Opening Service
- 2: Night Shelter opens
- 5: Commemoration for homeless who died
- St Martins-in-the-Fields
- 27: Annual Sleepout (last Friday of the month)
- December 2015
- 17: Carol Singing at London Bridge
- March 2016
- 20: Night Shelter closes
- April 2016
- 20: Volunteer Celebration
- July 2016
- 31: London Ride
- September 2016
- 14: Annual General Meeting



Robes Project

FUNDERS and SUPPORTERS

We are very grateful and want to thank our partners, funders, stakeholders, patrons and supporters. A special mention is given to our volunteers and guests for their enthusiasm and commitment in being part of the shelters each winter.

Partners:

Better Bankside, Churches - both venues and gift givers,

Eden Catering, Haysmacyntyre, Manna Society,

Marks & Spencers, Southwark Works, Streetwise Opera

Funders:

A list of our funders can be found on our website. We could not do this work without their support.

Congratulations to Simon Hughes (Patron) on his Knighthood and grateful thanks for his support of Robes while a Member of Parliament

and his continued interest as a local resident.

Councillor Sunil Chopra, while Mayor of Southwark, did a

magnificent job in holding three very successful events on behalf

of Robes.

And thank you to all those who quietly and faithfully support us in

so many creative and varied ways.

NOVEMBER 2015	DECEMBER 2015	JANUARY 2016	FEBRUARY 2016	MARCH 2016	APRIL 2016	MAY 2016	JUNE 2016	JULY 2016	AUGUST 2016	SEPTEMBER 2016	OCTOBER 2016
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