



Together we're Recycling Lives

Impact Report 2020/21
Recycling Lives Charity

A man with a shaved head and light blue eyes is wearing a black hoodie. The hoodie has a small logo on the left chest that says "rec. riggles" with a green graphic above it. He is standing next to a large, dark, crinkled object that looks like a piece of plastic or a large bag. The background is a blurred green wall.

Contents

Changing lives	3
Solving problems	4
Feeding communities	6-11
Reducing reoffending	12-19
Tackling homelessness	20-25
Creating value	26

Changing lives



Compassion for others and connection with the world around us became defining themes of 2020. These senses of community have always underpinned our work at Recycling Lives Charity, as we work to create opportunities for people to change their lives.

We do this by feeding communities, reducing reoffending and tackling homelessness.

Sharing our work and impact allows us to celebrate the successes of the men, women and communities we support, and recognise our team who make this possible. It also demonstrates that change is possible – that social problems which create both social and economic costs, can be overcome.

Our annual reports share the social and economic value we create. Our most recent social value figures total **£22.3m**, comprised of:

£650,000

by supporting 11 men, who were experiencing homelessness, into work and independent housing.

£12.4m

by supporting 85 ex-offenders into training and work, to reduce their risk of reoffending.

£450,000

by supporting 39 people who had been long-term unemployed into training and work placements.

£8.8m

by delivering 3 million meals to 216 charities and community group, preventing 1,262 tonnes of food waste, and supporting 14 volunteers into employment.

£22.3m

social value

<5%

reoffending rate

149

people supported into work

3m

meals delivered

Covering our activities between October 2019 and December 2020.

Social value – by our definition and as applied in previous Social Value Reports – looks at the fiscal benefits or cost savings created by our programmes. It takes into account the national average costs of reoffending, homelessness, food waste and food poverty to society, and calculates the savings created by tackling these. The figures are calculated using national metrics. While 'social value' is a commonly-used phrase, this definition and form of calculating value is exclusive to our work.

Solving problems

"2020 will forever be remembered as the year the world lived under the shadow of a global pandemic. Its impact and implications reached us, creating many challenges.

"However, I'm delighted to say we met these head on, responding with versatility and agility.

"When it all began, I set three targets:

- Make sure the charity and social enterprises survive
- Look after every team member and volunteer
- Ensure everyone in our programmes continues to get the same standard of care and support.

"I'm delighted to say we've achieved all three - and more.

"In fact, this experience has brought our team closer together. Everyone mucked in and helped wherever it was needed. Whether it was their role or not.

"Good communication and flexibility were key. When a challenge arose (and there were plenty) we came up with solutions and worked our way around it. Even when 60% of our income disappeared overnight, we learned to bring in funding to plug the gaps.

"Most importantly we continued to give our participants and recipients the best possible chances to improve their lives. The figures and case studies shared here speak for themselves. We could have written hundreds of pages on what we did.

"The future looks bright. We've bolstered our teams and brought in bright new talent to help us to grow further. Before the end of 2021 we will open in five new prisons and next year we will open a new training kitchen to offer even more to the people we work with.

"We've always been keen to demonstrate the value of our work – its benefits for participants and communities, and its value for communities and the taxpayer.

"This year we've added a new facet to our reporting. A comprehensive Social Return On Investment analysis, completed by an independent, expert consultant, has found that for every £1 invested in our programmes, we generate £8.67 of value – an impressive figure however you look at it. There's more info on Page 25.

"Of course, we'll always lean towards demonstrating our impact through the stories of the people we've helped. I'm proud to share these with you in this report.

"Finally, I'm grateful to all our supporters, funders and donors. However, my biggest thanks go to our incredible team who make all this happen. I'm proud to lead them and see the real change we create.

"Enjoy the report. Please share this with your colleagues, friends and family. Let's spread the word that there is a way to solve some of our social problems, with a bit of creativity and a lot of commitment."

Alasdair Jackson
Chief Executive

Recycling Lives Charity
& Social Enterprises

“Despite many challenges, we continued to give our participants and recipients the best possible chances to improve their lives.”





Feeding communities

The world had a lot on its plate in 2020.

As the pandemic created economic, social and health challenges, the number of people needing food soared. Job losses, furlough, illness, shielding and food shortages all contributed to people struggling to cope

Demand for food tripled in the first few months of the pandemic alone. Stepping up, our team delivered three times as many meals as previous years to communities across Lancashire and Cumbria, including to 43 new member groups.

This was achieved in the face of a 75% drop in team numbers, as restrictions forced some to shield and necessitated strict social distancing guidelines in our warehouse.

To keep pace, we overhauled our systems, improving processes to receive and redistribute food, and invested in equipment that allows us to manage and hold higher volumes of goods (Page 8). By refining our approaches we've further improved our member groups' customer experience while our suppliers are assured their goods are better brought to us than sent to waste.

In the face of these changes and challenges, we delivered:

3 million meals to communities in need

1,262 tonnes of food prevented from going to waste

216 charities and community groups supported

£8.8m social value created for retailers and communities

This social value was generated by preventing waste of quality goods and reducing food costs for member groups and their beneficiaries. By redistributing surplus goods from supermarkets and their supply chains, we prevented £5.7m of quality, in-date food from going to waste. And by supplying goods to members, reducing groups' overheads and reducing food costs for individuals and families, this created a total £3.1m of savings on food costs.

Our food redistribution programme:

3.6 million tonnes*

Every year, millions of tonnes of produce* go to waste from the food sector, as surplus stock is sent to landfill.

8.4 million people*

At the same time millions of people* across the UK struggle to afford to eat.

Our Food Redistribution Centre prevents food waste and tackles food poverty. It takes goods from supermarkets and their supply chains – all quality items which would have otherwise gone to waste – and redistributes this to charities and community groups.

The food goes out to community groups such as hospices, homeless shelters, food banks, school breakfast clubs and lunch clubs for the elderly.

Member groups pay a modest monthly fee to receive goods, significantly below the average retail prices, saving them thousands of pounds every year.

Part of a national network, the Centre works in partnership with FareShare as its regional centre for Lancashire and Cumbria.

It is run by a team of eight staff working with 50 volunteers, giving it a secondary social impact as it supports people directly (Page 10).



*Figures from FareShare

“Everyone understands how important their work is in reducing waste and feeding people.”



Investing in our programme

As part of the national FareShare network, our food redistribution programme has always received grant funding and donations.

When charitable giving grew hugely during the pandemic, boosted by national FareShare campaigns, we benefitted further.

We have used this extra resource to increase our capacity and futureproof the programme. Investments in new vans, fridges and freezers have allowed us to receive and redistribute more food.

We also undertook a significant overhaul of our systems, including around goods-in processes, allocations and invoicing. Making our processes more efficient has ensured members receive the right food for their beneficiaries, further improving customer experience and preventing waste.

“We have a responsibility to ensure these goods go to people who really need it,” explains Jamie, our Deputy Food Redistribution Manager. “That’s our commitment both to the communities who need it, and the suppliers for whom it’s become surplus. Updating our systems has really helped this.

“Everyone is customer-focussed, so we deliver an efficient, joined-up service. Our team can be quite fluid, with dozens of volunteers working different shifts through the week, but everyone, irrespective of their role, understands just how important their work is in reducing waste and feeding people.”

“This food’s better in a belly than in the bin.”

“We started our first food pantry about three years ago. We did a pilot and it was very successful. Well, we couldn’t just stop then - people were still going to be hungry.

“We’d just opened a second pantry in 2020 when Covid hit. We knew more people would need help.

“We helped a massive range of people – families on low-incomes, pensioners who couldn’t get out to the shops.

“I’d get regular phonecalls from people who were desperate. We’ve got a good network of organisations who can refer people to us and there’s not the same bureaucracy so we can go and help people out, no questions asked. It’s just done quietly.

“It’s about providing people with some security so they’re not going to bed on an empty stomach.

“It’s humbling to be able to help people but also concerning when there’s so much need.”

Antony McGuckin, Vice President
Workington Derwent Rotary Club



“The food was vital for us to help families in crisis.”

“When Covid arrived, it was a nightmare. There was a period where we had to buy food vouchers for families out of our own budget.

“Around half of our pupils are eligible for free school meals and a lot of our parents worked in the gig economy, are low paid workers, on zero hours contracts or are single parents. We had a lot of families losing low paid employment or having to self-isolate.

“The Food Redistribution Centre gave us a really substantial amount of food that meant we could give our families an opportunity to fill the cupboards.”

Cheryl Taylor, Headteacher
Grange School, Preston



Championing our volunteers

Volunteers play a pivotal part at the Centre, with around 50 people volunteering at any one time.

But this number dropped significantly at the outbreak of the pandemic, as we lost around 75% of the total team due to shielding or self-isolating.

As key workers the small team remaining worked tirelessly, as demand for food soared throughout multiple lockdowns and an economic downturn.

And numbers steadily increased as restrictions lifted with people returning for varied reasons.

"Our volunteers are invaluable," says Volunteer Coordinator, Vivienne. "Each comes with different experience and skills, and different needs too.

"Some want a springboard to find work, others want connection. It can be a transformative experience."

Throughout 2020 we had:

52 regular volunteers working with us

14 of whom secured full-time work as a result

The team is always diverse, including retired professionals, refugees, job seekers, prison leavers and foreign exchange students, all with their own motivators.

"It's kept me sane being able to come out and work during lockdown," reflects Christine, a retired teacher. "I love being here with the team, knowing we make a difference to communities.

"It's more than just redistributing food though. I like that the Charity has a broader social mission. We see people progressing, moving on and getting a job. It's nice to see someone complete a journey."

At the height of the pandemic the volunteer team also included our own staff furloughed from their usual roles due to prison closures. This unfailing commitment and flexibility helped significantly in the face of the initial drop in volunteer numbers.

For many, volunteering was a much-needed tonic to the impacts of the pandemic.

"I started volunteering to meet friends and improve my skills and confidence," says Helen, a mum-of-three. "But I had to leave because my partner was seriously ill. After he died I isolated myself. That didn't do me any good.

"So I asked if I could come back. Being somewhere familiar, with people I know, helped me a lot. I've had a lot of support. I feel good knowing the difference the food makes. I feel proud of myself too."



"I feel good knowing the difference the food makes. I feel proud of myself too."



“It was important to me to be able to help.”

“I came to the UK from Yemen in 2018 as an asylum seeker. I used my first few months here to study – English, maths, computers – I tried to fill all my free time with education.

“I wanted to volunteer to improve my English.

“I’ve worked all my life, since I was 20 so I brought experience to volunteering but it gave me a chance to be able to communicate with people and improve my language skills.

“It’s given me more confidence. It was very important for me eventually getting a job.

“When the country was in lockdown we were here working hard to help communities – it was very important to me to be able to help.”

Rimma – Volunteer

“Things were really hard. I’d been out of work for years and I was having a nightmare trying to find a job. It knocks your confidence.

“Volunteering gave me hope.

“I did just over 18 months and learned lots. I got my Fork Lift Truck licence – an extra qualification for my CV.

“Being able to work during lockdown was really good too, knowing I was helping other people, especially because I’ve been on the other side of it myself.

“You meet new people, learn new skills and it’s a real confidence boost. You’re meeting people from different backgrounds too, but there’s no hierarchy to it – it’s a level playing field. That’s what was nice about it.

“Then the team recommended me for the job I’m in now and gave me a good reference. My job is brilliant. I’m a lot happier.

“I’d have really struggled without the opportunity to volunteer.”

Mark – Volunteer

“Volunteering gave me hope.”



Reducing reoffending



Changing lives and changing tack – these were the themes for our rehabilitation programmes throughout 2020 and into 2021.

When the pandemic created unprecedented challenges, we had to quickly adapt our offering.

National lockdowns meant our eight prison-based Academies were closed overnight and remained so, well into 2021. This not only hampered our ability to support men and women, limiting face-to-face support, but took away our biggest income stream.



The Academies have always run self-sufficiently, generating income by undertaking recycling and fabrication contracts on behalf of commercial partners. Without them, we lost 60% of our revenue overnight. So as well as adapting our support model we also had to overhaul our financial model, seeking grant funding and government support.

To sustain some of our contracts, we opened a new community-based recycling workshop (see Page 16). This also allowed us to offer continuity of care to those released from prison.

For many of our men and women resettling in the community was even more challenging in 2020 as employment opportunities became scarce. The industries we typically placed our participants into – construction, for example – were temporarily closed.

And with the advent of job losses and furlough, participants we'd worked with months or even years earlier needed our support again.

By partnering with new employers in other sectors – logistics, warehousing and even health and social care – our men and women became key workers, contributing to vital industries (Page 16).

Our team's creativity and flexibility meant no-one went without the support they needed. From meeting for walks in local parks during lockdowns, to buying mobiles or tablets to help those recently released from prison to stay connected, we made sure people could flourish.

In doing all this, we:

Supported 85 men and women into training and work

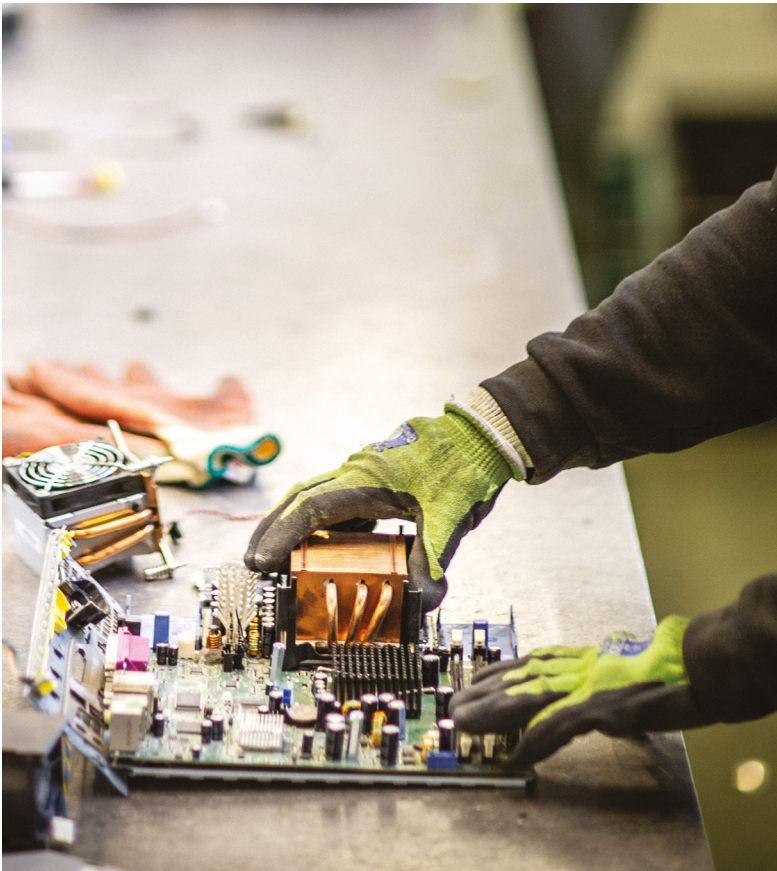
Reduced reoffending rates to less than 5%

Created £12.4m savings for local and national government

This social value was generated by reducing individuals' reoffending risk from c.62% to less than 5% and removing the need for welfare payments. By creating opportunities for training and employment we created tax contributions and the chance for participants to be active contributors to their local economies. And by supporting access to stable housing, specialist services and substance rehabilitation to prevent homelessness and reduce health problems, we created savings for housing, health and social services.

“Our job is to support people with whatever they need to get their life back on track. We love to see people succeed.”





Our prison-based programme:



Growth plans

We are now expanding our prisons provision. Using a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund we will establish links in five new prisons from the end of 2021.

By partnering with employers or prison-run workshops already in operation we will extend our support programme to hundreds more men and women.

Equipping ex-offenders with skills, experience and confidence is crucial to reduce reoffending. Nationally, around two-thirds of prisoners reoffend within one year of release, costing around £13bn every year*.

Our Academies are prison-based workshops employing men and women in recycling and fabrication work.

"It's real work that's important for the environment, giving participants a sense of self-worth," explains Rob, our Head of Rehabilitation Programmes.

By engaging participants in meaningful work, the Academies are an opportunity to develop transferable skills. And earning an enhanced wage for their work also allows them to start saving up ready for release. This is often used to put down deposits on accommodation or buy a car to get to work, as a significant step up from the £76 statutory discharge grant.

"Our job is to support people with whatever they need to get their life back on track - housing, work, relationships, or just having someone they can really talk to," says Rick, one of our Housing & Employability Coordinators, who previously worked as an Academy Manager.

"The workshops get people into good habits - turning up on time, working with others, solving problems, keeping to the rules. People enjoy coming in to work because it makes their time in prison go so much quicker. They have a laugh and work hard.

"Around three months before they're due for release, we start to really drill into making plans for housing, work or training, or support services.

"As much as we do a lot for people, we do put the onus on them helping themselves too - it's all about empowerment. Our job is to motivate people.

"We love to see people succeed."

Coping with lockdown

For men and women in prison, strict lockdown measures were even more isolating.

And restrictions created extra challenges for those newly released too. Two of the key drivers in reducing reoffending risks – housing and family links – were limited as lockdowns impacted opportunities to view rental properties or reconnect with family and friends.

"When you're in prison, everyone's suffering in some way anyway. Lockdown made that harder," says Donna. "Then I was released mid-way through 2020 and obviously the world was not the same. Having the support from Recycling Lives made a real difference."

Donna was one of dozens of people to be supported into accommodation and employment despite extra obstacles.

"My main worry was getting out and having to disclose the fact I've been to prison, so going from prison to carrying on working with the charity on release made that easier," she adds.

"I was on drugs before, majorly depressed and very lonely," says Aaron. "Jail was a blessing in disguise really, it gave me an opportunity to change my life.

"I knuckled down with the work and Ben would come in and go through a plan with me, offering me opportunities.

"Working with Recycling Lives was the main thing that got me into a good routine and ready for the outside world."

Many previous participants also reconnected with our teams. Some sought extra support after losing their jobs due to the pandemic, while many simply wanted someone friendly to chat to.

"I was made redundant during the pandemic," says Samantha. "Lucy really supported me still. She helped me with my CV so I could find something new."

Work is central to reducing reoffending rates. It is often the most transformative element for our participants. Giving skills, self-worth and opportunity to save up ready for release, the workshops help participants to secure jobs and also show families their commitment to changing.

"Recycling Lives gave me a goal, some direction and a lot of hope," says Garry.

"This stability has shown my family I'm being proactive and not falling back into my old behaviours. My girls can see I'm working, I've got a home and I'm doing well.

"I'd been in prison a long time - I would've struggled on my own. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to rebuild my life."





Developing new partnerships

"My job is to create opportunities, break down barriers and, often, bust misguided myths around those with criminal convictions," says Darren, our Employer Engagement Manager.

"We have to convince employers of the benefits of hiring an ex-offender. During the peak of the Covid crisis, employers were, understandably, less willing to take those risks."

Many of the industries he would normally approach to place people into jobs were some of the hardest hit, including manufacturing and construction. However, opportunities were soon found elsewhere. In the transport, logistics and storage sectors, vacancies were rising.

"By being flexible and having transferable skills, our men and women could move between industries," explains Darren.

"As a Fork Lift Truck driver, Robin went into the food production sector, for example.

"And in some cases we were able to fill roles where there was desperate need. Katie returned to the career she'd had before prison, securing work as a carer during the pandemic."

We now have links with 230 employers to place people into work, ranging from small family-run firms to FTSE 100 listed businesses.

Growing our workshop offering

When lockdowns closed our eight prison-based workshops we were left unable to process the 100,000 waste electricals usually recycled each month. These are essential to meeting contractual obligations, typically generating around half of our income.

To help, our partners at Recycling Lives Ltd stepped in, providing a rent-free warehouse space to open our first community-based workshop. Mirroring the operations of our HMP Academies, within days of opening the new workshop was processing thousands of waste items daily.

The workshop continues to create employment and volunteering opportunities for men and women in the community. It has been a springboard for dozens of people to secure employment, including its supervisor, Andy (see Page 23).



Our community-based programmes:

Supporting ex-offenders 'through the gate' is central to our successes. Our community-based programmes allow us to give ongoing support and guidance following release.

They also prevent people from ending up in prison in the first place, supporting those on suspended sentences.

- **Achieve:** Working with the national Achieve programme, we support men and women on probation to complete paid work placements for up to eight weeks, earning at least the minimum wage for 32 hours per week.

We also support other disadvantaged groups, helping people who have been long-term unemployed to improve their skills and employability.

- **Selnet:** Delivering the Building Better Opportunities programme, on behalf of Selnet, we support ex-offenders or people who are long-term unemployed to access voluntary work placements and training.
- **Kickstart:** While not criminal justice-related, we're also supporting young people into employment. The government scheme allows 16-24-year-olds at risk of long-term unemployment to complete a six-month paid placement, receiving tailored support to move into full-time work.

In each programme we support participants to get the essentials in order, such as bank accounts or ID, ready to find work.

Work placements help participants to develop confidence, set career goals and complete training.

"These programmes offer real-world work experience and allow participants to get up to speed with their CVs or training needs, receive advice on disclosing an offence or support resettling in the community," says Rob, our Rehabilitation Programmes Manager.

"We only place people with employers where there's real potential to secure work – it's a 'foot in the door'. People are judged on their skills and work ethic, rather than a paper sift or short interview. Or if it's not right for them, we can confidently approach other employers, knowing they have transferable skills.

"Before the pandemic, we would place people into work in all sorts of sectors. However, lockdown restrictions and changes in the labour market made some opportunities scarce. The new community workshop helped to overcome this challenge."

This workshop (see Page 16) engages participants from the Selnet, Achieve and Kickstart programmes, as well as prisoners on 'day release' and those recently released.

"Participants get out of the programmes what they put in," adds Rob. "It's always great to see people put their minds to it and achieve great things."

In 2019/20, the programmes:

Supported 39 people who had been long-term unemployed into training and work

Created £450,000 social value for local and national government



“Being with Recycling Lives was a big part of my recovery.”

“I loved it in the workshop. I was promoted to orderly, passed my fork-lift truck licence and got my Level 2s in maths and English.

“Before jail my bipolar was really bad. I was really unwell but I started using drugs and then I kept getting sectioned.

“Then I woke up in jail.

“I knew I had to ask for help and work on myself so my life could be different.

“I was able to achieve that with Recycling Lives' help.

“I started to feel good about myself from working. And if I hadn't worked there, I wouldn't have been able to answer any of the questions in my job interview when I got out.

“I could talk about the importance of PPE, experiences of working in a team, helping other people to do their jobs and overcoming problems.

“Now I'm in a job and I'm achieving all my goals.”

Kayleigh – HMP Styal





“Having someone I could speak to really helped me.”

“Us men, we can have an ego, so we don't really want to ask for help but really that's a weakness.

“When I came out of prison it was daunting. But I could just talk to Ben - ask him questions I couldn't ask other people. He'd call me just to check in. He understands my background so I could really talk to him.

“Recycling Lives helped me a lot like that.

“I'd done a long time in prison so Recycling Lives was a bridge between prison and coming home.

“I started in a workshop and got my Fork Lift Truck license then a ROTL job came up so I went there. It gave me independence, stability and routine. The money helped a lot too, to save up for my flat, a car and clothes, and then I carried on working there when I was released.

“You can't change what you've done in the past - I wish I could. But I've tried to make the best of a bad situation and come out, have a good life and keep myself to myself.”

Richard – HMP Hatfield

Tackling homelessness

The sanctuary of home was something we all came to appreciate even more through 2020. For men living in our residential charity – who had previously experienced, or been at risk of, homelessness – having a safe place to call home meant even more to them.

Our residential programme was adapted to cope with the challenges of the pandemic, ensuring its participants stayed safe and flourished.

Like all households, our residents 'locked down' together while the need for our service grew by a third (Page 23). After the first six-week lockdown, and with key worker status given to frontline charity workers, the men seized the opportunity to volunteer at the Food Redistribution Centre, helping the team to triple output.

With this work experience and - as importantly - great work ethic to demonstrate to employers the men have each secured full-time jobs. All have moved on, into their own homes, since restrictions have lifted.

The charity was also impacted by the operational and financial challenges of the rehabilitation programmes, which usually generates surplus to comfortably cover the charity's costs.

To maintain delivery we sought grant funding and received donations, allowing us to sustain our work and, later, build our capacity. New facilities and a new team member are further enhancing the programme (Page 25).

Together, our staff and the men living in the charity made a formidable team, coping admirably with the uncertainty of the pandemic, even in the face of their own personal challenges.

As a result, in 2020 we:

Supported 11 men into work and independent housing

Created a £625,000 social return for local and national government

This social value was generated by removing the need for welfare payments, creating access to employment and independent housing and, in some cases, supporting recovery from addiction.





Our residential programme:

Homelessness is rarely an isolated issue, often stemming from other complex social problems.

From mental illness, job loss or relationship breakdown to histories of offending or substance misuse, the backgrounds and needs of the men we support are varied.

Our residential charity offers accommodation, structure and support to men experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The 10-bed facility is a stable environment, with en-suite, single occupancy bedrooms and a large, modern shared living area.

Residents are supported with everything from rebuilding relationships or maintaining abstinence to managing finances.

Men have described it as a “breathing space” to get ‘basics’ in order, such as securing ID, bank accounts and registering with doctors, before completing training and work placements suited to their experience and ambitions.

As with all our programmes, work is central to the offering, as a means to develop skills, confidence and resilience. The goal is for each Resident to secure meaningful, sustainable paid employment to move into a home of their own. While living in our facility residents come off benefits but receive a weekly allowance and begin to put aside savings.

The programme is complemented by our community café, Fresh Start Café. This is often residents’ first work placement, offering opportunities to gain qualifications, develop customer service skills and improve important ‘soft’ work skills.



Growth plans

We have recently employed a Deputy Residential Manager, to sustain and grow our residential offering.

Working with referral partners, Katrina will ensure men in need of our specialist offering are able to access it, while also supporting current residents on their journey.

"I'd spent all my life in jail, just in and out constantly, so I did find it hard to talk to people in general. Coming here gave me the break I needed."



Importance of work

Work placements have always been central to our offering. They became even more essential during the pandemic, as a means of fulfilment and connection, as well as the pathway to independence.

At the onset of the national restrictions, residents kept to the lockdowns within the residential facility. Two of our team continued to support them, forming a 'bubble'.

"Getting through the last year with up to ten people living together without any illness is no small feat," reflects Neil, our Head of Residential.

"That's down to how the lads handled things. We figured out the value of 'social bubbles' early on and stuck to it to protect one another. It's testament to our residents' values and commitment to change."

Following a six-week lockdown the men went back to work, helping the team at our Food Redistribution Centre, which had lost 75% of its volunteers to shielding or self-isolating.

"Lockdown had been draining," says former resident Steve. "But then compared to being in jail, it was more like living in a penthouse for me."

"I loved getting back to work and helping. To see where the food goes to is nice and it was good to meet people from all different backgrounds."

"I'd spent all my life in jail, just in and out constantly, so I did find it hard to talk to people in general. Coming here gave me the break I needed." Steve now works for United Utilities and lives with his new partner.

"Life's looking good," he adds. "It's a dream, actually. I don't know why it took me 25 years to realise what life's about. I was so wrapped up in drugs but this has opened my eyes. It's like a breath of fresh air."

Rise in need

We saw a 30% rise in need for our offering in 2020/21, prompted by different knock-on effects of the pandemic.

Men released from prison during restrictions found securing housing more challenging, while local authorities sought to house their most vulnerable residents during lockdowns and, later, we saw a rise in evictions from private rental properties.

"I would've been out on the streets otherwise," says Andy. "I moved in in March 2020, a week before lockdown. It was hard at first but we all stuck together and got through it." He stayed 12 months and is now employed running our community recycling workshop.

"It's the first time in years that I've been able to see my life going somewhere," he adds.

"Years ago I got in with the wrong crowd and lost my job and my flat through drink and drugs. Life just went downhill.

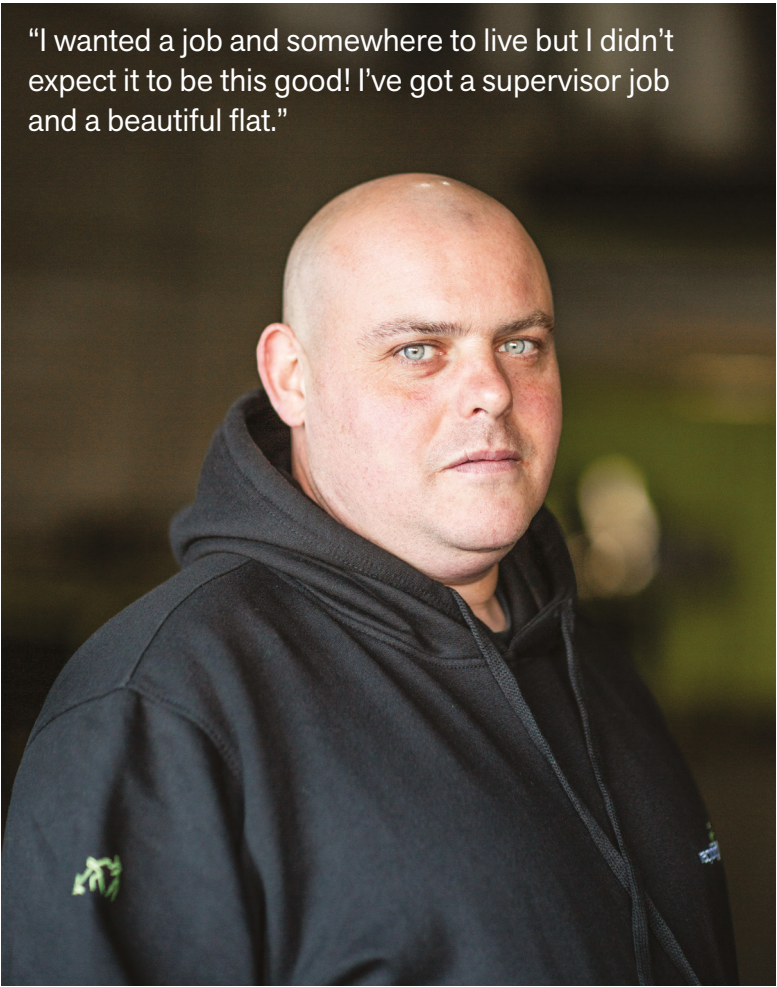
"I went to volunteer at the Food Redistribution Centre and met other lads who'd done the residential. Hearing what they'd got out of it, I thought I'd like that for myself. It's one of the best decisions I've made.

"I wanted a job and somewhere to live but I didn't expect it to be this good! I've got a supervisor job and a beautiful flat."



Growth plans

Like hospitality businesses nationwide, our community café experienced long closures due to the pandemic. We now have ambitions to develop the café into a training kitchen, enhancing employment opportunities for all programme participants.





“They showed me the light at the end of the tunnel.”

“I was homeless for three years – just living in a tent. I never begged, never stole, I just had Universal Credit.

“One day I bought a phone and started talking to my sister again and eventually she got me into the charity.

“I’d asked for help before but when you’re put in a place with people who are using drugs it’s no good. I wanted to sort my head out - I wanted to help myself.

“The other lads in the residential, they want that too, so it’s a good atmosphere.

“It showed me it was possible to get back to where I’d been before.

“I had everything – my own home, a girlfriend and kids, a car, a good job. I had it good. But it all deteriorated because of drugs.

“The experience in the residential is what you make of it. The team are amazing in what they’ll do for you, but they can’t do it all for you. I kept my head down and good things have come my way.

“Now I’ve got a home, a job and a girlfriend. And I’m back in contact with my children and my mum and dad.

“I just wanted my life back and that’s what I’ve got.”

Martin - Resident

Giving specialist support

The needs of our participants are often multiple and complex.

People can seek support with everything from coping with loss or overcoming substance misuse, to working with services, rebuilding family relationships or learning how to budget.

In early 2021 we brought in a Specialist Support Worker, Faye, to help people to navigate any challenges.

“Good mental health comes from knowing that if you face challenges, you have the resilience to cope, the confidence to talk, or the right support network or coping strategies to turn to,” explains Faye.

“This role is about helping people to have all that. I look at what building blocks they need to maintain employment, or sustain sobriety, or cope with an immediate crisis, building a holistic support package.”

This makes tailored support accessible for participants of any of our programmes and our own staff team. The three-year role is funded by our partners at Recycling Lives Ltd, allowing its employees to also access support.



Growth plans

We are already growing our Specialist Support offering, hiring a second Specialist Support Worker.

This investment will allow us to give personalised, expert guidance to more of our participants and staff team.

Securing grants and receiving donations

During our most challenging year, donations, grant funding and government support helped to sustain all our programmes, and allowed us to further enhance our offering.

Our financial model has historically been self-sufficient, with the residential model largely funded by the surplus generated by our rehabilitation and food redistribution programmes. As all faced financial and operational challenges, we benefitted from national grants and generous donations.



Creating value

The true value of our work is best shown through our participants' stories – sharing their challenges, changes and triumphs.

To demonstrate economic impact, we have always calculated the 'social value' of our work too.

In 2019/20 that was calculated at £22.3m - as outlined on Page 3.

To complement this, we commissioned an independent Social Return On Investment analysis of our work. This adds an independent assessment of our impact and the value we create for all stakeholders, extending beyond our participants.

£8.67 of value

This found that for every £1 invested in our programmes, we generate £8.67 of value.

Comprehensive analysis of our programmes was completed by Nicola Lynch, reviewing each of our programmes' activities throughout 2020.

Engaging with programme participants, volunteers and staff, and commercial and public sector partners, her surveys and conversations covered the change experienced by each group. The qualitative and quantitative data collected was then used to measure and account for the value of the change experienced. Recycling Lives Charity & Social Enterprises

Social Return on Investment (SROI) takes a principles-based approach to understanding and accounting for change. It offers one way of quantifying the relative importance stakeholders place on the change they experience in their lives. SROI is not cost benefit analysis. It does not analyse fiscal benefits or cost savings, as our social value calculations do. It is a widely-used approach, centred on an exploration of broader concepts of value.

SROI looks at the value of change for stakeholders, while social value (by our definition) looks at the savings created as a result of the change experienced.

The full SROI Analysis Report can be viewed on request.

Nicola Lynch, of Lynchpin Support, is an independent consultant to the voluntary, charitable and social enterprise sectors and National Lead for Civil Society at Social Value UK. The SROI Analysis was submitted for external assurance in October 2021.



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