



GROWTH

2018-19

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

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Design by Chloe Johnston.

A special thank you goes to Winston Mattis who took many of the photos in this report. Winston is a volunteer professional photographer who has taken photos for GrowTH each year since 2010.

This is GrowTH Ltd is a registered charity: 1161226 and a company registered in England: 8172757. Our registered office is 302 The Highway, London, E1W 3DH.

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MORE GROWTH!

What a year! For the ninth year running, churches in Tower Hamlets have been working in unity to carry out a mission. Together we've been sharing God's love in word and deed with our neighbours who don't have a place to call home. Our core project, the night shelter, ran for seven months again this season thanks to the hard work of the 450+ volunteers who played their part.

Our Advocate Workers, Paul and Naomi, did a brilliant job advocating for our guests and securing homes for them. Against the odds, they helped 50 guests into permanent homes and 41 into temporary accommodation. Find out more from page 12 onwards.

In January 2019 our team grew to four as Rachel became our GrowTH Housing Manager. Shortly after that our prayers were answered and we were able to expand our housing project, doubling our capacity. We now manage 7 flats for a total of 14 formerly homeless men and women! Read more about our housing project from page 24 onwards.



This season we were also pleased to help six guests get onto the amazing Pret a Manger 'Rising Stars' programme, which provides full time employment and support to those affected by homelessness (see page 23).

Whether you volunteered, gave financially, prayed, or supported GrowTH in any way: THANK YOU. As you read through this booklet, remember that you helped to make this all possible.

Let's give all the glory to God!

Matt Endersby, GrowTH Operations Manager

"We love because he first loved us."

1 John 4:19



IMPACT THIS YEAR



3,075 bed spaces for guests



6,150 hot meals provided



139 homeless men and women given shelter



50 assisted into more permanent accommodation



41 assisted into further temporary shelter



36 (at least) attended one of our churches



St Luke's Millwall ready to receive guests.

NIGHT SHELTER



NIGHT SHELTER

"I was fed and clothed and was given the support that I needed to move on to a more permanent accommodation."

"Much needed relief in a time of hardship. Met great people and were of great support."

"Warm and welcoming."

"[The volunteers] totally understand our needs... they were helpful and heart-warming."

GrowTH night shelter guests, 2018-19



CHURCHES RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS

The statistics are worrying. The estimated number of people sleeping rough in London increased again in 2018 to 1,283 on any given night¹ and it is estimated that the number of 'hidden homeless' in London is 13 times higher than that.²

We as individuals and the church are driven to do something to help. We acknowledge that our guests' situations are often complex and there is no simple fix or 'one-size-fits-all' approach. We also realise that we are unlikely to be truly effective on our own. However, by working together, we can make a real difference in people's lives in a holistic way; meeting not only material needs, but also relational and spiritual.

Partnership is vital

GrowTH is a demonstration of partnership. Individuals serve side-by-side as volunteers; cooking meals, putting up beds, chatting to guests. Churches work together, sharing the responsibility, to make sure the shelter can run seven nights a week. GrowTH, as a charity, partners with other organisations to make sure that our guests have as much support as possible and the greatest chance of finding a home.

The church has a unique role to play in truly loving and serving those who are homeless. Yes, churches can work together to provide brilliant practical help, but more than that, we can welcome our guests into a loving community and, most importantly, share the good news of Jesus with them.

¹<https://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 25 churches and 2 community centres; providing venues, volunteers, funding or a combination of those:

- > All Hallows Bow
- > All Saints, Poplar
- > Bethnal Green Mission Church
- > Bow Baptist Church
- > Christ Church Isle of Dogs
- > Christ Church London
- > Christ Church Spitalfields
- > East End Church
- > ELT Baptist Church
- > Greenlight Medical Van (Hillsong)
- > Hope Church Newham
- > Jubilee Hall, RCCG
- > Quaystone Church
- > Salvation Army, Poplar
- > St Anne's Limehouse
- > St Botolph-without-Aldersgate
- > St Helen's Bishopsgate
- > St Luke's Millwall
- > St Matthias Community Centre
- > St Nicholas, Poplar
- > St Paul's Shadwell
- > St Peter's Barge
- > The Good Shepherd Mission
- > The Hurtado Jesuit Centre
- > The Liberty Church
- > Tower Hamlets Community Church
- > Trinity Church Central London



Guests and a volunteer enjoying a game of draughts in the shelter.

- Our referral agencies in 2018-19 were:**
- > Crisis Skylight
 - > Whitechapel Mission
 - > Praxis Community Projects
 - > Providence Row
 - > Spitalfields Crypt Trust
 - > Health E1 GP Surgery



HOW THE SHELTER WORKS

GrowTH partnered with six referral agencies in Tower Hamlets this season who work alongside us while the guests are staying at the shelter. The infographic shows how someone can access the shelter.



"Thank you as ever for your invaluable work in ensuring that vulnerable people are provided with shelter during the coldest months. You are an incredibly useful resource for us." **Bethan Lant, Praxis Community Projects**



MY STORY: ALFATEH

At the end of 2014, Alfateh's father was falsely accused of supporting criminals, and their shop was burned to the ground. A year later Alfateh tragically lost his brother. "He was killed," he told us. "Now I thought maybe same thing will happen to me ... my life will not be safe if I stay there." In 2016 Alfateh decided to flee from Sudan to Libya, which would become the start of his journey to the UK.

The difficult and unexpected journey to the UK

Alfateh had expected to stay in Libya, but to his surprise this was "more horrible" he said. After two months in Libya, Alfateh decided to join around 100 other asylum seekers in crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Italy. This part, he recalls, "is a big story. The sea was horrible. People, they lose control ... they become like crazy ... when they see the dark and the water you

think you're going to die." Alfateh went on to describe the terrifying night sea as "like mountain." Though the atmosphere in the boat was one of panic and fear, "God," he said, "saved us." Indeed, no lives were lost and two days later, the boat reached Italy.

Alfateh spent around 15 days in Italy before deciding to follow a group of Sudanese nationals to France and then the UK. After a journey which included two days of walking, Alfateh arrived in Calais where he would join others attempting to hide in the back of a lorry that was heading for the UK. This was no easy task. "We try many times ... many times they catch us and send us back to Calais," he said. Eventually, after around 10 attempts, Alfateh and six others managed to get into the back of a lorry parked at a petrol station and in September 2016 Alfateh set foot in the UK.

With the good news comes the bad

Once in the UK, Alfateh was quickly placed in temporary Home Office accommodation while his asylum claim was being assessed and in May 2017, he was successfully granted leave to remain.



A typical boat taking refugees across the Mediterranean sea.

This was bittersweet news however because this also meant that he had to leave his accommodation due to Home Office rules. "I feel very bad, nowhere to live," he told us.

Twice homeless

Thankfully, a friend was able to let him stay for a year but when his friend left, Alfateh again had nowhere to go and he became street homeless. The physical, mental, and emotional hardship of homelessness took its toll on Alfateh, forcing him to quit his job. "I was on the street, but I was going to my work ... It was very hard ... even my wife called me, but I didn't want to talk ... I felt very bad," he told us. Alfateh was homeless for around a month before the rain became unbearable and he went to the police station to ask

for help. On the advice of the police, Alfateh called Street Link and through their intervention, he was supported into private accommodation. This, sadly, did not last as Alfateh lost his new job and was therefore unable to pay rent. "That time I felt no way for me ... I will have to be homeless again," Alfateh told us.

"When I joined GrowTH I felt like I was safe"

Homelessness, he said, was "like hell for one day but felt like hundred days ... I had nothing in my pocket, nothing to eat." Thankfully he found Whitechapel Mission who referred him to GrowTH. Recalling his first night he said, "When I joined GrowTH I felt like I was safe." Alfateh entered the shelter in May 2019 and through the advocacy work provided by GrowTH, he secured a place in GrowTH's own housing project the following month! When asked how it felt, Alfateh replied comically, "I missed the shelter, now I have to start making food! ... All the shelter I've been [meeting] amazing people and really they help us a lot, everything was nice!"

Alfateh is now better able to focus on sustainable employment and his wife will

soon join him in the UK! "I have waited four years," he said. Alfateh continues to receive ongoing support from the GrowTH Housing team.



"God saved us."





WHO ARE OUR GUESTS?

Total number of guests
in 2018-19 season: **139**



Oldest age: **75** years

Youngest age: **19** years

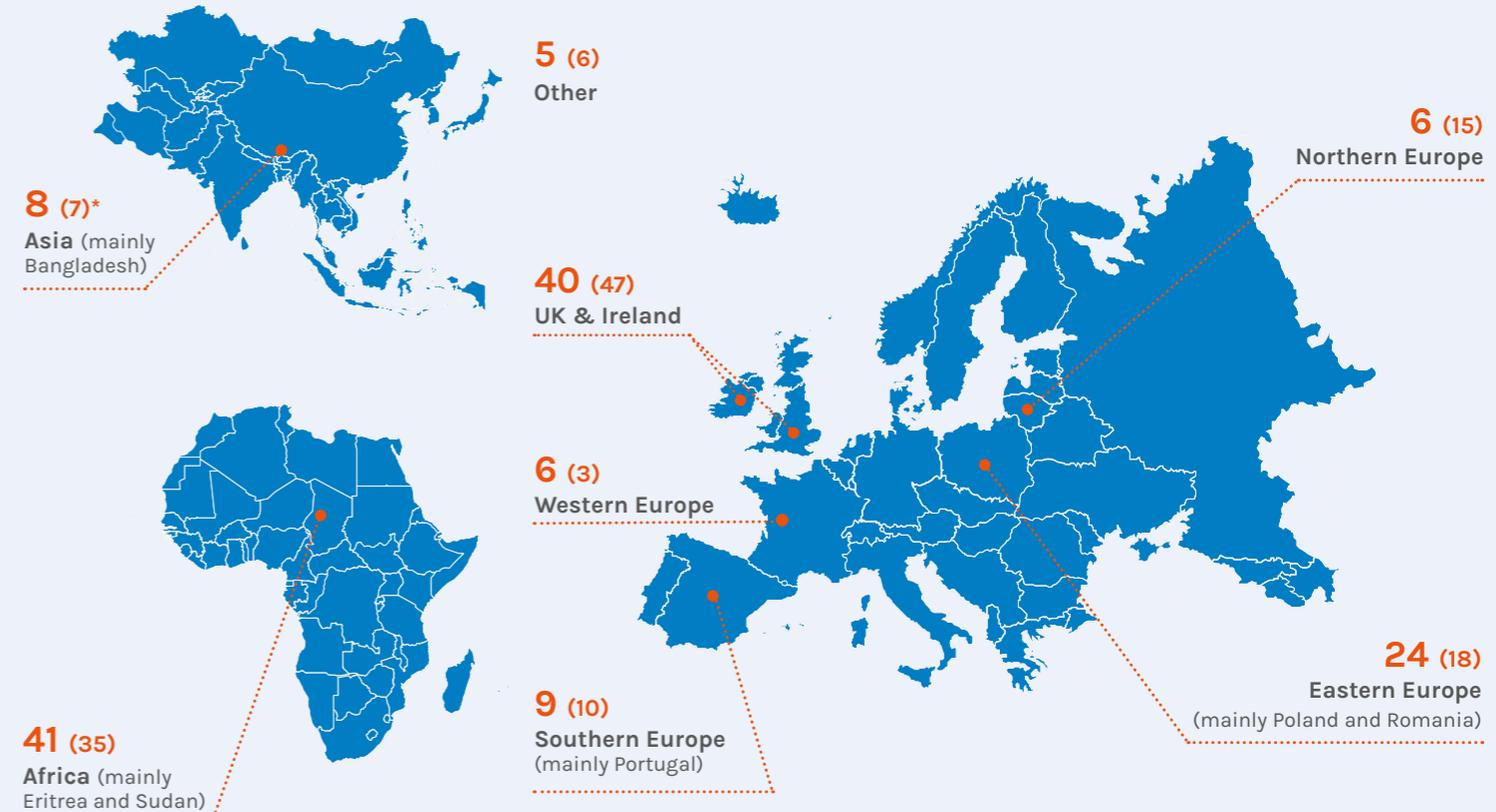
Average age: **42** years

Guests with No
Recourse to Public Funds: **23** (15)

Refugees: **29** (22)



NATIONALITY OF OUR SHELTER GUESTS



*The numbers in brackets show last year's statistics, which have been included for comparison.



A resettled guest!

RESETTLEMENT

"I think they're already doing a fantastic job and can't say anything that needs improving upon."

"[They] are very nice to help you get an accommodation."

"Paul and Naomi are always listening and asking for what guests need."

GrowTH night shelter guests, 2018-19



RESETTLEMENT



FINDING A HOME AND BARRIERS FACED

In the 2018/19 season, GrowTH was able to secure more permanent accommodation for 50 guests (36%). If we include those who we know moved into permanent homes later on, independently of GrowTH, that number rises to 62. We are so grateful to everyone involved in these life transforming outcomes!

However, we know you may be asking the question, 'But what about the remaining guests? And why did 44 of the 139 guests disengage from the service?'

The Process

We will start by briefly explaining the process a guest goes through whilst staying at the shelter. Each guest is allocated an Advocate Worker (AW) who will support them during the length of their stay and often beyond. An initial registration meeting helps to identify the key needs and issues. A plan can then be formulated and the AW will work with partner organisations such as Crisis and Providence Row to help overcome any barriers to accessing accommodation, or to agree on the best route to take. This always needs to be with the full support of the guest and so the AW will visit the shelters each morning to update the guests on any progress.

Barriers to accommodation

There are many factors that are outside of our control, although the AWs work hard to try and problem solve and find solutions. Some of the barriers are as follows:

Lack of benefits or work

> 23 of our guests had No Recourse to Public Funds due to being subject to immigration control. This means that they are not entitled to most benefits. Often they are also not allowed to work in the UK. Therefore, there is no way for them to pay rent on a home.

> 46 guests were from other EEA countries. Benefit eligibility criteria for EEA citizens has historically been quite complex and often our guests are struggling to find regular work, the latter being exacerbated by living on the streets.

High rent charges

> Rent in the London private sector is high! If a guest is already working, it is difficult to find any affordable accommodation, especially when

large deposits and rent in advance payments are expected. Guests' savings are usually minimal.

> Most of the accommodation we can refer guests to is known as 'Supported Accommodation'. With this support comes high rent charges which, although covered by housing benefit, makes it almost impossible for the guest to start working full time and still afford to live at the accommodation. This can discourage a guest from even entering the accommodation to start with.

Addictions and mental health

> Some guests are trapped in an addiction, be it drugs, alcohol or gambling. Finding suitable accommodation in this instance is challenging and can sometimes be like putting a sticking plaster over the issue. Maintaining accommodation whilst being addicted can be extremely difficult. We are pleased that four guests entered rehab this season. Many more need it, but are unwilling to enter. Often these guests will abandon our services.

> Mental health illnesses can certainly negatively affect a guest's chance of entering accommodation. If high support is required, it limits the options available. Poor mental health can also result in unwise decisions and/or refusal of services.

Lost/stolen ID

> It is very common for bags containing ID to be stolen or lost whilst on the streets. ID is required to secure both housing and jobs. Requesting replacement ID can be a long (and expensive) process.

Disengagement

Of the 44 disengaged guests, 31 stayed 7 nights or less, with 20 of these staying 3 nights or less. These short stays could be for the following reasons:

- > A friend has offered a sofa space. This is often preferable to moving to a new venue each night.
- > The guests find that they cannot comply with the zero-tolerance alcohol and drug policy.

> Arriving at the shelter at 7.30pm is a problem for some guests who want to be free to socialise in the evening.

Guests are expected to engage with their AW during their 28-night stay, as well as to accept a reasonable offer of accommodation. Disengagement can also occur when there is an unreasonable expectation of the type of accommodation available or the location of it is not favourable. Offers of adequate accommodation may therefore be refused by the guest and disengagement follows.

We hope this provides some insight into the challenges faced by those working on the frontline and gives more of an understanding into the statistics provided.

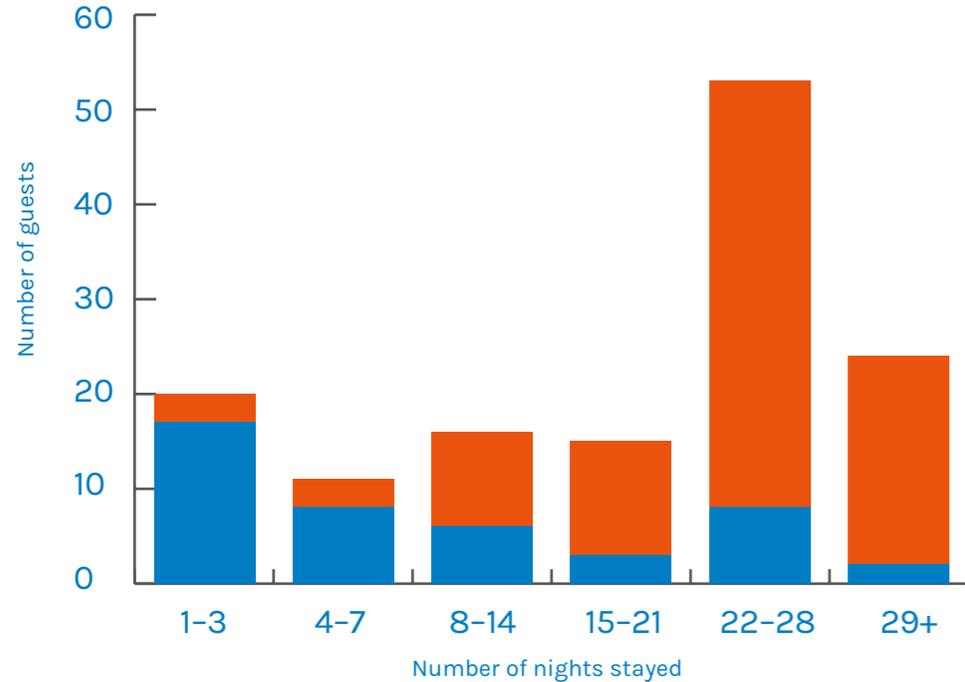
Please see the next page for our statistics.





WHERE DO GUESTS GO AFTER LEAVING THE SHELTER?

Length of stay in the shelter



62

Did you know?

Although we helped 50 people into permanent homes, that number rises to 62 (at least) when we include those that found permanent accommodation later on, independently of GrowTH.

Key:

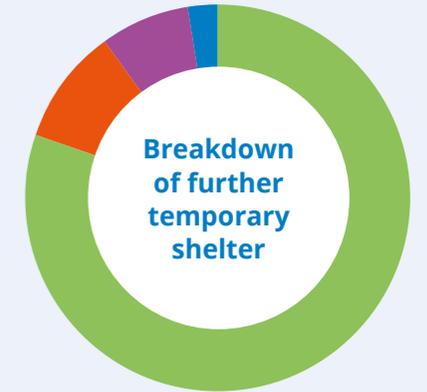
■ Guests who disengaged from the service.



- More permanent accommodation 50
- Further temporary shelter 41
- Disengaged 44
- No option 4



- Hostels 19
- Supported Housing 18
- Private rented sector 4
- Rehab 4
- Live-in job 2
- Family or friends 1
- Local Authority 1
- Return to home country 1



- Another night shelter 33
- Family or friends 4
- Backpackers hostel 3
- Refugee hosting 1



MY STORY: CHARLES

Before coming to London, Charles was settled in Norfolk with his own flat, having reconnected with his mum after growing up in care. Work was hard to come by, and Charles took pity on a friend in need. "I thought, 'I'll be charitable and let him stay with me.' I didn't charge him no rent." Although all started well, things quickly turned sour and eviction loomed. For his own safety, Charles decided to move away and travelled to London with enough money for four nights in a hostel and some food.

A providential meeting

Sat in a café on the third day, a lady lent Charles a phone charger and pointed him in the direction of Crisis Skylight. That turned out to be a providential meeting! During his 10-night stay on the streets, Charles registered with Crisis

Skylight and awaited the street outreach team, without success. At times, it was "bitterly cold" and Charles started to feel depressed with his circumstances.

Fortunately, Crisis then managed to secure a place for Charles in the GrowTH night shelter in February 2019. GrowTH was not what Charles expected. "It really did surprise me!" he admitted. "The staff were so friendly. They took a genuine interest in your situation. They did actually make you feel welcome. You wanted to go back there."

Answered prayer and new home

Charles stayed at GrowTH for 23 nights before securing a room in local accommodation. "The hostel I am in now is perfect, I am so happy there. I walked past it one day on the way to one of the shelters and I used to think, 'That would be a nice place to live in'. Then one day, my luck changed and I actually did get that hostel. It's like God answered a prayer. He knew that I had my eye on something like that."

Friendships that Charles enjoys now began in the shelter. "You built up like

a family rapport. You'd look out and care for one another. Miguel, Ahmed, Mohammed, we all became strong, good friends. Now we spend a lot of time together."

Counting the days

Charles was grateful to hear the message of Jesus shared in the shelter. He explains, "The night shelters are run by a lot of Christian people. They don't force the gospel on you ... but they were really happy and willing to sit down and read it with you if you wished ... I think that helps a lot of people. It helps a lot of people find God and return to church."

Previously a member of a Mormon church, he is now enjoying fellowship at East End Church. "The first time I walked into the church I felt a little out of place and uncomfortable because I was so used to going into church in a suit and tie ... but the church started their service and the singing started ... I found I really enjoyed it. I felt at home. I felt at peace being there. I found myself counting the days during the week. "When's it Sunday, how many days 'til Sunday? I want to go back to church!" It's an open family, they

are not just there to do their own thing, everyone cares about each other."

On the right path

Employment is important to Charles. He has completed a 12-week barista course with Crisis Skylight and has also enjoyed ad-hoc work with RenewEL, a social enterprise that offers work to those on the margins. He hopes to secure full-time employment and dreams of his first holiday abroad. "I have never left the country! I want to go somewhere with a sandy beach, swim with dolphins."

Charles is full of gratitude and hope for the future. He concludes, "I just really, really want to thank GrowTH night shelters. From giving me a roof over my head, to guiding me; leading me to the right path that I should be on, rather than just leaving me to wander like a lost sheep."

"It's like God answered a prayer."





MY STORY: MIKLOS

From hostel to hostel

"Horrible" is the word used by Miklos to summarise the last few years of his life.

Miklos lost his job in the winter of 2015. Three months later, with no savings and no new job, he became homeless. He moved from hostel to hostel. "Three years gone, just like that," he contemplates.



A tranquil home.

Finally, with help from Crisis, at the start of 2019 Miklos entered the winter night shelters, with GrowTH being his third consecutive shelter. Miklos describes street life as "crazy" and was thankful for the rest he experienced in the shelters, as well as the good food and the conversations with volunteers.

A permanent job

During his stay at GrowTH, he secured a permanent job as a chef. With that came a stable income and the opportunity to enter the private rented sector.

Fortunately, a room became available in the GrowTH move-on flats. It wasn't long

before Miklos was clutching the keys to his new home. When asked how he felt, he smiles and responds, "Cloud nine ... it was unbelievable!"

He continues, "The last two days [in the shelter] I was just ... fed up ... waiting, waiting, waiting for my own place, my own thing. I almost gave up and then something happened. Always last minute. Yeah that was very good and since then it is just getting better and better, you know?"

Surviving

Two months on and Miklos has made a real home of the space. His DJ turntable rests in the corner of the room; incense burns and the room is covered with plants, books and trinkets he has rescued from various places. His perfectly polished boots are neatly aligned.

When asked on his hopes for the future, Miklos states, "Just at the moment ... surviving." It may take a while for Miklos' new-found stability to become a reality but he is grateful for new beginnings.



"I almost gave up and then something happened."



SPOTLIGHT: QVSR

The Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR) has been a vital resource for GrowTH this season. Seven guests have found a home there, joining the handful of guests received in previous seasons.

QVSR was established in 1843 by two Methodist ministers determined to help seafarers, especially those living in appalling conditions. Today, they still care for seafarers but also house ex-servicemen and those homeless for other reasons.

Accommodating up to 165 residents, originally the rooms were modelled on a cabin in a ship with up to 20 men sharing bathroom facilities. In the last 10 years a major refurbishment has been carried out to convert all the bedrooms into en-suite rooms. Chief Executive Alexander Campbell has recently celebrated his 15th year in the role and



has overseen the whole refit, ensuring a high standard. "We want to give them the very best," he explains.

As well as the conversion of the rooms to en-suites, the communal areas have also been modernised; the accommodation boasts contemporary designed lounges and restaurant, gym facilities, a full size snooker table, an activity centre, satellite TV, a multi-faith room and a chapel.

Miguel moved to QVSR in March 2019 and has been impressed with the professionalism of the staff who are on hand to help with everything from finding work to assisting with benefits. He describes it as a "very friendly place" and comments on the quality of the facilities as well as the opportunity to be involved with a range of activities such as day trips, football matches and a cinema club. The motto of QVSR is 'Shelter, Support, Hope' and Miguel has experienced these values first hand.

Mr Campbell shares, "It's almost like a ship coming through. People find that harbour where they are able to get themselves sorted out. That may take

months, it may take years but eventually they will have hope for the future."

We are extremely thankful for our partnership with QVSR and for the understanding and compassion shown to our many guests by the Welfare Team, led by Salem Abdelkader. We look forward to many more of the GrowTH guests finding refuge and a home at QVSR.



QVSR's CEO, Alex Campbell, with a GrowTH resident.



The refurbished canteen area.



SPOTLIGHT: PRET A MANGER

In 1995 The Pret Foundation was born out of the Pret a Manger sandwich shop chain with one goal in mind: "to help break the cycle of homelessness." Pret recognised that one of the most important ways to break this cycle is by offering employment and in 2008 the Pret Rising Stars programme was launched to help do just that. 'Rising Stars' is designed to enable those experiencing homelessness to enter back into employment as well as providing plenty of ongoing support.

Those on the 3-month programme enter full time work in a Pret shop, are paid a fair weekly wage, have their initial travel costs covered and attend group support sessions during work hours to chat through any difficulties. Those who complete the three months continue as permanent employees.

Since its launch, over 475 people have been through the programme and this year GrowTH made six referrals to 'Rising Stars'. One has graduated and four are currently on the programme and "are doing well so far," says Hind Meflah, the Employment Programme Manager. A week in, one Rising Star said, "I like the Rising Star scheme. It will be great to be a star again ... as soon as I stepped inside [I got] lots of help from everyone ... in the kitchen we are like a family". Emmanuel, who is also new to the programme, said, "There are a lot of opportunities. You can become a manager, a team leader, be an assistant manager ... I'm having a blast!"

One of the highlights of this season is seeing Fredy (photo right) recently graduate from the programme and go on to work permanently for Pret. Fredy is so happy, he is already thinking of the future. He said, "I am happy here; I think to apply for the leader job ... maybe after two or three months."

Regarding GrowTH's partnership with Pret, Fredy said, "It was very good because if I never been there [the night shelter], I could never do the programme with Pret



Fredy in the Pret shop where he works.

so it's the best thing." Employed and now living in permanent accommodation, Fredy is a perfect example of all that the Pret Foundation set out to achieve and why our partnership with Pret continues to be so valuable to us!

For more information about the Pret Foundation and the Rising Stars programme visit www.pret.co.uk/rising-stars-programme.



GROWTH HOUSING

The site of many of the Growth Housing flats in Poplar.

"It's more than a relief, I just can't describe it. Being in the Growth flats has helped me start saving some money and paying off some of my debts."

"The flat is nice, smart, clean."

"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."

Growth Housing residents



GROWTH HOUSING



WHAT IS GROWTH HOUSING?

Finding local move-on accommodation for our shelter guests is not easy. Growth Housing exists to provide accessible, affordable accommodation in Tower Hamlets to former guests, along with support with finding work and moving on in life. Our residents usually stay in our flats for one year, and in that time they agree to engage in meaningful activity, such as employment, training, education and volunteering. They also meet regularly with the Growth Housing team for support.

There has been a whirlwind of activity at the Growth flats over the last few months. Where previously we were able to house six residents in four flats, we now can accommodate 14 residents in seven flats, thanks to our partnership with Poplar HARCA. We took the decision to convert some of the 1-bed flats



into 2-beds in order to support more individuals and also to offer more affordable accommodation. This enables and encourages residents to enter work. With the help of several generous donations from our amazing supporters, we were able to fully furnish these flats with kitchen appliances, carpets and furniture. Due to the expansion, we have employed a further two part-time Growth Housing Workers who will be joining the team imminently to provide much needed support to the residents.



7 flats



14 residents



The majority of residents are in employment



26 people have lived in the flats so far



Emmanuel is one of our newest residents. He was in the shelter in spring 2018 and has been attending East End Church since then. After leaving the shelter he moved to a studio flat in North London and enrolled on a number of training courses.

Unfortunately his high rent, which was paid through housing benefit, would be unaffordable if he started paid work and stopped receiving benefits. He stayed in contact with Growth and alongside giving him the keys to one of our flats, we also supported him onto the Pret Rising Stars programme. He is now working full time for Pret a Manger and is glad to be able to afford the rent in the Growth Housing, and to be living close to friends from church.



MY STORY: PATRIZIO

Patrizio used to ride the number 15 bus to keep warm whilst homeless. He now rides the very same bus from his home to his job at Pret a Manger! "In a few days everything had changed," he muses.

"A bad year"

The circumstances that led to Patrizio's homelessness are not uncommon. After his father died at Christmas 2018 and his sister suffered a stroke, Patrizio naturally travelled home to Italy. On returning to the UK, he discovered that he no longer had a job; one of the pitfalls of a zero-hour contract. "It was a bad year," he reflects.

Having already been asked to leave the flat he was sub-letting, he found himself riding the night buses and sleeping on the street. Ashamed, he tried to keep hidden. Eventually, he knocked on the

door of GrowTH and the next night entered the shelter. He has nothing but fond memories of shelter life. "The people inside were so friendly ... the shelters were great, nice people. Every night was very, very good."

A quick turnaround

Only 14 days later, Patrizio was holding the keys to his new home in GrowTH Housing. "I spent my first night after months in a proper bed ... I wake up in the morning with the sun, it is beautiful! From the window you can see all the skyscrapers ... a big moon. It is beautiful, amazing! I passed by many times with the night bus and now I'm here. It was amazing."

New opportunities

It wasn't long until a job opportunity came knocking. He was successfully accepted onto the Pret Rising Stars Programme and offered a position in a central London shop. Fortuitously, the shop manager is also Italian. He said it felt like they had been friends "for ages"!

Patrizio recounts that by the second day, he had already been allocated his own

bench in the Pret kitchen which he says is "almost impossible". He is so thankful. "It's an outstanding experience," he beams.

He is very hopeful for the future. At 65 years old, Patrizio shows no signs of slowing down. He is thankful for his good health and says "thanks God, thanks everybody, thanks GrowTH."



"In a few days everything had changed"





MY STORY: ISHMAEL

Ishmael's story shows how anyone can be only a few steps away from homelessness, but also how it is possible for the situation to quickly be turned around.

After starting an interior design business in Leeds, cashflow soon became an issue. Ishmael's savings were swallowed up, he was let down by potential investors and also fell victim to a bitcoin scam. The final straw was a client who failed to pay for a design job Ishmael had completed. Here he continues the story in his own words:

Disappointment

"At that time my sister invited me to come to London to live with them. I thought, 'This is a good opportunity to live with my sister, save money, and after a month, once I'm sorted, move

out'. I moved to London a couple weeks before Easter; my sister was away at the time so I moved in with my brother-in-law. I found it difficult with my brother-in-law. After 10 days, I got to the point where I had to move out; he'd always been a nice guy but when I was in need he changed. I had a couple hundred pounds so I tried to find a cheap hotel or something.

On the streets

I spent two nights on the streets; it was scary, uncomfortable, I'd never been in that kind of situation before, I was alone.

The first night I stayed awake, I had my bike so I was just riding around to stop me from falling asleep. The following morning I sat down for a moment and I just passed out on the bench. My body shut down because I was so tired. The following night I slept outside a hotel on my bike but I realised, 'I can't continue to do this'. I spoke to one homeless guy and he told me to go to a church for help and they pointed me to Crisis Skylight. It was late when I got to Crisis and they said to come back tomorrow, but also gave me details for a cheap hostel.

I managed to stay there for the night.

New starts: a home and a job

After four days I had an appointment at GrowTH. At that time I had no money at all so I felt relieved once I got to the shelter. I made friends there; that was the first time that I didn't feel invisible. All this time I'd been on my own and it was good to be seen.

The volunteers were awesome, friendly and always too eager to feed us, and so helpful. The help from the Advocate Workers was excellent. I felt like I'm just going to be open to any opportunities and be humble and accept whatever is available. They gave me lots of options and Paul was so supportive.

Now I have a rented flat in Poplar with GrowTH. The flat is nice, smart, clean. To finally get the keys, it was like 'Okay, is this really happening.' It's more than a relief, I just can't describe it.

Being in the GrowTH flats has helped me start saving some money and paying off some of my debts.

During my time in the shelter Paul had also submitted an application for the Pret Foundation; they help homeless people get back into the workforce. I attended an interview with the Pret Foundation manager; I told her my situation, my story and they invited me to do a trial shift in one of their stores, and I got the job.

For now I just say to myself to be less ambitious, take things slow, don't try to do too much or expect too much but work and pay off debts and live a simple life. In the future, things may change but I want to be consistent in work to be the best I can be."



"That was the first time that I didn't feel invisible"



A guest worshipping in church..

SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

"It helped me reconnect to God."

"GrowTH reinforced my opinion about Christianity.
Very compassionate."

"Touched by their belief and faith."

GrowTH night shelter guests, 2018-19

GrowTH is a signatory to the
Housing Justice Charter for
Christian Homelessness Agencies.



SPIRITUAL SUPPORT



WHY DO WE SHARE OUR FAITH?

Not too long ago the GrowTH team attended a thought-provoking event called 'Have we lost our Christianity in our caring?' In other words: is there any distinguishable difference in our caring to that of secular service provisions? In 2013 a secular report was published, researching the contribution faith-based organisations bring to supporting those that are homeless. The report highlights the steady removal of the "faith dimension", which was once the "defining and visible element of their service"¹², including the removal of "evangelism of proselytizing of any kind"¹³. The faith dimension has always been central to GrowTH as we seek to provide holistic support that meets both the material and spiritual needs of our guests. The importance of this approach is further reiterated in the report's conclusion that a focus on one's material

and physical needs alone is not enough. Spiritual needs must also be met to enable a full life!⁴

So, the question remains for GrowTH: what does it look like for us to have a Christian distinctiveness at the core of our caring? When we look at the life of Jesus, what do we see? We see a man who welcomes and loves all without exception. This

indeed is a Christian distinctive and one we hope is clearly visible in all we do. At GrowTH we welcome all people regardless of faith, ethnicity or sexual orientation, but

there's more! Jesus wasn't simply a good moral teacher exemplifying kindness, compassion, and charity. He came with life-transforming news – a message in fact, and he has tasked his church to go and tell this message to all peoples. Jesus is not only the reason why we do what we do but he is the very person whom we offer to the guests. He is the answer to the question, "How do I lead

and sustain as full a life as possible?"¹⁵ It is through relationship with Jesus that we experience the most joyful and soul-satisfying life transformation; something that cannot be attained in meeting only material and physical needs.

Like all good news, we want to share it. This is why we offer opportunities for guests to engage with the Christian faith

and talk about Jesus if they would like to. Sometimes this happens in natural and organic one-to-one conversations; other times it is through optional

Bible studies, praying with the guests, or simply inviting guests to church on Sunday.

The Bible says, "...how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?" (Romans 10:14) and this season it has been wonderful to see guests engage with the Christian faith in these various ways and all because we were willing to share something of how amazing God is!

"At GrowTH we welcome all people regardless of faith, ethnicity or sexual orientation, but there's more!"



¹Gravell, C. (2013) Lost and Found: Faith and spirituality in the lives of homeless people. Available at: <https://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/LostandFound.pdf>, p. 24. ²Ibid, p. 27, ³Ibid, p. 24, ⁴Ibid, p. 53, ⁵Ibid, p. 24





JOURNEYS OF FAITH

The decision to follow Jesus Christ is a life-long one and the Apostle Paul urged the church in Colossae to "continue in the faith" (Colossians 1:23). We rejoice that a handful of guests from the 2017-18 season continue to be a part of their local congregation a year on, and that they have also played a vital role in encouraging guests from the 2018-19 season to explore the Christian faith.

Liam is a 34-year-old who stayed in GrowTH in 2017-18. He has been part of the set-up team in his local church for over a year. He shares, "My journey through faith has not been linear but has always remained, thankfully. There are times when I find life difficult and trying, and that is when I question the reality, not of if God is real, but if He is really as close and connected as we

are taught. It is at these times where the church helps to overcome them through the testimonies and conviction of my fellow Christians and elders. In hindsight I can see God's intervention at times through my life and the paths He has guided me down, one being the path leading me to GrowTH and ultimately into East End Church and the good, kind, caring, generous and forgiving people there, all of which I needed and still need."

Tom Sexton runs a weekly Bible study with the GrowTH guests; a continuation of the Alpha course which featured in last year's report. "It's my favourite thing to do in the week. They are putting bits of the puzzle together and understanding it ... linking stuff and coming to their own conclusions. I'm just seeing those godly qualities come out more and more."

Keven (a guest from 2018) has been particularly influential in the involvement of new guests. Tom remarks, "[He] is like the Pied Piper isn't he? He could lead them anywhere but he brings them to the Bible study!"



Miguel camping at Big Church Day Out.

Shazad was a guest of GrowTH in 2017. He is a regular at the Bible study and describes it as "amazing". He elaborates, "It's got me in touch with spirituality ... getting in touch with God and actually just learning about where I was going wrong and learning the stories of the past and how meaningful they are to this day." He adds, "I was just lost in the world." He continues, "Tom and Frazer have been really nice and kind to me. Frazer invited me to his house to meet his family. I was very touched, met his kids, his wife; to me I'm a family man and that was very touching for me ... Frazer has got loads of wisdom and experience and it's good to have someone there, a father figure

... and Tom is like a brother to me". Two guests enjoyed attending the Big Church Day Out in May 2019; a weekend of camping and Christian worship. Other highlights include Emmanuel enacting the role of a wise man in the Christmas nativity, Keven playing bass in the worship team and friendships being strengthened during a beach day at Southend. Most recently, nine guests attended Hillsong's 2019 conference with one attending church the following Sunday for the first time and two others visibly responding to the gospel messages spoken. Youssef, a guest from 2018, shared, "The three days were awesome." We are thankful yet again to the Greenlight Medical Van (Hillsong) for giving guests the opportunity to attend.

The Christian faith will always be the driving force behind the work of GrowTH and we ask you to join us in praying for the guests. Many seeds are sown by our faithful volunteers over the season and we pray that these seeds will bear fruit over a lifetime and that guests' lives will be changed forever by the love of Jesus Christ.



Hillsong Conference 2019.



Keven on bass.



Setting up for a Sunday service.





MY STORY: KEVEN

In April 2018 Keven came into the GrowTH night shelter. Now in more permanent accommodation and committed to a local church, Keven tells us something of his journey of faith.

"I wanted to go back and couldn't wait for Sunday to come"

Keven's journey started one Sunday morning in the night shelter when Naomi invited him to East End Church. "The first thing I thought was 'Oh not another one, a Bible basher!' I didn't take it seriously. I just thought I'd go and show my face and disappear, but it didn't work out that way." Keven recalls his initial thoughts as he sat there listening to the talk. "The first few words he spoke kinda got my attention and from that day I decided, yes, I wanted to know more ... and I thought, 'Yeah this is good'. I wanted to go back. I couldn't wait for Sunday to come".

A week later Keven watched a movie in the night shelter called 'Risen'. He said, "This reinforced what Tom [Elder at East End Church] was talking about ... everything was interlinked. A lot of times people talk to you about religion and faith and you shut off because you're in a good place so you don't really want to know, but when you go in a bad place your mind is like shut off but at the same time when faith comes along and starts, you start seeing things for what it really is and start to think, 'That makes a lot of sense'."

One striking element about Keven's story is how he always felt like something was there but prior to this time he never encountered anyone who simply opened up the Bible with him and explained it all. "I was brought up in Church ... I couldn't stand it ... it was like in the army," Keven told us. When asked how this impacted him he said, "It's kind of at the back of your mind. You do believe something was there, but it wasn't explained to you properly ... until I started going to East End Church and listened to Tom talk."

"Everything reinforced and the belief gets stronger and stronger"

Keven's commitment to East End Church and being part of a loving community has played an important role in his journey. Everything from small conversations and attending the Alpha course, to key people "Naomi, Tom, and Frazer", have all played significant roles in helping him understand truth. Keven also plays bass in the worship team on Sunday mornings. He told us how this has also had a big impact on his faith. "I bought the bass four years ago. I wasn't playing it that much [but] I found my place in following Jesus ... my place is singing these words to Jesus, worshipping," he said.



Keven at the GrowTH Celebration 2019.

"Now I see it in a different light because Jesus did die for us"

In April 2018 Keven had no strong convictions about faith. Now, when asked if he believes Jesus died and rose again for him, he stated emphatically, "Yes, definitely. It makes all the difference to my life ... he done that for us, for some reason went through all that pain for us, without no sin, no hatred, he still forgave them ... I can't begin to explain ... it's amazing!" Keven continued, "I clearly see this is the right path. I'm not saying forget everybody else, but it is about Jesus."

Looking back

Reflecting on his journey, Keven said, "This is why he [God] put me through all that I went through to get where I am. That's why I'm not beat up! I embrace it, to be honest with you, because now I know. It's amazing where I am right now. Five years ago, if you asked me about that I'd say, 'Go away, don't talk to me'. It's an amazing feeling. I wish I could pass it on to someone else."

Keven is now thinking of taking the next step and getting baptised! We look forward to hearing about what God continues to do in his life!





Volunteers from Trinity Church Central London helping at the Bethnal Green Mission Church shelter venue.

TEAMWORK



TEAMWORK

THANK YOU

GrowTH works because it's a partnership. We have a huge team of dedicated and servant-hearted volunteers from our churches and from the community that give their time and energy to make GrowTH happen. Whether you cooked, cleaned, ran a Bible study, set up beds, befriended guests or slept over; we are so grateful to all of you for your hard work and for playing your part in caring for our guests.

We're also hugely grateful to all of you who have given financially and taken part in fundraising events. This year we have had an increase in the numbers of supporters who give monthly, and we've had some incredibly generous donations from individuals. This financial support is vital to the work of GrowTH, and has enabled us to continue, improve and increase what we do. Thank you for your sacrifice and for investing in GrowTH's mission!

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



GUEST FEEDBACK

For GrowTH to continue running a loving, safe and hospitable night shelter it is important to hear from the guests themselves to get their opinions on what worked well and what they think needs improving. We'd like to thank the 62 guests who filled out our feedback form this season. Here is a summary of what they said (shown here exactly as they were written):

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

"Warm and welcoming"; "surrealistic and happy"; "safe and enlightening"; "helpful and cosy"; "hospitable and hearty"; "eventful and social"; "friendly and stressful"; "quiet and revealing"; "excellent and uplifting."

Some longer comments from guests include:

"Life changing. Made me eager to volunteer when I get back on my feet"; "I wasn't sure what to expect but everyone from the volunteers to the guests have been great"; "I learn how to help others"; "much needed relief in a time of hardship"; "I met new friends"; "I was fed and clothed and was given the support that I needed to move on to a more permanent accommodation."

How would you describe the volunteers?

"They totally understand our needs ... they were helpful and heart-warming"; "friendly, polite, very helpful, warm and calm in any situation"; "when your down they cheer you up"; "simply the best"; "very compassionate"; "tip top"; "most of the staff and volunteers are some of the most beautiful people that I have met."



Paul doing casework with a guest in the shelter.



A guest and volunteer chatting in the shelter.

Do you have any feedback about the casework that GrowTH Advocate Workers do for guests?

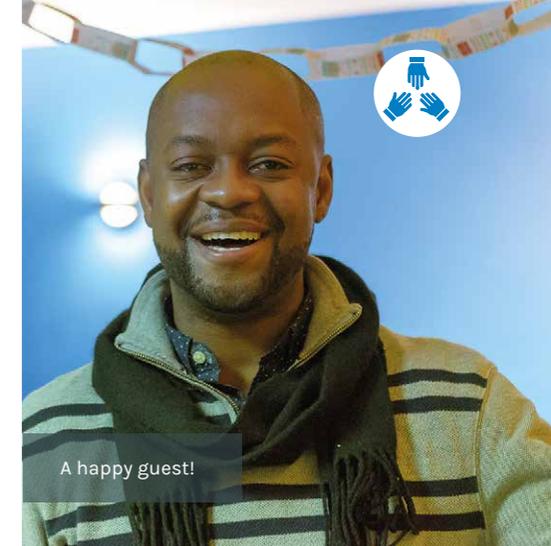
"My case worker did and does all she could and can to help me to get a better situation"; "GrowTH is dedicated in their job helping people. In getting accommodation - this is an avenue of improvement"; "I felt I was in great hands, dealt with politely and my needs were taken care of. Very efficient in helping me with longer term accommodation"; "very professional in their duty ... thumbs up all the way"; "a bit bureaucratic but very helpful"; "find more housing associations."

Did GrowTH help you to know more about God and Christianity? Have your opinions changed since you came to the GrowTH night shelter?

"Yes, every night. I have a high opinion of those who adhere to the Christian faith and I have a greater opinion of Christians and the tenants they follow"; "was introduced to a Sunday service and hope to continue to attend"; "it helped me reconnect to God"; "touched by their belief and faith"; "yes of course, those people are truly God send. Their love for God fills the place"; "GrowTH reinforced my opinion about Christianity. Very compassionate."



A guest and volunteer enjoy a game of table football in the shelter at All Saints Poplar.



A happy guest!

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





REFLECTION: ADVOCATE WORKER

My second year as an Advocate Worker here at GrowTH has passed with only a few minor hitches and yes, I look forward to a third season!

Each day is varied, with guests constantly changing and new stories to be shared. There is a buzz during the shelter season; generated through peaks and troughs of both jubilation

and angst. One memorable moment was calling the police, reporting that a guest was angrily waving around a 'metal pole' outside the shelter, which in fact turned out to be his white cane (he was partially sighted)! What began as a nerve-wracking incident turned out to be a rather humorous one!

The expansion of the GrowTH Housing was a particular highlight, after months of prayer. We see employment as a key part of the route out of homelessness and are so very happy to offer affordable accommodation which encourages this.

There have been many other moments to celebrate where, perhaps against the odds, guests secure a new home. These outcomes are greeted with cheers of relief and joy in the office. Great satisfaction is felt by all when a purpose of GrowTH is being fulfilled in such a tangible way.

But as a team we are clear that GrowTH has a bigger purpose and so my greatest satisfaction has come through seeing so many guests make East End Church (where I am a member) their home. These former guests are now my friends

"A good dose of humility is required, as well as patience and perseverance."

and I love them with all my heart. I love seeing their faith grow and seeing them serve on various church teams. These friends of mine have helped me celebrate my birthday and have shared the dance floor with me at wedding celebrations of their church family. We pray that one day they will also share in the eternal joy of heaven. Oh to see that day!

Finally, this season I have been challenged personally on the character required for an effective Advocate Worker. I can be quick to assume that I know what is best for the guest, but without their cooperation or accord, that plan will often fail. A good dose of humility is required, as well as patience and perseverance. A saviour complex is all too easy to develop, so we must continually be reminded that there is only one true saviour, and his name is Jesus Christ.

Naomi Newman, Advocate Worker

REFLECTION: GROWTH HOUSING MANAGER

In January I started my job as the GrowTH Housing Manager. I first began volunteering for GrowTH in February 2015, and enjoyed serving people that had fallen on hard times; people who really needed love and care. Since those first days I've been on a journey, grasping more and more of God's heart for those on the edges.

It's a delight supporting the residents in the flats, whether it be onto the next accommodation, helping a resident to find work, listening to what's going on in their life, or just catching up for a coffee. The residents are in the flats for around a year so there is plenty of time to build up a good friendship with each person.

In April Poplar HARCA provided us with three additional flats. It is fun but hard work preparing the flats for

the residents; and then so rewarding when finally someone moves in. I think that's the highlight of the job: seeing people move from homelessness into accommodation and the stability and joy it brings them.

I feel so blessed to be working for GrowTH. It's amazing to work as part of a team that is so supportive of one another; lifting each other up and caring is such a part of the culture of the team. On a busy day it's so good to get the chance to read the Bible and lift up in prayer the people, meetings and schedule for the day ahead; to stop and rest in Him before getting down to the tasks at hand.

Rachel Arnold, GrowTH Housing Manager

"That's the highlight of the job: seeing people move from homelessness into accommodation and the stability and joy it brings them."



Rachel with the keys to the new flats!



FUNDRAISING EVENTS

In the 2018-19 financial year, over £19,000 was raised for Growth through sponsored challenges and fundraising events. We've had a sponsored sleepout, 10K runs, four half marathons, a marathon, Christmas jumper days and carol concerts!

Thank you to all those who took part or gave money towards these events!

Could you help raise money for Growth?

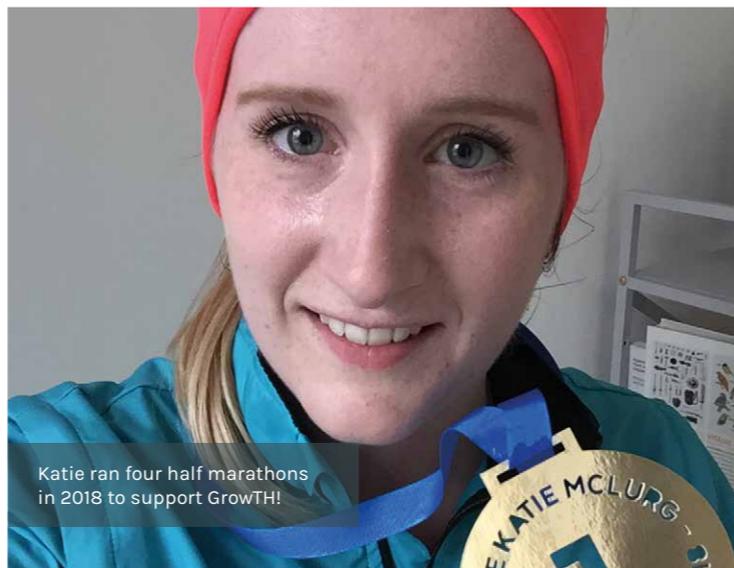
If you have a fundraising idea, please get in touch! Maybe you'd like to take on a sponsored challenge for Growth, or do a cake sale, quiz or special clothes day at your office or school? Whatever you have in mind, we'd love to hear from you!

Visit www.thisisgrowth.org/fundraisingevents

or email info@thisisgrowth.org



Sheila and David did a 10K run for Growth.



Katie ran four half marathons in 2018 to support Growth!



Peter outside Christ Church Spitalfields after completing the 2019 London Marathon for Growth.

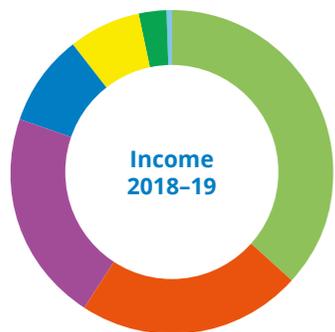


Sing Tower Hamlets Christmas Concert 2018.



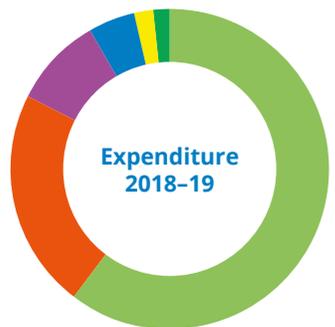
Participants in the Growth Sleepout 2018.

FINANCES



■	Individual donations: £78,985*
■	Rental income: £47,722
■	Charitable trusts: £45,571
■	Sponsorship events: £19,376
■	Regular giving: £15,287
■	Church donations £6,153
■	Other: £860

Total income: £213,954



■	Staff costs: £83,133
■	Housing rent and costs: £30,262
■	Charity costs: £12,698
■	Guest support and resettlement: £6,426
■	Shelter costs: £2,867
■	Van costs: £1,988

Total expenditure: £137,374

Total put into reserves: £12,877

Total put into savings: £70,000

The accounts above cover the period from April 2018 to March 2019. As with any charity our formal accounts are sent annually to the Charity Commission and these are available publicly online.

*£70,000 of this sum was from two individual donations alone. It was decided by the Board of Trustees that this amount would be put into savings with a view to using it for a new project, hopefully in 2020.

As well as receiving support from churches and individuals, GrowTH has also been supported by a number of trusts, foundations and companies in 2018-19. We would like to publicly thank the following:

- > East London Nursing Society Trust
- > Ecclesiastical
- > Golden Stable
- > Greater London Authority
- > Hospitality Action
- > Isla Foundation
- > Kingdom Bank
- > Linklaters Foundation
- > London Catalyst
- > London Diocesan Fund
- > The Alexandra Trust
- > The Archer Trust
- > The Charity of Mary Baker
- > The Lyndhurst Trust
- > The Vicar's Relief Fund
- > Wyseliot Rose Charitable Trust

Plus the many other organisations and individuals that have given towards our work.



HELP US TO CONTINUE THIS WORK...





DONATE

Giving financially to GrowTH is an opportunity to partner with us and play a role in providing shelter, support and housing to our homeless guests. Donations are vital to enable us to continue and improve what we do.

 thisisgrowth.org/donate



WAYS TO GIVE:

GO ONLINE

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

STANDING ORDER OR BANK TRANSFER

Send all payments to: Account name: This is GrowTH Ltd, Bank: CAF Bank Ltd, Sort code: 40 52 40, Account number: 00024575. Please email info@thisisgrowth.org to notify us of the payment.

DIRECT DEBIT FORM

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

CHEQUE

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

GIVE BY DIRECT DEBIT

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.

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

We would like to send you email updates about our work, fundraising activities and ways to get involved. Would you like to receive updates from us? Yes No

Please debit my account by the sum of:

£10 £30 £50 £100 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

Account number

Sort code

Signed

Date

GIFT AID

If you are a UK taxpayer you can add 25% to your donation at no cost to you by ticking below:

Yes, please Gift Aid this donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years. I am a UK taxpayer and 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.

Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or if you no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

GROWTH



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JOIN US

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



PRAY VOLUNTEER GIVE

www.thisisgrowth.org

