

# SPEAR Impact Report 2016



SPEAR supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in South West London.

Charity No. 1122206

**SPEAR**  
homelessness to independence

**Homelessness** is more than just a housing issue. It is strongly linked to mental and physical health and wellbeing, so our approach is to address health and employment needs as well as accommodation. In 2015/16, we helped over 500 people to rebuild their lives through a range of accommodation and support services and gave around 2,000 people housing advice:

- We helped 137 homeless people to access better health care

- We enabled 113 homeless people to prepare for employment through training, confidence-building activities, work placements and volunteering

- Our Outreach Teams supported 126 homeless clients from the streets into accommodation

- We provided 168 supported tenancies to homeless people

## Homelessness and accommodation

SPEAR's Outreach Teams go out onto the streets at night and very early in the morning to find people sleeping rough. They aim to make rough sleepers safe by finding them somewhere to stay, identifying health problems and linking clients up with social and community services.

We provide both emergency and longer term accommodation and our **Tenancy Support Teams** support people in their own homes once they are housed.

In 2015/16:

- 90% of SPEAR's supported tenancies were successfully sustained

- In Richmond we provided or brokered accommodation for 102 street homeless clients

- We provided 62 shared and 32 independent supported housing units

- We operated 55 hostel bed spaces

### Client profile

**79% of our clients are male**  
**21% are female**

**9% of our clients are under 21**  
**30% are aged 21-35**

# Health and homelessness

Our Homeless Health Link service was launched in 2015. Health assessments revealed that many homeless people were not receiving adequate support for their health issues and did not know how or where to seek help.



Our innovative service has:

- Significantly improved clients' engagement with health care provision – 100 clients registered with a GP; engagement with mental health and addiction services has increased by more than 50%
- Reduced inappropriate use of emergency and hospital services – use of A&E has reduced by 35%; hospital admissions have reduced by 50%
- Improved people's mental and physical health – 39% reduction in suicidal thinking and 40% reduction in breathing problems, chest pains, fainting or blackouts
- Reduced alcohol and substance misuse – 28% reduction in consumption of 10+ units alcohol/day and 32% reduction in use of illicit drugs



The trauma of war – Martin's story:

Martin served in the Gulf War and post-traumatic stress disorder had contributed to him becoming homeless. He became increasingly hopeless and suicidal but eventually managed to make contact with SPEAR's Homeless Health Link service.

**“It's the first time someone referred to what 'we' were going to do together. Knowing I had someone beside me enabled me to ask health services for what I needed.”**

# Training and employment

Finding work is an effective route out of homelessness, but low skills, complex issues and social disadvantage prevent many homeless clients from moving on with their lives.

SPEAR provides clients with personalised support to overcome their problems and transform their lives. In 2015/16, 113 people took up one or more of the activities we offered:

- 59 people completed confidence-building activities such as art club, book club, group discussions, cooking and gardening
- Employment brokerage and support helped 9 clients into work

- 41 clients completed internal training and 46 clients undertook external training, for example in IT, numeracy, literacy and life skills
- 19 people completed volunteering placements in local work places and the community



## Youth homelessness

Of the young people who lived at our hostels over the last eight years:

- 100% of residents with a criminal justice order completed it successfully
- 97% moved out of the hostel with no rent arrears
- 48% gained a qualification
- 93% who received family mediation support reported an improvement in family relationships
- 61% volunteered while living at the hostel
- 58% secured employment



### A fresh start for a young life – Joe's story:

When he was just 16, family problems forced Joe to leave home. He slept on friends' sofas and in his car for four years until SPEAR's Outreach Team found him and secured him a room in our emergency hostel in Twickenham.

Through our Skills Team, he got a place on an outward bound course with The Prince's Trust to increase his confidence.

He later felt ready to try some work experience and then to start applying for paid work.

He learned how to write a CV and was eventually offered a job as a carer. SPEAR's support hasn't stopped since Joe found work. We're confident he has a bright future ahead of him, but he knows we're here if he needs further help.

## Our work with homeless women

Most of our female homeless clients need specialised support to address experiences of trauma, exploitation and violence. We operate three shared supported housing projects for women, with all-female staff.



In 2015/16, we:

- Worked with 105 women, including 26 new street homeless clients
- Provided supported housing to 51 new women
- Opened two new all-women supported housing projects. Specialist workers ensured tailored programmes for female clients

Escaping violence and abuse – Amy’s story:

Amy, 26, had been sleeping rough after fleeing violence and abuse at home. She was traumatised, isolated and scared. Over time she started to feel safe as she learnt to trust SPEAR staff and talk about her experiences.

We referred her to health professionals to treat

her anxiety and sleeplessness and to specialist agencies to address the trauma she had experienced. Amy was supported each day during her initial weeks with us. She is now planning to move into independent accommodation and pursue her ambition to be a teacher.

**“SPEAR has helped me to understand I am not to blame for my situation. I feel for the first time that I have hope for my future.”**

# Volunteering, community partnerships and fundraising

Volunteers make a valuable contribution to SPEAR in all types of roles, from receptionist to outreach work. In 2015/16:

- We chaired the Richmond Homelessness Forum and supported Richmond Council colleagues to deliver elements of the Richmond Corporate Plan and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

- 70 volunteers gave over 3,700 hours of their time



- We enjoyed active support from over 70 community groups, companies, schools and churches

- We gave more than 30 educational presentations, reaching over 4,000 people



Charitable income enables SPEAR to deliver work beyond our main, contracted services. In 2015/16, it funded:

- All our current Training and Employment services

- Trainee worker posts in Accommodation and Outreach services to provide extra support to people with severe and complex problems



## Key facts

The number of new street homeless people in Richmond doubled in the last four years, rising to 137 in 2015/16.

The number of new street homeless women increased more than threefold and the number of people under the age of 35 more than doubled.

- 72% of people living in SPEAR supported accommodation had a mental health issue
- 40% had a recent history of offending
- 30% had a significant physical health issue
- 38% had a debt problem
- 60% had an alcohol or substance misuse issue
- 23% had experienced or perpetrated domestic violence

Living on the street – Mark’s story:

“ My journey to the streets started with mental health problems and a breakdown. Unable to maintain my rent payments, I was evicted and slept rough in the Ham area for about four months.

I found it overwhelmingly difficult to deal with my circumstances and just couldn’t see a way out of my situation. It was only when a SPEAR outreach worker met up with me that I began to see life didn’t have to be like that. The head of the Skills Team spent time with me and explained SPEAR’s

services and I slowly began to feel I could talk to others and join in activities. I started with the Book Club, then became one of the first members of the Client Involvement Group and even used my IT skills to help edit their bi-monthly newsletter.

I’ve taken on other activities too, such as representing SPEAR as a Speaker and participating in fundraising events. This has really helped me to build my confidence and improve my quality of life day to day.”

All case-studies and testimonials are true, but names have been changed to protect identities.

## Our thanks

We would like to thank all those organisations who directly funded our operations and each and every one of you who donated through direct debit, a one-off donation or fundraising event. You ensured our essential services to those

suffering from homelessness continue to be sustainable in the future. We can’t thank you enough for your commitment.

**We cannot carry out our work without you.**

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*homelessness to independence*

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## SPEAR, YOUR LOCAL CHARITY

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