



GROWTH

**CHURCHES OPEN THEIR DOORS TO SERVE
THOSE HOMELESS IN TOWER HAMLETS**

2017/18

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Winston is a volunteer professional
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"We love because he first loved us."

1 John 4:19

SEASON OF BLESSING

As we look back over a successful eighth shelter season, we are grateful to God for his faithful provision. This year 23 churches and community centres were involved in running the shelter across the seven-month season, united in a mission to show love to those that are homeless in Tower Hamlets. Our 450+ volunteers have worked hard and given their time and energy to making the shelter happen. Whether you have cooked, put up beds, befriended guests, prayed for us, given financially or supported GrowTH in any way, we want to say a huge thank you - we could not have done it without you!

In Autumn 2017 we said farewell to Martin who had worked for GrowTH since 2012, first as an Advocate Worker, then as Operations Manager. We also welcomed Naomi to the team as our new Advocate Worker, working alongside Paul. They have both worked hard this year advocating for our guests and securing homes for them. This year 57 guests moved into more permanent accommodation, 40% of all those who stayed in the shelter!

We have seen a huge answer to prayer this year as more guests than ever, almost one third, chose to attend a local church, with many attending regularly and becoming part of the church family long after leaving the shelter.

We hope you feel encouraged as you read about all that has happened this year.

Matt Endersby, GrowTH Operations Manager



IMPACT THIS YEAR

 **3075** bed spaces for guests

 **6150** hot meals provided

 **141** homeless men and women given shelter

 **57** assisted into more permanent accommodation

 **42** assisted into further temporary shelter

 **50** (at least) engaged with a Bible study or church service



St Matthias Community Centre
ready to receive the guests.

NIGHT SHELTER

“Provided exactly what I needed.”

“Friendly place to be.”

“It was an amazing experience.”

“The shelter has given me a roof over my head which helped me to continue with contribution to society as well as able to handle challenges.”

“The volunteers have been wonderful – commitment, sense of humour, loving, socialising as well as sharing meals with us. The dedication to make every night a success.”

GrowTH night shelter guests, 2017-18



NIGHT SHELTER



CHURCHES RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS

The need for a response to homelessness is as urgent as ever. While statistics do not give the full picture, they are confirming what many have noticed: that homelessness is rising. It is now estimated that 4,751 people in the UK are sleeping rough on any given night, 24% of whom are in London. Rough sleeping in London has increased by 174% since 2010. Between 2016 and 2017, Tower Hamlets saw a 91% increase in those sleeping on the street.¹

Hidden homelessness

However, homelessness does not simply mean rough sleeping. The majority of the those that are without a place to call home are 'hidden' from official statistics. This includes those that are sofa surfing, squatting, and sleeping on public transport. The London Assembly estimates that there are 13 times more people that are 'hidden homeless' in London than are visibly sleeping rough – as many as 12,500 each night.²

Churches take action

It was at a prayer meeting in 2010 when leaders from various churches in Tower Hamlets decided to set up a night shelter to respond to this issue of homelessness in the area. We're now able to run the shelter for seven months of the year, and we have an increasing number of partner churches and volunteers, all playing their part in providing shelter, meals and a warm welcome to their homeless neighbours. Our 'rolling night shelter' model means that the load is shared between church venues and teams, resulting in GrowTH being a true partnership.

¹<https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/rough-sleeping/rough-sleeping-explore-data>

²https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf

In 2018-19 we were privileged to work with 21 churches and 2 community centres; providing venues, volunteers and additional services.

- › All Hallows Bow
- › All Saints, Poplar
- › Bethnal Green Mission Church
- › Bow Baptist Church
- › Christ Church Isle of Dogs
- › Christ Church London
- › Christ Church Spitalfields
- › E1 Community Church
- › East End Church
- › ELT Baptist Church
- › Greenlight Medical Van (Hillsong)
- › Jubilee Hall, RCCG
- › London Underground Church
- › Salvation Army, Poplar
- › St Anne's Limehouse
- › St Luke's Millwall
- › St Matthias Community Centre
- › St Nicholas, Poplar
- › St Paul's Shadwell
- › The Good Shepherd Mission
- › The Hurtado Jesuit Centre
- › The Liberty Church
- › Tower Hamlets Community Church



Our referral agencies in 2017-18 were:

- › Crisis Skylight
- › Whitechapel Mission
- › Providence Row
- › Health E1 GP Surgery
- › Spitalfields Crypt Trust Drop-in
- › Praxis Community Projects
- › Tower Hamlets Community Intervention Service



HOW THE SHELTER WORKS

GrowTH partners with a number of referral agencies in Tower Hamlets. We love working together to help meet the needs of those homeless in the borough.

Each guest goes to one of these agencies, who then determine whether a night shelter is a suitable option. The agency will then call the GrowTH office and, if there is space, will suggest that the guest is referred. A GrowTH staff member will carry out a risk assessment over the telephone, and the agency completes an online referral form, both of which help to determine whether the guest can be offered a bed in the night shelter.

GrowTH also operates a waiting list, which helps to ensure that no beds are left empty in the shelter.

I just wanted to say how much we appreciate all you have done for our members over the last months. There has been nothing but great feedback from our members on how welcoming you have been with everyone and how they have really felt at home there! One client said the guitar playing and song there eased their worries and made them feel really welcome and included... Not to mention how 'on it' you have been with numerous referrals for everybody, it's been so helpful for us!!

Caroline Harte, Crisis Skylight



MY STORY: DANNY

From GrowTH guest to GrowTH Church Coordinator

Four years ago Danny was a guest in GrowTH night shelter. Today he volunteers and is a Church Coordinator. We hear something of his journey and faith through all of this.

"Those special 28 days"

Danny came in to the shelter with nothing. "I lost everything ... I was at the end of the road ... worthless, a nobody. I saw no way out," he told us. "I thought it [GrowTH] would be a place to put my head down and carry on the next day," he added. "I didn't know that God had a plan". For Danny, what was initially seen as only despair and hopelessness began to reveal itself as something quite different. This was to be the place where Danny would meet with God "in his

fullness'. With issues from his past, God began to work in and through Danny's situation. "He stripped me of everything ... The very thing you think you need is the very most thing you have to deny and God said, 'No, you need me, forget about money, and people' ... He took everything away from me and I know that there is no one else in the world that can help me. I will never forget those 28 days in the shelter ... [they] changed my life because I found Christ."

Through the support and love of the The Good Shepherd Mission, Danny began his journey of faith. "I found Christ and really wanted to know who Jesus was and get close to the people in the church." Two years later, Danny was asked if he would like to volunteer with GrowTH and then in the 2017-18 shelter season, Danny coordinated for the first time.

Why did you decide to volunteer and why have you continued?

"Ryan asked. I said I would love to do it ... I like talking and encouraging people ... I can tell people my experience as I was here once and tell them 'this is

what I felt and I came on the other side and have a place now and you can do it too'. Volunteering all these years has had direct impact on my life and helped me grow, it makes me feel whole, there is a peace in me that I am where I'm supposed to be. You are helping the needy, helping the lost ... that's one of the reasons why Jesus Christ came."

How was your experience coordinating for the first time and what has God taught you?

"At first a bit daunting ... the person who trained me was not there with me at the time so it was all hands on deck for me. I was very nervous on the first night ... you have to address the guests and tell them the house rules ... I was thinking, 'what would I say?! They could tell I was nervous; they could tell I was a rookie but I got through the night and had a lot of help from the other volunteers.

"Coordinating has taught me patience and compassion; the difference between compassion, sympathy and empathy; being firm and fair and most of all about love and duty. Being patient - that was

one of the hardest things - you pray and you have to wait for an answer ... God will walk you through the process to build me ... you grow in that way."

What would you say to encourage something who is thinking about volunteering?

"It's the most beautiful thing ever. I will always encourage that. There is nothing like it. You are a foot soldier for Christ and carry a banner. You are not just helping other people but building yourself through Christ to help other people. I think that is what he asks us to do - love your neighbour as yourself."

"My journey from being a guest to becoming a coordinator is all on the premise of how I've grown within Christ."





WHO ARE OUR GUESTS?

This season we have hosted 141 guests, with a very slight increase in the ratio of women to men on the previous year. Increasing our capacity to host women is something that we are considering for the future, as we noticed referral agencies attempting to refer more women than usual.

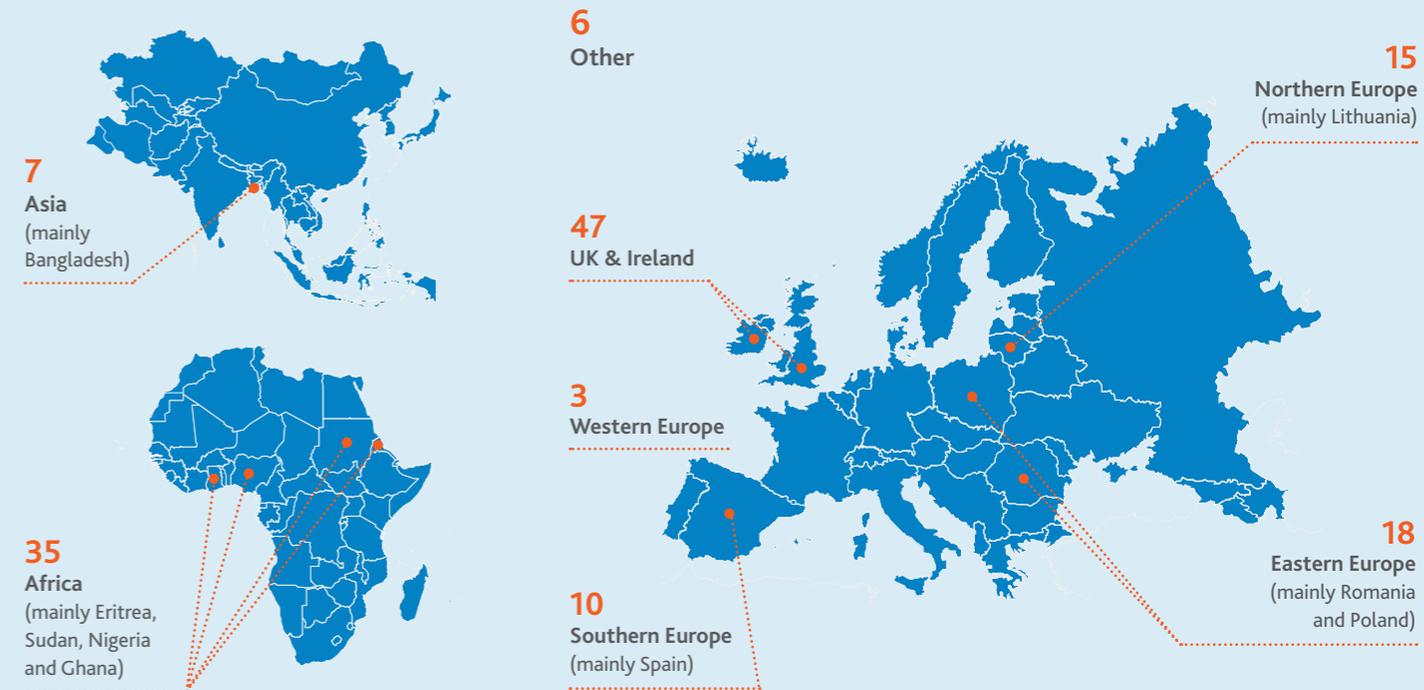
There was a dramatic drop in the number of refugees this year, from 42 last season to 22 this season. Eritrean guests outnumbered those from Sudan, many of whom had fled due to political persecution. Our Advocate Workers have listened to many stories of the desperate lengths that guests have gone to in order to escape to safety.

There was a slight decrease in guests from Europe this year, coupled with a shift in the countries that they came from, with many more from Northern Europe but fewer from Eastern and Western Europe. Within the Eastern European guests, there was a drop in the number of workers from Poland but an increase in those from Romania. 47 guests this year had UK or Irish nationality, which is an increase on last year.

6 of the European guests decided to be reconnected to their home countries this season. Although this is an increase on the previous year, most guests are still determined to make a life in the UK, no matter how hard the journey is.



NATIONALITY OF OUR SHELTER GUESTS





MY STORY: ROWAN

Rowan's story, unlike many where accommodation is secured, shows us the harsh reality faced by those who have lengthy and ongoing immigration cases which prevent stability or progress.

Rowan's story started in 2001 when he came to the UK from Jamaica on a 6-month visa. For personal reasons, Rowan felt he needed to remain here in the UK, although the consequence of this was that he was now living illegally in the UK. Determined to find a solution, Rowan survived the next few years and thanks to a change in the law in 2010, the Home Office granted Rowan a 3-year visa. After the 3 years, he hoped to receive a final further 3-year visa which would lead to permanent status in the UK. By now, Rowan had two children in the UK and although he was dealing with conflict

from his ex-partner, felt settled in life. He had his own place and was working for the council.

However, just a few months before the end of his 3-year visa, Rowan received a surprising letter from child support services which Rowan believes to be completely unjustified. "That is the whole thing that ... put me in this situation," he said. Good child care was essential to his application and any suspicion to the contrary would jeopardise the whole thing.

Consequently, Rowan was not granted his final visa. The Home Office kept his passport and Rowan became homeless and unemployed. Speaking of being homeless he said, "It's not a good sight and horrible ... I have seen things I never thought I would see with my own eyes ... you wake up in the morning from the night bus with nowhere to turn ... it's hard to find a 'Mother Teresa' around here."

"Words cannot explain"

Although Rowan was denied the visa he hoped for, he contacted Praxis, an organisation that supports migrants

in crisis. Seeing the injustice of the decision and the good prospects of having it overturned, Praxis willingly took on his immigration case and referred him to GrowTH.

GrowTH, he said, "... was amazing ... the greatest thing is that you have a roof over your head, breakfast and dinner, you have fruits ... words cannot explain ... it is a pleasure meeting you guys, I'm just uplifted." Rowan was also very impacted by the encouraging Christian messages and testimonies in the shelter evenings. He said, "It was so good ... it held me up stronger."

Whilst Rowan's situation meant that his Advocate Worker was not be able to support him into accommodation, he continued to receive meaningful support in way that helped build him up. "Paul is amazing," he said. "The first time I met him with his smile I said 'this thing is going to work.'"

Rowan speaks of the joys of being prayed for each morning in the shelter by an Advocate Worker. "I cannot leave

without you praying for me," he said. It is an area of support that Rowan still to this day appreciates. "It is amazing, you always call me and pray for me," he smiles.

"I am just waiting for an answer"

Following Rowan's stay in GrowTH, he met a kind stranger who invited him into his home. Thankfully, he has not as yet had to endure another night on the streets. His case still in progress, he is now awaiting a decision from the Home Office. He concludes, "Either they say yes or say no." We continue to pray for him.



"It was so good... it held me up stronger."





A guest and volunteer chatting after dinner.

SEEKING GOD

"Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:14

.....

These words from Jesus remain at the very heart of what we do at GrowTH. We want to see the guests who come into the shelter transformed by God both materially and spiritually. We seek to love the guests in word and deed, and to be Jesus' hands and feet, as well as his mouthpiece.

Every guest is made in God's image, with dignity and value and it is God's loving intention to see their lives flourish in every area, including knowing Jesus. We believe that true and lasting joy, peace, security, and fullness of life cannot ultimately be found in anyone or anything other than Jesus and this truth will continue to remain central to what we do.

Throughout the shelter season and in various ways, guests have the opportunity to hear about and participate in the Christian faith. Often a simple Gospel message will be given in the shelter after dinner, or a testimony will be shared. If guests wish to, they can receive prayer, participate in informal Bible studies, go to a local church on Sundays or attend the Alpha course. We know that at least 46 guests came to church this season and at least 16 received a Bible!



SEEKING GOD



JOURNEYS OF FAITH

This season an unprecedented number of guests have not only attended church services or Bible studies, but have continued to attend long after leaving the shelter. Why is this?

The "missing piece"

The Bible says that the harvest is plentiful and the GrowTH team has been witnessing the deep desires in many guests for something more; a "missing piece" that relationships, money, drugs, medication and alcohol have all failed to satisfy. Consequently, many guests have turned to seeking the truth about God.

With the arrival of Naomi, the new Advocate Worker, a closer relationship has been built with East End Church in Bethnal Green. As well as the numerous Bible studies run by night shelter volunteers throughout the season, around

46 guests attended either East End Church, St Anne's Church in Limehouse or other local churches and we have been overjoyed to witness numerous men being rooted in these and flourishing.

Fellowship and friendship

East End Church (EEC) has run a weekly Alpha course specially for former shelter guests, provoking some excellent conversations and encouraging those attending to examine the evidence and reach their own conclusions about the Christian faith.

Many meals have been shared together, in various houses and also in the local parks. Birthdays have been celebrated; World Cup games watched and 5 guests recently attended the Hillsong conference at the O2 arena with over 15,000 people, thanks to the generosity of Greenlight Medical Van.

Guests' thoughts

Youssef is a Moroccan national who has been a regular at East End Church services. He comments on how informative the talks are and

how welcoming he has found the congregation. "The guys there, Tom, Frazer ... were friendly, helpful; a big thank you from me".

He says he has found the Alpha course simple to understand and he seems unambiguous in his understanding of why Jesus died on the cross. "To save us from our sins," he affirms.

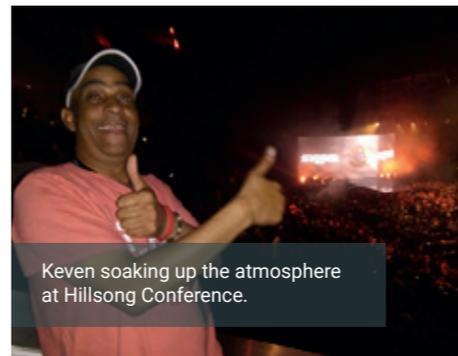
Emmanuel, who stayed at GrowTH in May 2018, has appreciated the close link between GrowTH and the church. "The love we've received from GrowTH ... these people are miracle workers.

You can find a church with a foundation like GrowTH. I've found a pastor (Tom, of EEC). He's the real deal, what you see is what you get. I love him!"

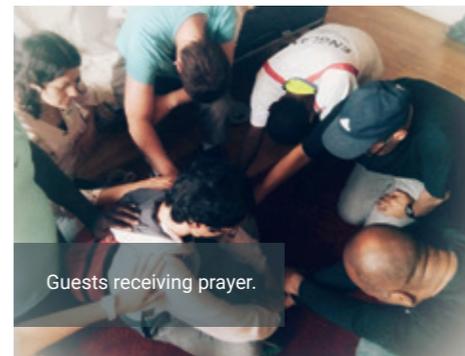
It has truly been wonderful to witness the engagement of the guests and to see them take steps closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that "He fulfils the longing soul" and our team and many of our volunteers have found this to be so true in our own lives. We indeed have good news to share!



A full house for East End Church's Alpha Course.



Keven soaking up the atmosphere at Hillsong Conference.



Guests receiving prayer.



Relaxing in the park.





MY STORY: ALLAN

Allan's father put him on a plane to the UK from Kenya when he was only 18. 17 years later, Allan has not been able as yet to secure legal status in the UK but naturally, feels at home here. His England football shirt hangs drying on the line as we speak.

"I think my life has changed. I just thank God that I've met people like you; that you made a difference in my life".

Where it all began

Rewind to 2017 and Allan had been sleeping on the streets for a year, addicted to drugs. It's a story that we hear sadly all too often. "I look back and can't believe I've been abusing myself for that long," he says, mulling over what could have been.

Allan's world changed after a tragic

encounter. "I had started abusing spice as well; it's evenly more deadly than crack, than heroin." Then he heard the news of a fellow rough sleeper who had tried the new drug. "It killed him. I heard he just collapsed and passed away. That's the time I actually sat down and started thinking to myself, wow, I need to stop taking all this. So I decided to turn my life around."

At the time, Allan was volunteering in a church as a cleaner. He had always known the love of Jesus but was far removed and entrenched in what he refers to as the "underground world". Allan's friend from the church recommended NEWway shelter to him and, later down the line, he landed in GrowTH.

A place to call home

Although grateful for the shelter respite, with no legal status Allan's options were rapidly running out and the streets looked depressingly inevitable. However, his Advocate Worker, Naomi, had one last hope. Against the odds, Allan was offered a room in a local accommodation which provides support

for those with no status. One month on and Allan is firmly settled in the house. He makes me a coffee as the house dog patters around. "I love the way they run the place. I like the freedom. I think I've made progress because I have overcome by the help of God many things that I used to be addicted to".

"I feel free"

Allan has been coming back to the faith that he once knew and worshipping at East End Church. He attended the men's weekend away and is thankful for the friendships he's building. "I feel free. I feel I'm at peace with myself. I feel I'm growing spiritually every day, as I read the word of God. The way I interact with people, it shows me I'm on the right track."

Allan is also excited to volunteer with GrowTH in the next season. He has plenty to reflect over but knows he is heading in the right direction. "Especially looking at my past and where I am right now, I've made progress, definitely. I'm just looking to make more and more progress, because progress doesn't stop here".



"I feel free. I feel I'm at peace with myself. I feel I'm growing spiritually every day, as I read the word of God."



A guest moving to residential rehab.

RESETTLEMENT

"I think Growth staff do their best, over and beyond - thank you!"

"It only took two weeks for Growth to find me somewhere permanent so I don't know how they [could] improve."

"The advocacy team is great and I am leaving as A VERY HAPPY GUEST."

Feedback from night shelter guests, 2016-17



RESETTLEMENT



FINDING A HOME

The practical aspect of GrowTH has two core strands; to facilitate the running of the night shelter and to find new homes for the guests.

Our Advocate Workers are tireless in their efforts to move guests from the shelter into new accommodation, whether that's of a temporary nature or something more permanent.

Many factors contribute towards the outcome but we do our utmost to secure the best result.

Registration

Within 48 hours of a guest's first night in the shelter, we aim for them to meet with an Advocate Worker at our office to discuss their case, including how they came to be homeless, any support needs they feel they have and what their hopes are for the future. This enables the Advocate Worker (AW) to start building a relationship with the guest, as well as garnering information that will allow the AW to suggest options for a move-on.

Partnership working

After the meeting, the AW will contact partner organisations that are also working with the guest, in order to share ideas and discuss the identified needs. We recognise that 'two heads are better than one' and we work with some fantastic organisations such as Crisis and Providence Row that have a huge amount of experience and heart. We then start to formulate a plan of action, often sharing the workload between the organisations.

Case work

During their 28-night stay, guests will continue to catch up with the AWs each morning in the shelter. Once the plan of action is underway, AWs may need to attend meetings with the guest, or apply for replacement ID or new benefits. Often, new conversations throw up previously unidentified issues or the resolving of one issue highlights another to be attended to. Constant contact is kept with the partner organisations to keep them up-to-date of new developments.

Housing options

Once the necessary paperwork and ID is in place, then applications are made. We refer guests to a variety of places: permanent hostels, council accommodation, privately rented properties, supported accommodation and rehabilitation centres. Sometimes a guest will choose to reconnect to their home country. We support the guest throughout the whole process, right up to the move-in and where possible, on a longer term basis too, to ensure a successful placement.



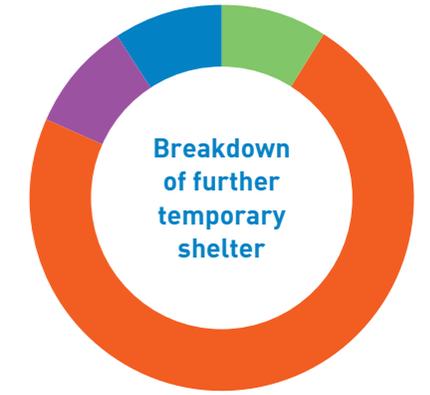
WHERE DO GUESTS GO AFTER LEAVING THE SHELTER?



- More permanent accommodation 57
- Further temporary shelter 42
- Disengaged 31
- No option 6
- Unsuccessful 5



- Private rented sector 13
- Supported Housing 18
- Hostels 12
- Local Authority 5
- Return to home country 7
- Live-in job 1
- Rehab 1



- Family or friends 3
- Another night shelter 31
- Backpackers hostel 4
- Refugee hosting 4



MY STORY: JONATHAN

A new beginning

Having lived abroad for many years, Jonathan decided to return to the UK but unfortunately found it difficult to get work due to new regulations in his industry and so ended up squatting. 5 years down the line and with the squats being overrun and substance abuse rife, Jonathan knew it was time to try and get on the right track.

In his words, "I really wanted to make a big change." Jonathan registered with Crisis and was soon referred to NEWway night shelter and subsequently into GrowTH.

"Faith in action"

Although wary of night shelters and admitting that he found sleeping in a room with 15 individuals a "struggle and

a challenge", Jonathan's reservations soon melted away. "I was struck by the genuine compassion, the open mindedness and the gentleness and patience of the staff, coordinators and volunteers. As an individual who had lost touch with fundamental human nature, it was humbling to see people's faith in action."

Jonathan continues, "Religion was never really a thing for me, I had so much going on. When I started to come here and see proper faith where they adhere to the commandments and stuff like that I thought ok, there are some good people and I have kind of re-evaluated everything."

Jonathan was referred by NEWway into a local accommodation in Tower Hamlets, with the referral coming to fruition during his time in GrowTH. Although he was at one time at the point of quitting the night shelter to go back to his former life, some words of encouragement to look beyond the short term from his Advocate Worker helped Jonathan to see the importance of seeing through his final

days in the shelter. Jonathan's patience paid off and he was offered a room in the highly rated accommodation he had been referred to. He reflects, "I just needed an opportunity and I was given an opportunity."

The perfect step

Jonathan is now settled into his new accommodation and is considering his future. He's hoping to take a course in engineering and is looking forward to securing a stable job. For now though, he enjoys swimming and going to the gym and sees this as "the perfect step ... everything from the past has started to slip away."

Jonathan concludes, "I see myself in a position now where I can improve and be the sort of person I want to be. That would be my particular way of honouring His name. When you actually look at it [the Bible] there are some really touching verses that tell you how you should interact with people. If we all did it, it would work out far better."



"GrowTH was the starting point for turning my life around."





MY STORY: LAURA

Laura, originally from Spain but most recently residing in France, arrived in the UK in December 2017. Her plans were to start work immediately as a live-in carer, knowing the numerous opportunities that London promised.

Unexpected difficulties

On arrival, Laura checked into a hostel and was quickly interviewed by a local agency. The training, DBS check and references took longer than Laura anticipated however, and the money she had brought quickly disappeared. "I had come with a lot of hope but with very little money, thinking that I would start working very fast," she recalls.

Laura found a room to share and was able to pay one month's rent. The experience was not a good one though, as she realised that this was an illegal

let. "It was a very negative place," she says. Although desperate to get out, she had no more money to rent elsewhere so the outlook was bleak. Incredibly though, the day before she was due to move out she attended a class at a local day centre and this day centre turned out to be Providence Row, a local charity helping the homeless. She laughs as she remembers her words, "I said, 'Well maybe tomorrow morning I will come here for an appointment as from the next day I will be homeless!'".

A gift from God

Laura's key worker at Providence Row was able to secure a space for her at GrowTH that very next day and she sees this as a 'gift from God'. She reflects on the 24 nights she spent in the shelter. "I remember it as a very good experience. People were so warm and welcoming. It is very good to feel this humanity when you arrive to a place. Maybe you don't have the energy to interact much, but it's very warm. Being in a safe, secure place ... being able to eat and just go to bed."

Laura's positivity radiates out of her and she is thankful for her experience. "I was very proud to be in the night shelter. For me it was something very positive in many ways. Not being able to have money to do what you want to do, to put yourself in a situation where you can only accept what God is giving you ... it was very positive. It was a lesson of humility."

In March 2018, Laura started working as a live-in carer although for the first couple of weeks, she pined for her time in the shelter! "I missed it a lot at the beginning. The first two weeks I was thinking, 'I would like very much to be in the night shelters instead of living here.' I felt a part of a community."

A bright future

Since then, Laura has been working consistently. She is keen to keep improving her English, as well as improving in her role as a carer. She says she's happy to have a job and has moved into a home in North West London which will act as a permanent base for her. Her future looks bright indeed!

"I remember it as a very good experience. People were so warm and welcoming..."





MY STORY: GARRY

For over 30 years Garry has been in and out of prison with drugs playing a major role in this. Striving to get free from drugs while in prison but then relapsing after his release was an all too familiar pattern for Garry that led to feelings of hopelessness and despair. However, his final release from prison in 2018 would see things take a drastic turn; this time round there was no accommodation waiting for him. His previous accommodation was no longer available and probation could not put him in a hostel. "It's not like that," he said. "They give you a number and they say 'do it yourself.'"

While Garry did find somewhere to stay for a few nights he soon realised that to access certain homeless support services, you literally have to be sleeping

on the streets. "I thought I could stay somewhere and they could just get me but it doesn't work like that," Garry told us. "They [the street outreach team] have to come and get me off the street."

Garry had no choice but to find somewhere outside to stay and wait for the outreach team to pick him up. With thick snow covering the country, Garry managed to stay in the stairwell of a tower block. "It was a bad experience," he said. "That is when it hit me about homelessness." Garry stayed in that tower block for two nights before he was picked up. "It nearly broke me!"

Open arms

After the outreach team had collected Garry, Providence Row then referred him to GrowTH. Reflecting on his first time at the shelter he said, "It was amazing ... it was like a godsend." Speaking of the volunteers he said, "I thought, wow, all these nice people around ... there are people out there who want to help ... they opened their arms to every single one of us." Of the support he received while at GrowTH Garry said, "GrowTH had a

domino effect ... if you knew you couldn't do something, you put me onto someone else and that worked out great for me ... you don't just leave us there."

It was only at the very end of Garry's 28 nights in the shelter that he got an appointment with the council who very quickly moved him into a temporary B&B.

It doesn't end there though...

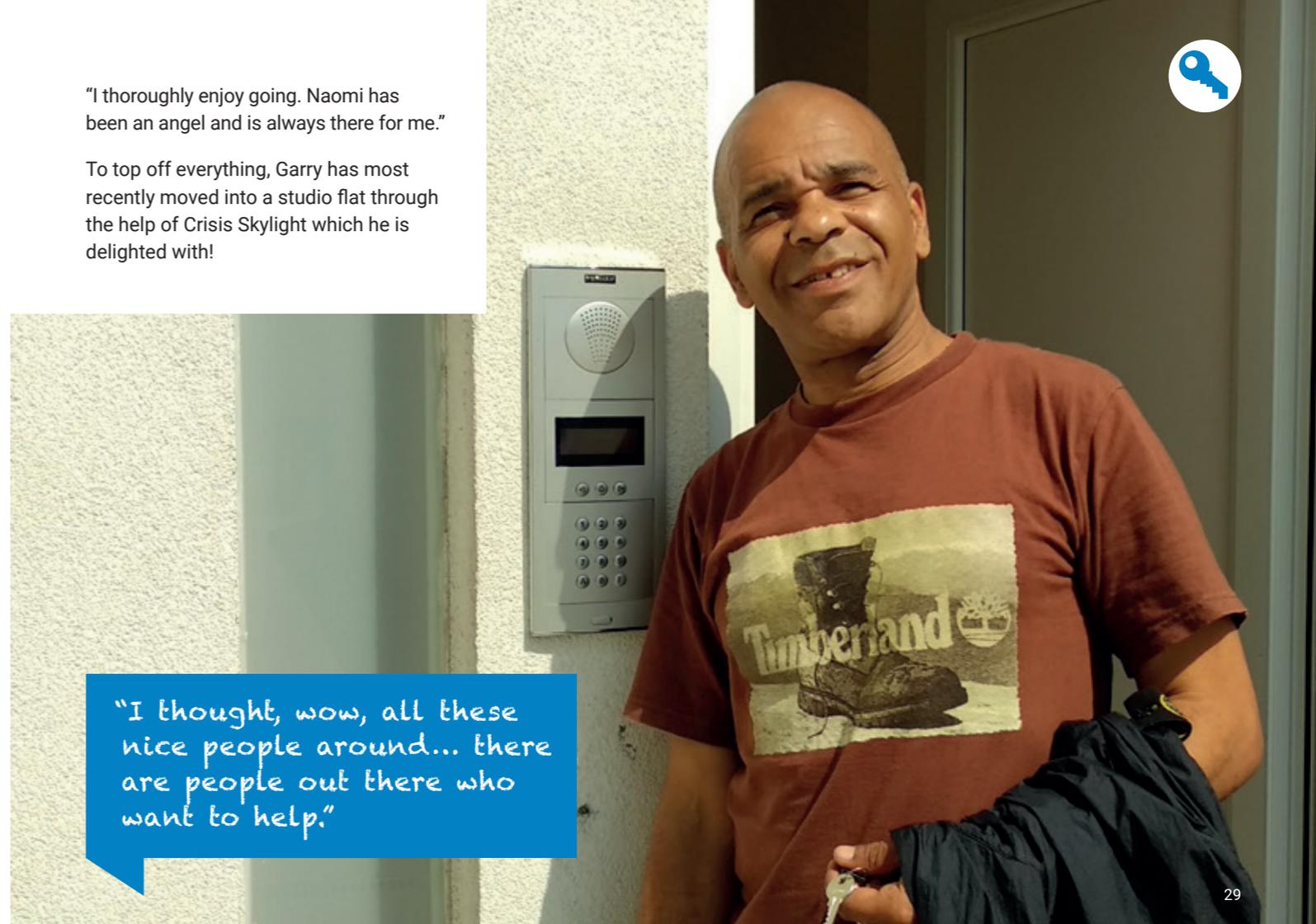
After Garry moved into the B&B he was intent on changing his lifestyle. While this had usually been short-lived, for Garry, this time was different. Thanks to the various drug support services he is engaging with, Garry can say, "I haven't been like this since 1993 ... I've been clean 3 months."

This, for Garry, is a huge achievement as it is the longest time he has remained clean outside of prison. Garry has also been engaging consistently with the Christian faith and has loved attending East End Church, the Alpha course, and spending time with the community who have lovingly welcomed him.

"I thoroughly enjoy going. Naomi has been an angel and is always there for me."

To top off everything, Garry has most recently moved into a studio flat through the help of Crisis Skylight which he is delighted with!

"I thought, wow, all these nice people around... there are people out there who want to help."





Supported Housing residents sharing a Christmas meal with the GrowTH team.

SUPPORTED HOUSING

GrowTH has the privilege of managing four flats in Tower Hamlets which we run as supported housing for six formerly homeless men at a time. The homes are easy to access for those starting with nothing, and each resident is given support in accessing services, gaining skills, finding work and gaining independence. Each resident stays for around one year before moving on. 18 people have benefitted from them so far!

.....

"The GrowTH Housing has given me the confidence to deal with day to day life, and made me feel like I was part of the family. They also given me a roof over my head and supported me with my mental health & well being. I'm truly grateful for all the support & guidance they have provided me."

Shazad, Supported Housing Resident



SUPPORTED HOUSING



MY STORY: ANDOM

Large numbers of people flee Eritrea every year due to government oppression. When Andom tried to leave, he was caught and put into prison for two years. His experience there was painful and hard. "They don't feed you well ... there is no shower." It was one day however, while a prison guard was "relaxing", that Andom made a decision to escape and run out of the prison. Andom was successful and this was the first step towards fleeing Eritrea.

From Eritrea, Andom journeyed to Sudan, Libya, Italy and then through France to Calais where he stayed for a month before hiding, with four others, in a lorry which was heading to the UK. When asked about his Christian faith through all of this, he spoke of how God was in every aspect of his journey. He said,

"God has given me every situation ... he saved my life ... nothing I did by myself, everything was given to me by God."

Andom entered the UK in June 2014 and quickly accessed temporary accommodation provided by the Home Office. He eventually got the good news of being granted leave to remain in the UK, however this also meant that he had to leave his Home Office accommodation. He was left without a place to stay and without security.

Over the next few months, Andom managed to find some temporary solutions including a host family for four months through 'Refugees at Home'. Unfortunately in December 2017 Andom had to move on from there and he was now on the streets. This, he said, was "very bad". It was "terrible weather" such that Andom could not sleep during the night and found himself instead, sleeping in the day. Thankfully he was given details of Crisis Skylight and it was through Crisis that Andom accessed GrowTH.

"GrowTH changed my life"

The contrast from the streets to GrowTH was significant for Andom. Going from sleepless nights to safe, peaceful sleep in the shelter and being able to have breakfast made such a difference to him. "I was very, very happy ... I will not forget my time".

He spoke of how everyone was "lovely" and he described the people in the shelter as a "family". As well as this, Andom worked alongside his Advocate Worker and in January 2018, he moved into the GrowTH Supported Housing. GrowTH, he said, "changed his life."

"Now I can think for the future"

Finally with some security and a place he could call home, Andom could now start focusing on studying and looking for work. Andom's new home enabled him to "think for the future."

He is focusing on studying English and looking for work as well as volunteering in GrowTH night shelter, which he hopes to continue to do next season.

"I was very, very happy...
I will not forget my time."





Volunteers serving food at the GrowTH Celebration Evening 2018.

TEAMWORK

THANK YOU

GrowTH works because it's a partnership. We have a huge team of dedicated and servant-hearted volunteers that give their time and energy to make GrowTH happen.

We are so grateful to all those who volunteered at the shelter this season and played their part in caring for our guests. We're also grateful to all those who have given financially and taken part in fundraising events.

We're all part of the GrowTH team! Whichever part you played, thank you.



TEAMWORK



GUEST FEEDBACK

We always want to hear from guests and learn from their experience. Their feedback helps us to know what works well and what can be improved. We'd like to thank the 47 guests who completed feedback forms this year. Here is a summary of what they said:

The comments were overall very positive, with some honest answers included, which we hope to learn from.

How would you describe your time in the shelter in two words?

The range of answers guests gave shows the variety of emotions that the guests go through during their time in the shelter.

Here are a selection; "good and safe"; "fabulous and amazing"; "good and bad"; "happy and calm"; "sociable and pleasant"; "happy and sad"; "helpful and safe"; "enlightening and informative"; "non-judgemental and empathetic";

"amazing and hard"; "amazing and unexpected"; "eye opening"; "useful and challenging"; "deliciously stimulating!"

How would you describe the volunteers?

GrowTH relies completely on volunteers to run the night shelter and we are so grateful to them. Many of the guests took this opportunity to express their appreciation too.

The volunteers' commitment was commented on with one guest summarising them as "very devoting and always ready to help." "Friendly", "caring" and "amazing" also featured within many



Jonathan shares his story at the GrowTH Celebration Evening.

of the comments. One guest added "100% good"!

Did GrowTH help you to know more about God and Christianity? Has your opinion changed?

Many guests come to the shelter with some level of faith already. There are many ways during their stay that the guests can engage further with the Christian faith if they wish and with almost one third of guests attending church on a Sunday, the uptake was high!

Although opinions were not always changed, one guest commented, "It gives you something to believe in" with another

adding that the Christians he had encountered in the shelter were "humble and giving".

For others, it was a reminder of a God they already knew. One said, "My love for God Jesus Christ has increased" whereas another reflected that, "I'm a Christian before but have lost myself over the past couple of years. [I've] been going to church since and really loving it."

Is there anything you would like to share about your experience of being homeless?

The reality is that homelessness is a state that no one would hope to face and the guests were very honest in their feedback, one describing it as 'horrible' and another as 'the most difficult experience in the world'.

One summarised homelessness as 'an experience that exposes one to the other side of life, but not a good one.'

However, a surprising number of guests were able to view their experiences in a very different light. One lady shared,

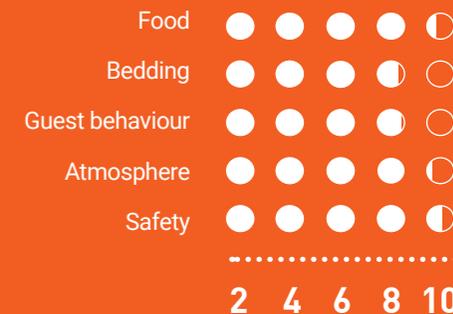
"It helps me to know others more, be more empathetic towards others' situations, pray for their situations to improve and no matter what, know that God is in control ... and I'm his walking miracle."

A second guest was also grateful for the opportunity to meet others in a similar situation, commenting, "You get to meet different people from all kinds of difficult backgrounds and find out how similar we all are. Homelessness breaks down barriers."

One gentleman sent us a letter after leaving the shelter. He wrote, "I was actually petrified when I first ended up homeless but because of people like you and the countless others I've met in the Growth group, it not only made me comfortable but it put a smile back on my face and inspired me to chase a dream that I intend to devote my life to. I really hope our paths cross again."



How would you rate the following aspects of the shelter out of ten? Average responses:





FUNDRAISING

Thousands of pounds are raised for Growth each year through sponsored challenges and fundraising events. We are so grateful to those that have participated in these, whether sleepouts, carol concerts, triathlons or marathons! Thank you!

Would you be up for doing a challenge for Growth? Whether you want to join one of our events or have an idea of your own, please get in touch and we can talk it through.

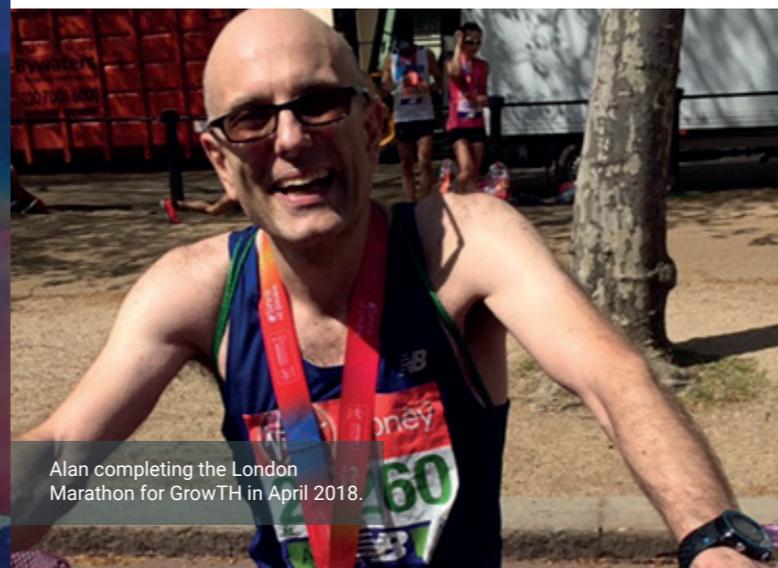
 www.thisisgrowth.org/fundraisingevents



James, Steve, James and Markus completing a triathlon in May 2018.



Participants in the Growth Sleepout 2017.



Alan completing the London Marathon for Growth in April 2018.



Kenny doing the Growth Sleepout 2017.



Sing Tower Hamlets Christmas Concert 2017.



REFLECTIONS: OPERATIONS MANAGER

Working for GrowTH has been a non-stop adventure since I began here in 2015. A new chapter began this season when I took up the role of Operations Manager after Martin moved on. I had big boots to fill and whilst the challenge was exciting, the weight of this new responsibility seemed daunting. Little did I know how much God's faithfulness and generosity

would exceed my expectations in the months ahead. In every area, God lovingly showed me that he is in control, and he has far greater plans than anything we could come up with.

It is encouraging that, although GrowTH has developed in many ways over the years, it is still very much a partnership of churches, and we want each church to see GrowTH as 'their' mission to their homeless neighbours. GrowTH as a charity simply provides the framework, administration and casework to enable the churches to carry out their mission.

I love seeing how the shelter has a different flavour each night of the week, and each team of volunteers has its own ways of showing love to the guests. Some sing songs while others share inspiring testimonies; some show artwork while others show films; some play ping pong while others play chess! Not to mention the variety of meals from around the world that are cooked for guests!

Thanks to this diverse partnership, guests encounter God's love in many ways and through many people.

"Thanks to this diverse partnership, guests encounter God's love in many ways and through many people."

Moreover, as each church plays their part, we remember that "The body is a unit ... and though all its parts are many, they form one body." (1 Corinthians 12:12). Every "part" involved in making GrowTH work is vital and valuable, and we need every part to be working! 'GrowTH' is simply the name we give to this partnership, so as we report on what *GrowTH* has done this year, we want people to be seeing that this is what the *local church*, working together, has done this year, or better still, what *God*, through the local church, has done this year!

I look forward to seeing what God will do through us next season and beyond, and I pray that he will grow the GrowTH family even more!

Matt Endersby, Operations Manager

REFLECTIONS: ADVOCATE WORKER

There has not been a single moment in the last 10 months where I have regretted taking the step from volunteer to staff member at GrowTH; from the corporate world, so often money-centric, to the world where men and women are riding buses to stay warm at night.

141 guests walked through the doors of our shelter this season. Some for only a fleeting moment, others to enjoy the full 28 night respite. Those whom I have come to know well have captured my heart! I hope they know the great joy that they have brought me.

I can see now that the role of an Advocate Worker cannot be underestimated. The influence that we have has been surprising, be it upon the guests themselves, the referral agencies that we work with or the professionals that we

face on a regular basis. Many a time an encouraging word has positively swayed the decision of a guest or our supporting presence in a meeting has resulted in an unexpected or swift outcome.

Having volunteered with GrowTH previously, I did not walk in completely blind, although I have had to learn quickly in this fast-paced environment; where free food is distributed, how to make a claim for benefits, the restrictions on those from outside the UK, how to access a criminal record, who the council will agree to house...

To walk alongside someone going through the difficult trial of homelessness and to support them in these practical ways has been extremely fulfilling but I have also loved simply being a friend; to revel together in their highs and to console in their lows.

Most importantly, I aim to be the best ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ that I can be. As a team, we are united in our prayer that the guests will "know the hope to which he has called them" (Eph 1:18). Each morning we spend time praying



"Those whom I have come to know well have captured my heart!"

for the guests and reminding ourselves through His word of His faithfulness and great love.

We can help change a guest's external circumstances but it is our Heavenly Father who changes the heart. May GrowTH always have Christ at the centre of all we do!

Naomi Newman, Advocate Worker



REFLECTIONS: ADVOCATE WORKER

November 1st 2017 the questions began: Is everything ready? Will there be a calm atmosphere in the shelter? How many guests might we be able to house this season and what about those who end up back on the streets?

The shelter season ahead seemed to be filled with uncertainties but it is in

these moments of uncertainty that God has taught me of the sweetness of fully depending on him.

As a team we are learning to work daily in the knowledge that our loving and mighty God is the leader of GrowTH and he must continue to be so every day, every season, and in every area, from the volunteering and coordinating, to the advocacy, finances and management!

Greater dependence on God also taught me about persevering in prayer. Things change when you persevere in prayer and we have seen God answer all sorts of prayers this season, many of which were very 'last minute' as guests often got into accommodation right at the end of their 28-night stay.

It has been wonderful to see lives changed; many of our guests are now on journeys of faith.

I can recall one guest who would not smile or even give eye contact. By the end of the 28 nights, he was quite literally a different man. To see his smile and hear his laughter was pure joy. But this is exactly

"As a team we are learning to work daily in the knowledge that our loving and mighty God is the leader of GrowTH."

what one should expect from a God who "raises the poor from the dust and ... seats them with princes" (Psalm 113:7-8).

While there have been plenty of good news stories this season there are of course some guests whom we could not help into accommodation. Life for them is still very uncertain and hard.

Even more so then, I have found my need to depend more on God, persevere in prayer, and expect immeasurably more! In this, I rest and work.

Paul Tebb, Advocate Worker

REFLECTIONS: TRUSTEE

It is amazing to think about what happens when we step out in faith and decide to use what we have for the benefit of others. As I recall the beginnings of GrowTH 9 years ago, I am reminded of how daunting things seemed.

The decision to set up a night shelter in a short amount of time required faith, risk, cooperation with others and above all the miraculous provision of God.

From those small and crazy first steps, God has continually used GrowTH to do great things in Tower Hamlets, enabling us to bring help and assistance to those in need as well as practically demonstrating the good news of Jesus.

Jesus spoke in Matthew 5 of the church being light. At GrowTH, our aim has always been to demonstrate that to our local community. In working together, churches in Tower Hamlets are able to

bring light to our community. It is our hope that this light helps people to find not only help with housing but also to be able to find the One who is himself the Way, Jesus. It is his love and mercy that is at the centre of all we do.

On a personal note, this year marks a transition as I step back from being Chair and Ryan Lynch stands aside as Deputy Chair. Having overseen GrowTH from the start, we feel that now is a good time for us to allow others to take the work forward and are convinced that the best days of GrowTH lie firmly in front of it.

It has been a joy and pleasure for us to work alongside a fabulous team of trustees, staff and volunteers and we have had our lives impacted by so many inspiring guests.

To God be the Glory!

Tony Uddin, Trustee



"From those small and crazy first steps, God has continually used GrowTH to do great things in Tower Hamlets."



GIVING

We want to say a huge thank you to the many individuals, churches, trusts and foundations that have given to GrowTH in 2017-18, either as one-off donations or regularly. We are so grateful for your support!

Giving financially to GrowTH is an opportunity to partner with us and play a role in providing shelter and support to our homeless guests. Donations are vital to enable us to

continue what we do: running the night shelter, supporting guests into housing and investing in guests' lives to see real transformation.

We also want our work to grow so we can impact more lives for the better. Any amount, big or small, makes a difference.

 www.thisisgrowth.org/donate

WAYS TO GIVE:

Online

Make a donation or give regularly via give.net by visiting www.thisisgrowth.org/donate.

Standing order

Fill in the form opposite and post it to our office.

Bank transfer

Make a payment direct to our bank account: Account name: This is GrowTH Ltd, Bank: CAF Bank Ltd, Sort code: 40 52 40, Account number: 00024575.

Cheque

Make cheques payable to 'This is GrowTH Ltd' and send to: GrowTH, 302 The Highway, London, E1W 3DH.

GIVE BY STANDING ORDER

If you'd like to give regularly towards the work of GrowTH, please fill in this form and post it to: GrowTH, 302 The Highway, London E1W 3DH.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Personal information is used solely to process payment of your donation, Gift Aid and for related internal management, and is not disclosed to third parties other than our Payment Service Providers. For more info visit www.thisisgrowth.org/privacy-notice.

Title:	First Name:
Surname:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Email:	
Telephone:	

Please debit my account by the sum of:

£5 £10 £20 £50 Other _____

every month starting from: / /

Until further notice, and credit the amount to the account of This is GrowTH LTD (Account Number: 00024575, Sort Code: 40-52-40, CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ).

BANK DETAILS

Name of bank/building society:	
Address of bank/building society:	
Account number <input type="text"/>	
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Signed _____	Date _____

GIFT AID

If you are a UK taxpayer you can increase the value of your donation by enabling us to reclaim tax via the Gift Aid Declaration below:

I want the charity to treat the enclosed donation as a gift aid donation.

I am a UK taxpayer and I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of gift aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I am also consenting to my details being held on record by GrowTH. Should my circumstances change such that this is no longer the case, I will inform GrowTH and cancel this declaration. Please treat as Gift Aid donation all qualifying gifts of money made today/in the future/in the past 4 years (delete those not applicable).

Please note that if you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate you can claim further tax relief in your self assessment tax return.

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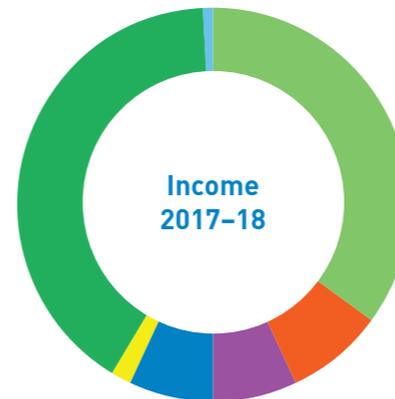
Would you sleep outside for one night for our homeless guests?

GROWTH

SLEEPOUT 2018

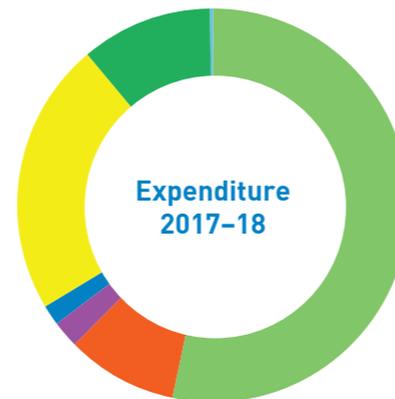
St Anne's Limehouse Friday 19th October 7pm

Raise awareness and raise money. Sign up: www.thisisgrowth.org/sleepout



- Charitable trusts 46,840
- Sponsorship events 10,509
- Individual donations 9,442
- Regular giving 9,069
- Church donations 2,344
- Rental income 54,027
- Other 809

Total income: £133,040



- Staff costs 73,571
- Charity costs 12,598
- Shelter costs 2,966
- Resettlement 2,446
- Housing rent & costs 30,769
- Van 14,655*
- Other 368

Total expenditure: £137,373

The accounts above cover the period from April 2017 to March 2018. As with any charity our formal accounts are sent annually to the Charity Commission and these are available publicly online.

*All van costs were covered by a grant received from the Pret Foundation Trust in the previous financial year.

A number of trusts and foundations gave towards Growth in 2017-18. We would like to publicly thank the following:

- › East London Nursing Society Trust
- › Isla Foundation
- › Leeds Building Society Charitable Trust
- › Linklaters Foundation
- › London Catalyst
- › London Diocesan Fund
- › Mrs Smith & Mount Trust
- › Oliver Borthwick Memorial Trust
- › Seedfield Trust
- › Souter Charitable Trust
- › The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- › The Alexandra Trust
- › The Archer Trust
- › The Barnabas Trust
- › The Charity of Mary Baker
- › The Grace Trust
- › The Porters' Trust
- › Wyseliot Rose Charitable Trust

Plus the many other trusts, organisations, churches, schools, businesses and individuals that have given towards our work.



JOIN US

"We love because he first loved us."
1 John 4:19

PRAY :: VOLUNTEER :: GIVE

www.thisisgrowth.org

