

CRASH

2014

**Too many people make
their home in a doorway.
Help them open one.**





Sharing what you do best

CRASH was founded by the construction and property industry and it is thanks to this industry sharing its talents and skills that CRASH is able to help homelessness charities improve their buildings.

Working in partnership with our patron companies, CRASH offers professional expertise, free materials and cash grants. Some homelessness projects only need one of these things to achieve their goal and some need all three.

The wonderful thing about CRASH is that it gives construction and property firms the opportunity to share what they are already good at – their skills, materials, time and generosity to help disadvantaged people in their communities.

What we do to help make these places welcoming and fit for purpose is incredibly important. Not just for the homeless people but the incredible people who run these hostels.

CRASH is a unique charity not only in the way that it helps homelessness charities, but in the way it is supported entirely by the construction and property industry. In CRASH, the industry has created a charity that is unique, meaningful and demonstrably makes a difference to people's lives.

There is a wide variety of reasons why people find themselves homeless and it's important not to assume all people on the streets are addicts. Mental health problems, relationship breakdown and loss of employment are also big factors.

More recently, changes in housing benefit have caused people in private rented accommodation to be given notice to quit. They found themselves homeless and some were sleeping rough for the first time in their lives.

We all know that buildings and environments change how we feel about ourselves and others and that's no different for people who are homeless

For most people hopefully the experience of being homeless will be a short one, from which with the right help they will recover and move on. But to do that they need to find help at the night shelters, day centres and hostels CRASH works with.

We all know that buildings and environments change how we feel about ourselves and others and that's no different for people who are homeless.

I cannot thank our patrons enough for all that they do. They help us create buildings and homes that give people a chance. A chance to find shelter and receive help to deal with complicated and frequently shocking experiences as well as the chance of getting off the street and their lives back on track.

I would also like to thank the editorial team at Building for so generously volunteering their time and skills to create this publication.

CRASH could not continue its fight against homelessness without industry support. Our strength and future lies with the companies that support CRASH. Please join us and make a real, practical difference to vulnerable, excluded members of our society.

Francesca Roberts, CRASH chief executive



A unique charity

Homelessness in Britain touches more people than you might think: according to research by umbrella body Homeless Link last year, one in three people living in the UK has either experienced homelessness, or knows someone who has.

This deeply troubling statistic highlights not only the sheer scale of homelessness in the UK, but also how it really can happen to anyone, regardless of background. The causes of homelessness are many and varied and not, as some assume, always related to alcohol or drug addiction. Relationship breakdowns, unemployment, and mental

health issues are also some of the biggest contributory factors.

The construction industry is in a unique position to help. It can, literally, put a roof over people's heads. The skills those in the sector display on a daily basis – in building work, in design, in the production of

The construction industry is in a unique position to help. It can, literally, put a roof over people's heads

building materials – are all integral to creating the shelters, hostels and communities that homelessness charities need to get people off the streets and into a position where they can start to create better lives for themselves.

In CRASH, the industry has a ready-made vehicle to enable it to help in this way. The way the charity works – making use of the industry's expertise and matching it with homeless charities' needs – means that firms know their help is being used where it is really needed. The pro-bono professional work and building materials donated by companies last year helped 62 homelessness projects across the UK, while 14 homelessness groups received cash grants donated through the charity to improve buildings.

At Building magazine, we have chosen to support CRASH as our official partner charity for two reasons. Because we passionately believe that its work is making a real difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in society. And because it is bringing the industry together in a way which makes use of the sector's unique skills and expertise for a powerful social good.

We hope that in creating this publication for CRASH, we can help to convince you to do the same. By supporting the organisation, you will not only be building shelters – you will be helping to rebuild lives.

Sarah Richardson, editor, Building

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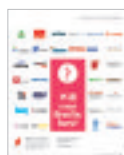
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CRASH is totally reliant on the generosity of its patron companies. Can you see yourself among them?

Produced by Building for **CRASH**

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CRASH

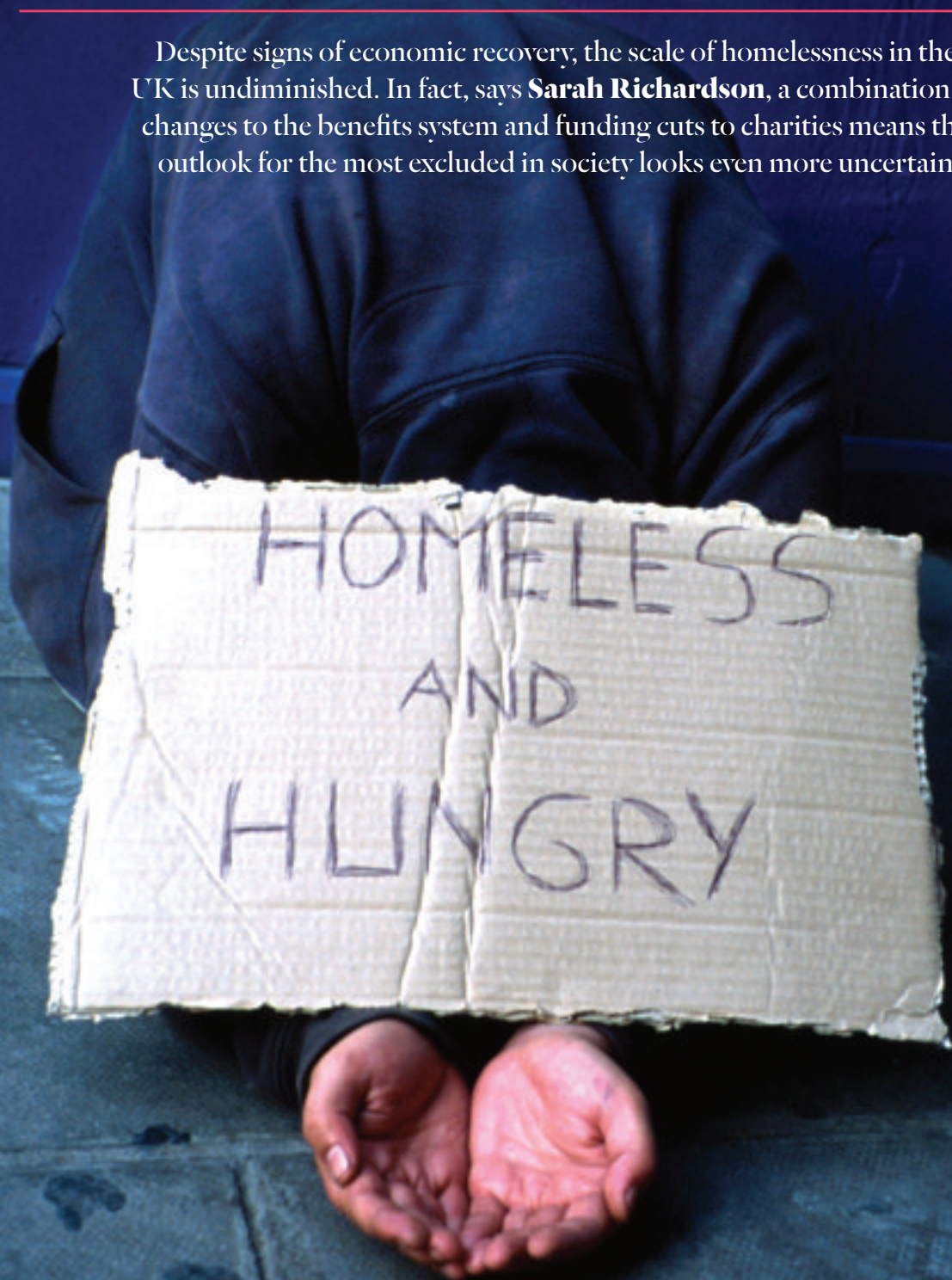
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THE WORST IS FAR FROM OVER

Despite signs of economic recovery, the scale of homelessness in the UK is undiminished. In fact, says **Sarah Richardson**, a combination of changes to the benefits system and funding cuts to charities means the outlook for the most excluded in society looks even more uncertain



Martin is perhaps not the type of person you would typically think of as someone who could end up homeless. Born in Cambridge and in school until he was 18, he spent six years in the army before moving back home and getting a job in a security firm. But suddenly the business went bust.

"That was the first time I found myself with no job, and nowhere to stay," says Martin, who turned to a life of alcohol and sleeping on the streets. "I think it's important that people realise I had a decent life to start off with. When I lived on the streets I felt like people thought I was a piece of dirt, but they should know that bad luck can happen to anyone."

With UK unemployment reaching 8.5% at the height of the recession, stories such as Martin's have in fact become all too familiar. Statistics indicate that all forms of homelessness have risen throughout the economic downturn as, for some, a sudden lack of income or difficulty maintaining employment in a tough jobs market left them unable to meet rent or mortgage payments. The economic picture has compounded other factors that remain major causes of homelessness: relationship breakdowns, drug and alcohol problems, and mental health difficulties.

There is some evidence to suggest that the growth in homelessness is slowing as

economic recovery begins – government figures for Q3 in 2013 showed 3% fewer homeless households in England applied to local authorities for help than the same time a year earlier. However, research by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published in December 2013 suggests 185,000 adults in England experience some form of homelessness each year, putting homelessness at a three-year high. Although overall unemployment may be turning for the better, there are other contributory factors to homelessness that appear to be worsening. These include an increased risk of eviction from private-rented accommodation by landlords, and potentially even social landlords, because of changes in housing benefit.

For those already in a cycle of homelessness, and those on the cusp, this presents a worrying new reality at a time when homelessness may have been expected to decrease; particularly given that cuts to charities' income have led to a sharp drop in the amount of facilities and services available to help people back off the streets.

The scale of homelessness

Knowing exactly how many people are homeless is impossible, but the picture has certainly worsened dramatically during the recession. In 2012-13, the Department for Communities and Local

Government (DCLG) recorded that the number of households in England that approached their council asking for help due to homelessness was 113,260, an 11% rise over two years. Typically just under half of these applications are accepted by local authorities as being statutorily homeless, meaning the authority has a duty to house them; the number accepted as "statutory homeless" – which includes people with dependents, vulnerable single adults and pregnant women – was 53,540 in 2012-13.

Meanwhile, in 2012 a government estimate based on street counts put the number of people sleeping rough on any one night at about 2,309, a rise of 31% over two years. In London alone, the homelessness database CHAIN records that 6,437 people slept rough at some point during 2012/13, which was an increase of 62% over two years. Many homelessness charities believe the number of rough sleepers is actually much higher than these estimates, as the transitory nature of those affected makes it difficult to get an accurate picture of the situation.

With unemployment a major contributory factor to homelessness, these trends, while alarming, are to some extent not surprising against a backdrop of economic downturn. And there is, encouragingly, some suggestion that the situation is stabilising as the economy picks up. Figures released by DCLG for the third quarter of 2013 showed that 28,380 households applied to councils for help with homelessness, a 3% drop on the same period in 2012. Of these, 13,330 were accepted as being "statutory homeless" and "in priority need" – a 4% decrease on the previous year.

This improvement, however, has not been felt everywhere. In London, there was a 2% increase in applications to local authorities, and a 13% increase in acceptances. The South-east also saw a 9% increase in applications, with the number of acceptances remaining unchanged.

A complex and changing pattern

The reasons that a person can become homeless are numerous and often »

Records show that 6,437 people slept rough in London at some point during 2012/13, which is an increase of 62% over two years

185,000

adults in England experience homelessness each year



» interwoven with each other: for many, there is no single reason they find themselves on the streets. Drug and alcohol problems, often assumed by many to be the cause of homelessness, were cited as a contributory factor by 31% and 28% of homeless people in a wide ranging survey by Shelter published in 2007, but a far higher proportion (41%) gave the breakdown of a relationship as a factor.

Mary, a "companion" at Emmaus Hastings – the term used for the former homeless people who live and work in communities run by Emmaus – is one such person. She met her first partner in her late 20s, and had a 13-year relationship in which they had three children, while she worked a succession of part-time jobs. After the relationship ended, she says, she began another with "an old friend", moving her family in with him. "After 10 years that relationship broke down and I left," says

Mary. "I walked out of the house and went to stay with my son and daughter-in-law. But I couldn't do that forever."

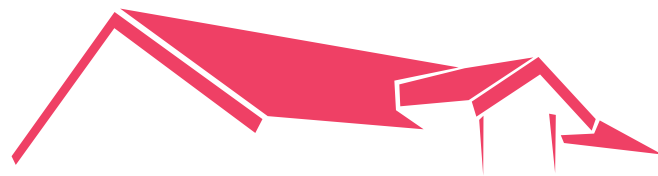
In Mary's case, her local housing trust suggested that she looked into living at Emmaus Brighton, making her aware of the national organisation that runs the community that is now her home. For others, such as Karen, an Emmaus companion at Preston, the impact of a failed relationship can take even longer to recover from – and lead to more problems that fuel a cycle of homelessness.

Karen describes how having an "abusive and controlling partner" in her teens, with whom she had three children, contributed to her joining him in using heroin, stealing to pay for her addiction. It was only when her partner died, aged 31, of complications related to his own addiction that she was able to free herself of the drug, eventually moving to Emmaus



Around 80,000

young people aged 16-25 experience homelessness in the UK every year



113,260

households approached councils asking for help due to homelessness in 2013



Around
2309
people sleep rough
on any one night

from a bail hostel after serving an eight-month spell in prison.

Leaving prison is a well-known catalyst for homelessness, with 25% of those questioned in Shelter's 2007 survey citing it as a factor. But another, again bigger trigger, which is often overlooked, is people being asked to leave their family home.

Between October 2012 and September 2013, government figures show that 15,680 households headed by people under 25 were accepted as statutory homeless in England. Research by charity Centrepoint in 2011 estimated that 80,000 young people experience some form of homelessness in the UK every year. A survey of 169 frontline agencies, called Young and Homeless 2013, found that of those young people who approached local authorities for help, almost half (44%) said that their parents were no longer willing to accommodate them, with a further 14% saying a friend or relative was no longer willing.

Campaigners against homelessness are concerned that young people would be even more at risk if current suggestions from the Conservative party to restrict housing benefit for under 25-year-olds become law. The party has announced it is reviewing benefit entitlements for 16-25-year-olds ahead of its manifesto for

A severe shortage of affordable housing and the highest levels of youth unemployment in nearly 20 years mean many young people face significant barriers

Rick Henderson, Homeless Link

the next election, and David Cameron has previously suggested that changes could entail an end to automatic entitlement to housing benefits for those aged under 25 who meet all other eligibility criteria.

Rick Henderson, chief executive of Homeless Link, says: "A severe shortage of affordable housing and the highest levels of youth unemployment in nearly 20 years mean many young people face significant barriers to achieving their goals. We are calling on the government to invest in their futures by ensuring the support is in place to make sure they have somewhere safe to call home."

Another change to housing benefit which already appears to be worsening the problem of homelessness is the move to pay benefit direct to claimants, rather than to their landlords as has historically been the case. Since 2008, the majority of benefit claimants who rent from private landlords have their housing benefit paid direct to them to pass on as rent, which the National Landlords Association has said has led some private landlords to refuse to take claimants on benefit as they no longer have the security of receiving tenants' rent payments direct from government. The proportion of households accepted as "statutory homeless" as a result of the loss of private tenancies rose to 27% of all cases by Q1 2013-14, according to DCLG figures.

Now, the move away from paying benefits direct to landlords is being broadened into the social housing sector as a central strand of the government's Universal Credit policy. This will result in six forms of benefit, including housing benefit, being paid as one sum direct to the claimant.

The programme, which has been mired in technical difficulties, is due to be rolled

out by 2017 but is currently only being enacted on a very limited basis. However, six pilot schemes launched in 2011 have led to significant rises in rent arrears. Tenants in Torfaen, South Wales, one of the pilot areas, saw rent arrears rise sevenfold in the first seven months of the pilot, according to a BBC investigation. Social landlords have expressed deep concern over the increased risk that tenants will end up spending the benefit elsewhere, leaving them at risk of eviction.

The increased risk to payments to social landlords has also caused significant concern from the landlords as they fear it will affect their future revenue streams, both directly and in the sense that it will make banks less willing to lend to them. This, in turn, has led to warnings that they will have to scale back social housing build programmes and community initiatives designed to help people back into employment or training.

A final element in this dangerous stacking of odds against those struggling to avoid homelessness is cuts experienced by local authorities and charities, including those in the homeless sector, as a result of recession. Homeless Link's 2013 survey of homelessness services in England reports a 9% reduction in bed spaces since 2010, with over half (55%) refusing clients because their needs were too high to be met on the resource available. Many of these beds, including those in projects supported by CRASH, offer help to single homeless people aged over 18, a group who are not entitled to any statutory assistance from local authorities.

So the economy may well be on the mend, but for those trying to help some of its most excluded people rejoin society, the task may be becoming harder rather than easier.

Around **6437** people slept rough in
London in 2012/13



TEAM EFFORT

Meet two charities CRASH supports: one for people in inner London recovering from addiction, the other supporting a community living in a former convent in Brighton. **Mike Brown** reports



I remember exactly when it was completed – 17 March 2007.” For Mossie Lyons, director of the Kairos Community Trust, the date is hugely significant - it was when the hall at Linden Grove in Nunhead, south London, was transformed with help from CRASH.

Kairos helps people who become homeless through addiction. It has a network of 28 supported houses, mostly in south London.

The relationship between Kairos and CRASH goes back 13 years, starting with work on its Linden Grove building. Mossie explains: “The phone number for CRASH was included in the development notes, so I decided to get in touch,” said Mossie. “Then the process kicked in.”

CRASH was impressed by the quality of Kairos’ work and concerned about the lack of provision in this part of London. It decided that to work with Kairos effectively it would need to invest long term. CRASH’s help has since led to cash grants of over £54,000 spread over six projects since 2008. The work has involved everything from boiler installations to painting projects, kitchen fitouts and building extensions. Much of this was only possible with the materials donated by the likes of Baxi, Sir Robert McAlpine, Bauder and Argent.

But it’s not just the materials and funding supplied by CRASH that Mossie values: “[CRASH] also gives professional advice. For example, Guildersfield Road is a listed building. We were able to get guidance on what would be appropriate development.” Consultant Aecom provided invaluable advice on this particular project.

The architect practice Areen Design helped out on another recent Kairos project in Eugenia Road, in London’s Surrey Quays. Here they created a community dining room and are working on plans for two further bedrooms.

Help for residents

Residents in Kairos accommodation find themselves

homeless for a wide range of reasons, and there is no typical homeless person. “My mental health issues started way back, but the alcohol masked it all. That’s how I ended up on the streets, after a nervous breakdown,” says Dominic O’Gorman, support worker at Kairos.

“I was a seven-stone tramp full of beard, drinking on the streets of Euston. She [the street outreach worker] came and sat next to me. She explained who she was and just talked to me a little bit. After a few visits she asked me ‘do you want to get clean?’”

Dominic received support from Kairos as he found his feet. When he needed a work placement scheme to fulfil the requirements of a social care course, Kairos was more than happy to let Dominic volunteer at the home.

Turning around the fortunes of people like Dominic is the challenge facing charities such as Kairos, and for Mossie the work to improve its accommodation is vital to that aim. And he is keen to stress the important role the work of other people played to make it all happen: “We would not have done it without CRASH.”

Community living

Emmaus in Brighton is a similar charity to Kairos in that it provides homeless people with a stable home and meaningful work, but the nature of its building projects are quite different.

The charity is based on the site of the site of a grade II-listed former convent which was acquired by the Emmaus Community in 1997.

Work on the community’s buildings has benefited from the expertise of housebuilder Taylor Wimpey, which offered the services of one of its engineers, and the NHBC, which supplied Building Control advice.

And last year, consultant EC Harris helped CRASH explore the possibility of expanding the Emmaus community. One key activity for Emmaus is to encourage residents repair second-hand furniture. But the charity was keen to find a suitable location for a shop where they

could sell the furniture to the public, which helps to provide a focus for residents as well as raising funds for the charity. Eventually a former pub was found near an A-road, which could be refurbished as a permanent shop.

The role for EC Harris started with looking at whether the project was feasible. It considered all the issues that need to be resolved before the property was bought, and then worked out what the next steps of work would be for other patrons of CRASH to make it functional.

EC Harris also got involved in some fundraising for the community. According to spokesperson Phil Brown: “CRASH is a consistent benefactor of our fundraising and volunteering efforts, like our Community Challenge Day where a team of EC Harris staff helped redecorate certain areas of the homelessness project.”

Over the years, the partnership between CRASH and Emmaus has grown: it has facilitated the use of materials from companies such as A-Plant, Baxi, ACO Technologies, Travis Perkins, Hanson, Marshalls and Heckmondwike. As well as expertise on community projects, CRASH has supplied Emmaus Brighton & Hove with cash grants of £30,000 over two projects since 2009.

A process of due diligence

Emmaus and Kairos, like all charities CRASH works with, went through a lengthy assessment process. “We don’t just assess the buildings, we have a good look at the services that are provided by that charity to homeless people,” says CRASH communications manager Emma Brophy. “There’s a great deal of due diligence that goes on before we even agree to help.”

And this careful approach is key to CRASH’s success: as a charity it aims to work on long-term projects so that the outcomes really make a lasting difference. This way of working is not just more efficient, it is also immensely rewarding for all those involved.



Community dining room at Kairos Community Trust's Eugenia Road in south London, a communal space where homeless people can begin to reconnect with their families



Kitchen at Kairos Community Trust's Eugenia Road



Greenhouse at Emmaus Brighton & Hove, a social enterprise which is part of the community's aim to be self funding

A COUNTRY RETREAT

The Pilsdon Community is a working farm in Dorset, which provides a refuge for people in crisis and intermittent respite for homeless people. But when they engaged a contractor to renovate a dilapidated barn and stables to create extra space they got their fingers burned. **Deborah Duke** finds out how working with CRASH and its patrons has rebuilt trust in the building profession



You don't realise how many people there are who need help, but who don't seem to fit into the formal social services framework

Nick Goff

The contractor's view

Three-and-a-half years ago we got a call from CRASH about a community in Dorset that had had problems with a contractor – they had used most of their money and hadn't been able to complete all the work they planned. They needed someone to do painting and decorating, so a group from BAM volunteered.

It was originally meant to be one day, painting windows, but we were made so welcome there that we couldn't leave the job half done. The people at Pilsdon were so genuine, but so vulnerable to these unscrupulous builders. They just wanted

to be treated fairly and properly – with us, they were going to get their building and get a good experience. Their trust in us has increased over time, because we've done what we've said we'll do. They're like friends now – working at Pilsdon is like doing something for your family.

The project we're working on now will create more space for homeless people as well as some stabling for animals. It started in September, and we've rebuilt the frame and envelope of the building. It's scheduled to finish this March. We priced it like a normal project, but tried to get materials with charitable offers for them – CRASH has helped with that – and

although times are hard in the building industry, we got some generous discounts from subcontractors. One subcontractor offered to do all the floor coverings for free.

During the voluntary work, everybody mixes with each other; we have morning tea together, and lunch. There are people who need time to settle, to get back into a working way of life. You meet people with difficult circumstances. Some like to talk, and you hear all about their problems. And it's a busy place – you don't realise how many people there are who need help, but who don't seem to fit into the formal social services framework. All the guests at Pilsdon have tasks to do, but some came and helped with the painting in the stables as well. When you get people to pull together, it's amazing what you can achieve.

We have a full-time project manager at Pilsdon, and other people from the company participate as well. Just recently, we put out a call for painting volunteers. As soon as you start talking about the project, people want to get involved. Working on this project has helped my colleagues gel as a team, they just want to do their absolute best for that community. I couldn't have asked for more from them.

The important thing is the personal satisfaction – you feel like you've really helped. You can see the benefit. It's totally different from the day job, but you go down there and paint 20 windows and you feel good about that. The project manager, Tony Syddall, has been involved with some iconic buildings, but he says that Pilsdon is the best project he's ever worked on.

Nick Goff is construction director at BAM



Photo credit: George Olney



Working with CRASH and its patrons has been a matter of rebuilding trust with the building profession

Michael Deegan

The community's view

Homelessness is something we have always worked with. Pilsdon was set up 55 years ago as 'a place of rest along the journey' – its ethos is hospitality, work and worship. In our community of about 28 people, some stay here for one, two or more years, and some are what we call "wayfarers", homeless people who visit for a night or two at a time. We don't know when they're going to turn up, they just come – if we don't have space, then we put mattresses on the floor. They come from all over – some local to Dorset and some from much further afield.

Being homeless is a very high-risk proposition. You don't know if you'll be attacked or robbed, you're very vulnerable. Here they get some respite and a feeling of safety. They can catch up on sleep, and laundry, and do some light work in the garden, the kitchen or with the animals we have on our sustainable farm.

A lot of our guests have had a level of chaos in their lives, and we provide a place of safety and a healthy pattern of day-to-day living. They are often in recovery from crisis: bereavement, divorce, addiction. They don't need a hospital, but they need something that has more support than just living in a flat somewhere.

When we worked with a contractor before, it was a bad experience. The work was badly done – parts of it had to be re-done and we're still repairing as we go. It took up a lot of our time and budget.

Working with CRASH and its patrons has been a matter of rebuilding trust with the building profession. CRASH came in offering more than we could have hoped for. They put us in touch with firms such as BAM and EC Harris, and helped us do some development in fundraising. They did everything they could to make sure that the project was well supported. It's an ongoing relationship.

This building project has been running over the past three or four years. We're taking down the old animal stables, and reconstructing them. We're converting the loose boxes to be an auxiliary kitchen

space, for preparing the communal meals that we eat, and a large space to be used as a general meeting room, and flexible spaces for crafts such as woodwork and upholstery that the guests do. The rest of the building will be winter quarters for our cattle. The project is also allowing us to provide eight more spaces for wayfarers (homeless people) to sleep in, which means we can take in more people.

Between our guests, and the people who have been working on this project, everyone knows everybody by name. The construction folks that are working here have been that easy to work with, they've become part of the community. It's been wonderful.

Michael Deegan is the warden of the Pilsdon community

NOW, LET'S TAKE THINGS UP A GEAR

The construction industry continued to support CRASH even through the worst years of the downturn. But now that the economy is picking up, the charity is more ambitious than ever. **Chloë McCulloch** reports

This recession hasn't been kind to construction companies, or for that matter charities. So you might think that an industry charity such as CRASH would have been brought to its knees by a double whammy effect. Not so.

CRASH is totally reliant on the goodwill and generosity of the construction industry to keep it going: it doesn't receive any government funding or any other form of grant. But despite the challenges, the charity is fit and well. Francesca Roberts, one of only four employees who work for the charity, says: "Construction companies' loyalty to CRASH through the lean years has been phenomenal".



Last year the industry donated nearly £250,000 in the form of pro-bono professional work and building materials to homelessness projects through CRASH. The charity's auditing work shows how these "gifts in kind" translate to help on the frontline: CRASH helped 62 homelessness projects and 32 projects were completed that provided accommodation and services. And CRASH gave cash grants totalling nearly £163,000 to 14 homelessness groups to improve buildings and facilities.

This impressive amount of work is all thanks to the support of CRASH's 30 "patrons", who have each signed up to a long-term commitment, typically three years but in many cases much longer, to help the charity. It is this long-term investment that is so vital to CRASH, and while it didn't disappear in 2008 it did decline. To make up the shortfall the charity has over the past few years done more one-off fundraising activities, but it now wants to start building up its base of patrons to pre-recession levels.

The problem CRASH has is that at a time when so many charities are clamouring for attention, homelessness isn't one that evokes the most sympathy from the general public. "Companies are increasingly asking employees to nominate charities and invariably they are charities that support cancer patients, children and animals – homelessness never comes near the top of the list," says Francesca Roberts, CRASH chief executive.

Part of the answer may lie in dispelling some myths about homelessness. While it can be assumed that people become homeless because they have a drug or alcohol problem or have fallen into criminality, in fact most cases are triggered by a breakdown in a relationship or person losing their job (see pages 4-7 for the official statistics). The key is making the public aware of how many people slip into homelessness through no fault of their own.

Another powerful argument in CRASH's favour is that it is a logical fit for construction companies. "This is a charity with a clear resonance with construction – it's about making the most of what your company is brilliant at doing every day of

It's not just money, it's construction expertise, time and skill. It's a sharing of ourselves, which after all is what charity is about

Francesca Roberts, CRASH chief executive

the year," says Roberts. "It's not just money, it's construction expertise, time and skill. It's a sharing of ourselves, which after all is what charity is about."

And on this front Roberts is hopeful – she says companies are getting smarter about letting their staff get involved and the help CRASH is receiving from its patrons is getting more sophisticated. For example, it's no longer about sending 30 volunteers to paint a room for a day. Companies now send valued project managers, QSs and accountants to help put together a business plan for a project. And when a materials producer offers CRASH the facility to order materials up to a certain cash value, it also provides advice as to how best use its products. This is something that a corporate donor from another sector could not do. In short, it makes a construction company's corporate social responsibility policy so much more meaningful for its employees.

In 2014 CRASH expects to take on at least 50 new projects and to complete 30 that it is carrying over from last year. In addition to working on these individual projects, CRASH keeps patrons informed about the difference their contributions make. This means that every time a patron helps, the CRASH team adds that to a bespoke report for the company. CRASH is also launching a project committee this year so that all its patrons can share learning and ideas across projects.

This committee being formed just goes to show how the firms that have chosen to give something back also find that they gain from the experience, often in unexpected ways. This would seem to be another good reason for construction companies to support CRASH in 2014.

Q&A



Francesca Roberts, CRASH chief executive since 2007, talks about her involvement in and vision for the charity:

What attracted you to CRASH?

When I went for the job one of the reasons was the unusual way it was set up. It was so intricately interwoven with the construction industry and that remains true today.

When and how was CRASH founded?

Its origins go back to the nineties when the problem of homelessness became very visible on London's streets. Tony Denison worked in construction and his wife was a ballet critic, and he would find himself stepping over homeless people on his way to the ballet with his wife. He found it appalling that people should be sleeping rough when there was a construction industry that could do something about it.

How has CRASH developed from those early days?

In the nineties the focus was on providing cold weather night shelters on short-term leases and the work was limited to London. We still improve night shelters but we also work on hostels, day centres and move-on accommodation. We also have projects located all over the country from Inverness to Newquay.

How is CRASH different to other charities?

Typically charities have to spend a great deal of time and money on their fundraising activities. Thanks to the way Tony Denison set up the charity with patrons signing up to a long-term commitment, we can keep our overheads low and focus on helping homeless charities with their projects.

What are you most proud of?

CRASH was founded as the construction industry's charity, and it still is the industry's charity. We have deliberately kept our focus narrow, we don't manage or run homelessness shelters: we help to build and refurbish them. We deliver something no other charity delivers, that makes us unique and it's immensely gratifying.

YOU CAN HAVE A SAY IN HOW CRASH IS RUN

As a long-standing patron of CRASH, the managing director at British Gypsum Mike Chaldecott believes he's found an efficient form of charitable giving for his company. Interview by **Chloë McCulloch**

What's different about supporting CRASH as opposed to other charities? This is a question that Mike Chaldecott, managing director at British Gypsum, is well qualified to answer - his company has been a CRASH patron for about 15 years.

"With CRASH you can offer a more serious commitment," says Mike. "It's lovely to do charity work for cancer charities, of course, but with CRASH you can get people throughout the company really involved. They can get in and close,"

To illustrate the point Mike highlights the example of two British Gypsum employees who co-ordinate the supply of discounted materials to sites CRASH is supporting all over the UK. "It's a challenge, these projects need materials yesterday. These ladies on our team are able to operate efficiently and make sure everything is delivered on time. They really drive it, they go above and beyond."

Other staff from all departments in British Gypsum have got involved in fundraising. Last year the company took on the challenge of raising £100,000 in 100 days by participating in a variety of events. The money raised was split between CRASH and Macmillan Cancer Support.

Mike says it proved a great team building exercise, where members of staff revealed their many talents.

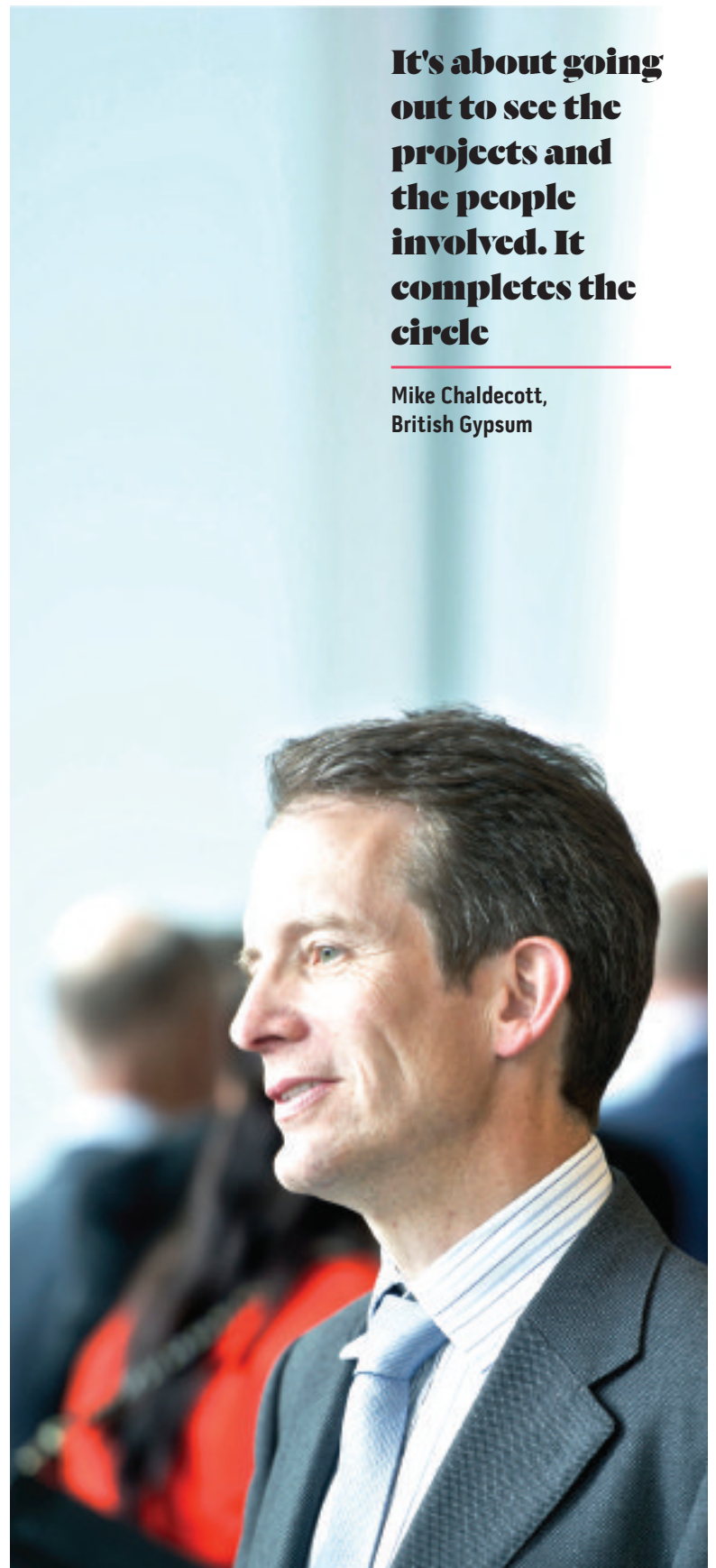
And on a personal level Mike enjoys actually seeing the results of his colleagues' efforts: "It's not just about donating money or materials, it's also about going out to see the projects and the people involved - places like the centre near Victoria Coach Station or The Crypt in Leeds. It completes a circle."

Mike clearly feels a sense of being a part of the charity and has become involved in its governance by joining the board. He points out that for business people this can be really satisfying: "You can have a real say in how it's going. Patrons can be on the charity's board, where you are able to guide it, make sure the funding is used well, makes sure it is being ambitious but at the same time not taking on too much."

One thing he is keen to point out is that construction companies don't have to be as big as British Gypsum to be a patron. "Not everyone can perhaps donate huge sums of money but companies can help in different ways. By lending the services of your architects or QSs or supplying plasterboard or boilers you can really make a difference. And see the people who benefit."

It's about going out to see the projects and the people involved. It completes the circle

**Mike Chaldecott,
British Gypsum**



THANK YOU TO CRASH'S PATRONS



Will
your
firm be
here?



CRASH is the construction and property industry's charity for homeless people.

We are a practical charity that focuses on improving the buildings used by homeless people. We do this in three ways:

Providing pro-bono professional expertise
Supplying free building materials
Awarding cash grants

CRASH is a UK registered charity (no. 1054107) and operates throughout the UK.



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