

SpotLight



Kerrie has been CEO at Streets2Homes since 2010. Passionate about making a difference, Kerrie is dedicated to offering a holistic service to Harlow's homeless. One of Kerrie's key objectives is to increase the amount of corporate support that the charity receives.

She took the time to tell us about her work at Streets2Homes.



Helping those who are homeless

Kerrie Eastman - Chief Executive Officer at **Streets2Homes**

Q: In a nutshell, what is Streets2Homes about?

A: At Streets2Homes, we aim to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to access safe accommodation and to have the chance to be part of the local community. As well as offering counselling and mentoring, we can help people gain employment and training.

We are a registered charity, relying heavily on donations. All of our services are provided free of charge to homeless people.

Q: What are the core services that you offer?

A: At the Streets2Homes Day Centre, we provide outreach services where our team will go out to rough sleepers on the streets. During these visits, we encourage rough sleepers to come into our centre, where they can access shower facilities, clean clothes, hot food and lots of support.

We'll use the intervention to ascertain their links and what the best pathway for them would be – i.e. identifying housing need (supported accommodation or private rented) or if there is an opportunity to link them back in with family.

At the Day Centre, once somebody is housed, we provide ongoing tenancy support – this includes once they move into a property, we set them up with a starter pack of essentials, and we ensure they have food in their cupboard etc.

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Q: Do you offer training to homeless people?

A: Yes, we provide workshop sessions at the Day Centre, where we do a cookery class that not only teaches cooking skills, but also provides important social interaction and confidence building. Another option is for people to undertake our online courses (there is a wide range of topics) which are all facilitated professionally.

We hold a regular games morning, where visitors can play bingo or do quizzes – again another confidence builder that fosters positive relationships. We have a popular art workshop.

Q: Is there a 'typical' type of homeless person?

A: I want to dispel myths about homelessness – there is no stereotypical homeless person. Yes, the people we deal with are all vulnerable, but they all have different life experiences, for example:

- Relationship breakdowns
- Bereavement
- Job loss
- Domestic abuse
- Addictions
- Lost their way
- Made the wrong choices

Homeless people are not necessarily unemployed or suffering from addictions. They might be professionals, employed or unemployed. They could be young adults up to senior citizens.

Homelessness comes in many forms. The most severe is rough sleeping – and that's the one that most people think of. There are so many people that are just steps away from rough sleeping – for example, those that are sofa surfing – staying on a friend's couch until their host's hospitality wears off.

Another example of homelessness is people that are in temporary accommodation. They might be waiting on a Council decision regarding their domestic situation. All of these situations lack stability.

An unstable person will soon become vulnerable.



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We would really like to increase our corporate supporters. If you are a company, we want to reach out to you.



Show you care at
www.streets2homes.co.uk



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Q: How does Harlow benefit from Streets2Homes?

A: Streets2Homes is based in Harlow, and as such our priority is helping people that are based in Harlow. We will, however, assist people from surrounding areas, although some of our funding is tied to people with an established link to Harlow. We will never not house a rough sleeper because they are not from Harlow. Whatever someone's problem with housing is, we are here to help.

Q: How can local companies get involved?

A: We would really like to increase our corporate supporters. If you are a company, we want to reach out to you. The corporate support we have had in the past has been fantastically well received by staff and residents, because it's not just about the money – it's the recognition and validation from a big company.

A company might choose to fund our online courses or lunches for example – and we ensure that everyone knows who has provided the funding. That is not only great for our residents' morale, but really gives the company's staff a sense of achievement and value. People that are homeless can sometimes lose their identity and not feel valued – being a corporate fundraiser provides much needed endorsement.

Q: What about volunteering?

A: Volunteering is an easy way to get involved – we rely heavily on our volunteers. Without them, we could not run the centre. We are always looking for volunteers that are 18+. For example, we have a GP volunteer who does some cooking for us and some ex-clients also volunteer. Once a person has volunteered, they tend to stay with us for a long time, however, Covid-19 meant that we had to reduce the number of volunteers coming into our premises.

We are now actively seeking more volunteers.