

Reachout

Your twice yearly care and support magazine from Peabody

Winter 2019

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Hello...

Welcome to the autumn/winter edition of *Reachout* magazine, bringing you all the news about events and projects from the last six months in our care and support services in London, Essex and the south east.

I find it hard to believe Christmas is nearly here – where does the time go? But the festive season always reminds me of the importance of helping people less fortunate. This is demonstrated brilliantly on page 9's story of the two MacMillan coffee mornings. How lovely that some of you have made time in your busy lives to help raise money for people going through cancer treatment.

It's also great to read about all the creativity in care and support

for mental health. The Jamz sessions in London's Link Street sound huge fun and Sebastian's paintings are absolutely wonderful, and such good therapy as well.

How wonderful too to hear how our East Sussex STEPS service helped Jane claim her pension. It just shows how important it is to check to see if you are entitled to any benefits.

I hope you all enjoy *Reachout* as much as I did and that you have a very merry Christmas and new year.

Best wishes,

Moira Griffiths
Group Care and Support Director

About Reachout

Pictured right is the *Reachout* editorial panel, which decides what goes into each issue.

The panel is made up of customers and a few staff and meets twice a year. If you'd like to join the panel, ask your support worker to contact editor Alexandra Marshall.

Customers write some of the stories in *Reachout*. Some are written by staff. If you would like



Left to right: Bernie Forshaw, Allan Winstanley, Peter Gee, Andrew Gwilt, Laura Weir-Steele and Louise Brindley

to write an article for *Reachout* or to report news other readers might find interesting, please tell your support worker.

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01268 498 500
Visiting support services
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On the cover

Pictured is Icilda of Leander Court at the Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning fundraiser. Read the full story on page 9

Money for good works

The Peabody Community Foundation supports many of the projects featured in *Reachout*. If you have ideas for a project in your area, speak to your support worker to see if you can apply to the foundation for some help.



Planet saver: exotic holidays at home



Extra care home Arthur Bliss, in Haywards Heath, threw a Hawaiian-themed party in summer, giving newcomers a chance to mingle with more settled tenants over food and non-alcoholic punch. 'I have not been here long and this helps me get to know people,' said Marjorie. Angie, whose mother recently moved here to be closer to family, said: 'It is a lovely place and things like this make it more special.'

New wifi service will bring free use of internet

A free connection to the internet is coming to 68 Peabody schemes across London, Essex and south England. And it should be up and running by March next year.

Engineers have started installing wi-fi at all the supported housing schemes we own. That means if you have a smartphone you should by next March be able to pick up a signal that lets you use the internet to do activities 'online'.

You will need to register first and some websites will be blocked.

The fastest and most reliable signal will be in places closest to where our technical staff put the router, a gadget which sends the wi-fi signal around your building.

And while the network can be used by lots of users at once, if people use it for activities that take up lots of 'space', you may find your connection is slow or cuts out.

What can you do with wifi?

These are just some of the things a wifi link to the internet lets you do. You can:

- claim or make enquiries about welfare benefits
- look for and apply for training courses or job vacancies
- find out what is going on in your neighbourhood – or the world
- watch films or TV, including an entire series, when you want
- use services like Skype or Facetime to make video calls to friends and family far away
- play interactive games.

What equipment can you use to pick up the wi-fi signal?

Once you've registered:

- a smartphone
- a tablet, laptop or desktop computer.

If you have any questions about wifi or how you can use it, just ask your support worker.

Could you be our next cover photographer?



Have you taken a photo that says: 'This looks like spring to me!' Then why not share it with other *Reachout* readers?

Send us your best shots and our panel will decide which one should go on the cover of the summer issue of *Reachout*.

Have a query? Just email editor Alexandra Marshall at Alexandra.Marshall@peabody.org.uk

Photos must be digital and at least 2MB in size or they will not print clearly.

Deadline for sending your digital photos to *Reachout* editor Alexandra Marshall: 5pm on Friday 27 March



Left to right: music makers Shaun, Martha, Olywaseyi and Ian at Jamz

Jamz today

Whether you tinkle the ivories, strum guitar or yodel in the shower, everyone is welcome to the new Jamz sessions on Fridays from 3pm at Link Street, Hackney.

The sessions started at our Hackney rough sleepers scheme but are open to anyone wanting to feel the joy of making music.

Aspiring Stormzy Shaun is studying music technology and loves the sessions. 'Music wakens the soul and lifts the spirits in everyone,' he said.

They're the highlight of David's week. 'Bob Marley once said, "One good thing about music, when it hits you you feel no pain".'

All welcome, no charge, and instruments provided from guitars, keyboards and mikes to drums.

National ballet goes east

Three regulars from dance classes we run for older people at Bethnal Green's Sundial Centre were invited to the official opening of the English National Ballet's brand new headquarters in Canning Town in September

The 60-year-old charity has for the past two years run Dancing East at the centre, in partnership with our Linkage Plus project for over-50s in Tower Hamlets.

Outreach coordinator Natasha Middleton said it was a lovely way for the community to help celebrate the ballet's move to East London.

'We were given star treatment,' Natasha said. 'We were taken around the dance studios and in one we met mayor Sadiq Khan.'

'I told him about the amazing dance and movement classes for over 50s the ENB runs at the Sundial Centre and he jokingly asked if, being 48, he could take part.'

After watching a short ballet rehearsal by younger students our four were escorted downstairs to a champagne reception then off to watch twelve male dancers perform to modern music.

'We were three rows from the front and it was a beautiful show,' Natasha said.

After the show, ENB artistic director Tamara Rojo said she wanted local people in Tower Hamlets to get very much involved with the ballet.

Mayor Khan added it could bring cultural benefits to the community as well as work opportunities.

Dancing East were special guests at the English National Ballet event



© LAURENT LOTARDO



Therapy reveals a talent right out of the ordinary

Capturing someone's likeness in a painting is a skill very few people have. But Sebastian captures their personality too, using just paint, brushes and paper

East Grinstead resident Sebastian was a trained architect for 20 years and worked on many well known projects. But in 2015 he had a breakdown and still suffers from anxiety and depression.

Portraits and landscapes

Our Mid-Sussex resettlement service is helping Sebastian but he is also finding it therapeutic to create portraits and landscapes using watercolours and oils.

'I wanted to find another outlet for my creativity as I had found architecture very stressful,' Sebastian said. 'This gives me a purpose and helps my self-esteem.'

Sebastian has painted portraits of family and friends but also fellow customers of the resettlement service. He's not sure where painting fits into his future plans but is trying hard to develop his skills.

'My painting has really come on over the last year. One of my paintings was shortlisted for the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours annual exhibition so that has made me consider exhibiting my work in the future.'

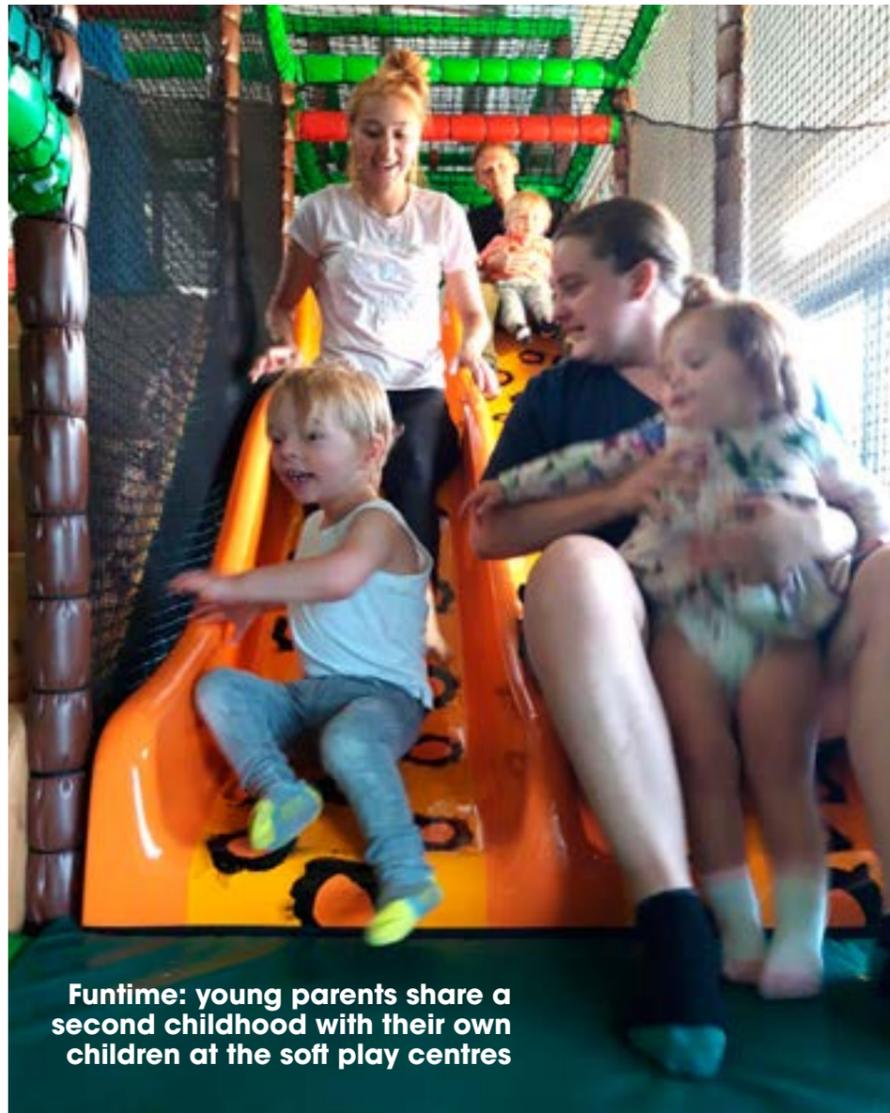
We began supporting Sebastian this year in a number of ways, including helping sort out some problems with his finances.

'I've been through quite a few different places and seen the difference in the level of care you get,' Sebastian said. 'But this has been the best. It's amazing.'

'I tend to shut myself off but Jo and SallyAnn have really helped me deal with things. It's good to know I have support around my mental health in case anything goes wrong in the future.'



A small sample of Sebastian's beautiful artworks, clockwise from top: sunrise, Point Blank and granddad. Point Blank was shortlisted by the Royal Institute



Funtime: young parents share a second childhood with their own children at the soft play centres



Lessons from the ballpit

Diving into the ballpit with their babies for the first time has given a huge confidence boost to young parents from our Colchester and Braintree support schemes.

'I was embarrassed getting in with my baby,' said Demi, 'but everyone else did it so it wasn't embarrassing any more.'

Ballpits are just one of the attractions at the soft play centres for under-fives and a great way to get the babies' parents trying new things.

'Some of our parents had never been to a soft play centre or climbed into a ballpit with their children,' said organiser Linda Conway.

'We encouraged them to try everything and give the toddlers a good run around. The wobbly mirrors were a big hit, as were the slides.'

Eating lunch at a table together was even a novelty for some as not all have a table in their home.

'Tasting a milkshake before you buy it!' exclaimed Gracie later. 'I didn't even know that was allowed.'

There was a serious side to the outings. Having fun mixing with other people is a good way to boost your social skills and self-esteem. And being willing to try new things sends a great message to your children.

'It was really good,' said Grace. 'We're going to save up to go back another time.'

'Everyone else did it so it wasn't embarrassing anymore!'
Demi



High praise for scheme for homeless hospital patients

Gloria House, a service we run in partnership with the NHS, giving lodgings and support to homeless people discharged from hospital, has been praised by deputy mayor Sophie Linden for helping break a vicious circle that sees patients go straight back to living on the street, ending up ill again, or worse

Figures published earlier this year* show that at least 44 homeless people have died in East London in the past five years.

Forward thinking

The Gloria House model, created by the Royal London Hospital Pathways team, offers a safe place to recover after treatment for illness, an attack or an accident.

Gloria House staff are trained to give support for lots of varied issues to try to prevent their clients ending up back on the street.

Their success rate after nearly two years is an impressive 90%, with 58 of their 64 clients now in suitable housing, and saving close to £1.2m for the public purse.

'It's great to see these incredibly positive outcomes,' said deputy mayor Sophie Linden.

Tower Hamlets clinical commissioning group (CCG) manager Maggie Jeffrey said: 'One of the main issues for the NHS is the cost of keeping people with nowhere to go in hospital so this really helps save the NHS money.'

The deputy mayor also heard first-hand accounts from some of our former clients. One woman who had fled domestic violence said she was now restarting her life. An ex-offender and drug user said he'd stopped using and was now on a special apprenticeship for people with disabilities.

Deputy mayor Linden's visit has boosted political support for our NHS partnership and Tower Hamlets CCG has agreed to carry on funding it for another two years.

**Office of National Statistics*

Challenge volunteers' concern for rough sleepers

Helping Havering's rough sleepers was high on the 'to do' list for 10 young volunteers who came to our Holgate House office earlier in summer

The group spent their summer break helping others locally as part of our regular initiative with local voluntary group, *The Challenge*.

Their main task was promoting our Havering support and advice service but they also had a plan to help the rising number of homeless people locally. So after designing a poster to tell young people about Peabody's services and leafletting Romford, they did a sponsored walk to raise funds to make and fill 14 gift boxes for homeless people.

The Salvation Army approved their plan and four of our group went to a drop-in session to present the boxes and meet some people who, with our support, now have a home in Havering.

The Salvation Army's Dave Chuck said the volunteers' work was very inspiring and imaginative with the goodies in the 14 parcels perfect for rough sleepers.



From left with Salvation Army pastor Dave (at back) are volunteers Nancy, Sophia, Robert and Oliver, and former rough sleepers Samuel, Mark and Hughie with Peabody manager Norma



Linda with senior support worker Amy



Linda, again, off to see Mamma Mia in London



George and Thomas on the minibus to London

Our Clacton support services for people with learning difficulties have had an exciting time taking in sights over head and over the footlights

One of our schemes has a very good view of the fields used for the **Clacton Air Show** so when customers said they'd love to watch the show over a barbecue, the choice of venue was obvious.

Customers from other services were invited, along with their families. All enjoyed catching up with friends, eating good food and watching the planes.

Mr and Mrs Strugnell, parents of customer Linda, who moved in last June, said they had never been invited to days like this before and were very happy to be there.

Everyone enjoyed the day and we are already working on plans for a Halloween party.

An outing to see musical **Mama Mia** at the London Theatre was months in the planning.

Clacton staff and customers from 8 and 20 Douglas Road, Honeysuckle and 777 St John's Road sorted out the tickets and booked a coach to get them to the theatre and home again.

It was well worth the effort. Everyone had a fantastic evening. Our customers knew every song and are still talking about the fantastic show and day out.

'I'd not been to London since I was a child. I loved it,' Valerie said. Barry added: 'It was brilliant. Now can we go to see *Christmas Disney on Ice*?'

Dial O for older people at the Sundial Centre

Older People's Day went off with a swing at the Sundial Centre on 2 October with music and a show for older people from across Tower Hamlets.

A performance by our resident singing group was followed by a show by Brick Lane Music Hall.

In the afternoon everyone was in raptures after half an hour of beautiful harp music played by a gifted girl aged 11.

There was a hot and cold buffet at lunchtime, and time for a spot of knitwear shopping at Margaret's Golden Girls stall. To round off the day we all had tea and cakes.

'I loved everything,' said Shirley. 'The music, the food - it was all lovely.'



Brick Lane Music Hall perform at the Sundial

'You did so well getting all the different kinds of music for everyone to listen to and the food was lovely,' said Mary*.

'It was an exceptional day and a good turnout,' said facilities assistant Kelly Donnelly. And of course we also got a chance to plug a new course coming up at the centre for people with long term health conditions and to tell guests about other activities we run for older people.

*not her real name



Giant coffee morning to fill cancer charity coffers

The Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning fundraiser got residents across Peabody's services baking and brewing to fundraise for cancer support

In Southwark, Greet Street customers and mental health support staff raised £50 for Macmillan. Sheltered tenants and staff in Lewisham's Leander Court more than doubled that with a whopping £110.

The money will help Macmillan pay for nurses, occupational therapists, dieticians and more to support people with cancer.

Leander tenant Angela, who has twice had cancer, said baking

cakes for the event was her way of saying 'thank you' for the great treatment Macmillan gave her.

Leander tenants also brought along fruit and Andriani made sandwiches. Joyce's musician friend Nesta played guitar and everyone enjoyed singing, dancing and a quiz.

Tenants who were unable to leave their flats were treated to home deliveries of cake.

Ivydale customers, who have learning difficulties, were among the guests at Greet Street.

'Cancer is something everyone has a connection with, through family or someone they know,' said customer Robert Millar.

Ivydale support worker Jane said her own mum had been cared for by Macmillan. 'I could not thank them enough for their support,' Jane said.

Staff member Hadijah said the event meant a lot to customers who had lost loved ones to cancer. 'We gave a round of applause for Macmillan's great work,' she said.



Main pic and top right: Leander Court tenants tuck in for charity





STEPS pension surprise for retired nurse saves the day

A retired nurse and her partner have been saved from homelessness after support service STEPS tracked down the old age pension she had no idea she was even allowed to claim

'I never even thought I could claim a pension,' said Jane. 'We're both war babies and just used to managing with what we have.'

Jane had a long career, as a general nurse, cancer nurse and army midwife, before moving to Bexhill to care for her parents.

She met David* two decades ago while recovering from a hip operation. After two years they moved in together and lived frugally for 20 years on David's £125 a week pension.

Tenancy shock

But then came bad news from their landlord. Problems with his mortgage meant he would have to sell the flat they called home.

Jane and David tried the council, who put them in touch with STEPS, our visiting support service for older people in Hastings and Rother.

STEPS support workers Indra and Derek quickly realised that Jane had never applied for her state pension so Indra got to work.

It wasn't exactly straightforward. Jane didn't have a bank account, a National Insurance number or any ID bar an expired passport.

Indra focused on the National Insurance number first. Without it there'd be no pension.

Retrieving it was going to take more than six weeks but, with it, they could re-open Jane's long dormant bank account and apply to have her pension backdated.

While this was going on, Jane and David had their names added to the housing register but that was no guarantee they'd get a home before the flat was sold. Their troubles were far from over.

Another three months passed before Jane's pension was re-instated. And with it came a back payment.

Jane and David were astonished. The sum came to an incredible £121,000!

Jane and Indra had a lightbulb moment - why not use the money to buy the flat Jane and David were renting? Within a week Jane and David's offer was accepted by their landlord.

With Jane's pension the couple now also have a much healthier income. Jane is, with Indra's help, getting attendance allowance as well. And an occupational therapy assessment should help the couple to manage more easily around their 'new' home.

'We simply don't know where we would have ended up without Indra's help and that was so stressful,' Jane said.

'It's so wonderful to feel settled and able to stay in my home! I had no idea I could apply for a pension, let alone get it backdated.'

'Their expertise has been invaluable, they have been really kind and approachable. I would recommend their service to anyone.'

**not his real name*

If you aren't sure whether or not you are entitled to a state pension, please speak to your support worker.

STEPS is a free short-term support service for people in Hastings and Rother who live in their own home. It helps people aged 65 or older, or aged 18 or over with a long-term physical health need. STEPS is commissioned by East Sussex Council's supporting people team.



A much relieved Jane

'It's so wonderful to feel settled and able to stay in my home! I had no idea I could apply for a pension, let alone get it backdated.'

Jane



Support worker spots landlord's errors

We've been really touched by a handwritten note from Anne Knight House tenant Joe about the help he's had from housing support worker Samantha

Joe came to our Chelmsford support scheme after his landlord served notice on him for unpaid rent. Joe had needed surgery for a back problem and that left him unable to work full-time.

Not knowing his legal rights, he hadn't challenged his landlord. Instead he sofa-surfed after the court case, deeply distressed by the debts he now owed.

But after he moved into Anne Knight House, detective work by Samantha found Joe's landlord hadn't followed the law.

He had failed to put into a tenancy deposit scheme the money Joe had paid upfront before moving into the flat. Doing this has been law since 2007.

Samantha put a case together, made an appointment for Joe with

Citizens' Advice and wrote a letter for him to take setting out his case.

It now looks likely that not only is Joe's deposit enough to cover most if not all of his rent arrears, he may also have a claim for compensation and damages.

'Samantha has gone over and beyond in helping me in multiple aspects, from dealing with my landlord and court and even with my mental wellbeing,' Joe wrote.

He said Samantha was very friendly and understanding, 'and easy to open up to'.

'It's rewarding being able to make a difference to tenants like Joe,' Samantha said. 'I work with a brilliant team and our managers encourage us to fight for those who for whatever reason cannot fight for themselves.'



Samantha with happier Joe

'Samantha has gone over and beyond in helping me in multiple aspects, from dealing with my landlord and court and even with my mental wellbeing.'

Joe



Diane and Scott at Pride

Essex outreach is Basildon's Pride

Scott and Diane from our Essex outreach support team went along to Basildon Pride in September to spread the word about our service, say hello to a few of the people we support and catch up with some who've moved on and up.

It was an amazing day, starting with a parade through town and into Gloucester Park with about 1,500 supporters. Beautiful music and matching weather made for a lovely warm atmosphere.

Our pair had gone kitted out with gift bags and gave out all 200. The bags had leaflets about the service but also a few practical items like a £1 coin for a shopping trolley, a card wallet, and mints.

We were able to give some helpful advice to people on the day, but also gave out our details so they can be passed to people we heard of who need support.

The Essex outreach team gives free, confidential support and advice to people over 16 to help make people more confident, able to live independently and aware of relevant local services. Your housing set up doesn't matter. You could be renting your home, buying it, could own it or have no home at all.



Safe to Segway: from left, George, Trevor, Kate and Scott

Never say never

It's hard not to suspect that what some Pathways residents most enjoyed on their day out at Leeds Castle was watching team manager Kate cope with her (very sensible) fear of heights and speed

But everyone at Pathways had to step outside their comfort zone for the challenge of extreme *Go Ape* and Segway riding - booked by the residents, not Kate.

'We all got harnessed up, had our safety briefing then we were zip-lining, climbing rope ladders, and travelling from tree to tree on wobbly equipment,' Kate said. 'It took about two hours but no one wanted to lose face by giving up.'

'I couldn't believe Kate finished,' said resident George. 'I was sure she was going to give up.'

Segway riding came next. 'It felt weird,' Kate said. Helmeted up, the group set off at a sedate pace. 'We were speed restricted at first,' Kate said. 'That really suited me.'

Enjoying panoramic views of the castle normally hidden to the public they got a potted history of past owners. 'One bought the castle in her 20s for a few thousand pounds to use as a party retreat for her rich and famous friends. She even built an airstrip to fly them in,' Kate said.

It was at that point that their instructor lifted the speed restriction having decided they were competent enough to whizz along. 'We had a great time though I was scared as I hate speed, especially on two wheels,' Kate said.

The journey was completed without incident, almost. 'We were returning when Trevor hit a small fence and fell off. I think his pride was hurt more than anything else.'

'Segwaying was great,' said Scott (undamaged). 'We saw some really nice countryside and I'd love to do it again.'

'It was a great day out,' George added, 'and I tried things I've never done before.'

'That's the third time I've agreed to do *Go Ape*,' said Kate. 'And everytime I say "never again".'

Pathways is a Sussex support scheme for people who need support with their mental health. The day out was paid for by a Tesco Bags of Hope grant.

Raising your personal best

Since April, Redbridge mental health customers have been taking part in weekly *Fit for Fun* sessions that have proved so popular customers have called for round two.

Rising demand

The plan had been to run 20 sessions but we're now seeking funds for another 20, but with extra space so customers from another Redbridge scheme can join in the fun.

Warming up with instructor Agnieszka



Nine customers signed up for the first round of our *Fit for fun* sessions and attendance has been high throughout.

Each carefully planned one-hour session with instructor Agnieszka in Cranbrook House's lounge included a healthy lunch of sandwiches (prepared by customers) and fruit, washed down with water.

'The exercises became more challenging every week,' said Claudia.

'It's very relaxing and enjoyable and I'm looking forward to more chair-based exercises,' said Shada Ahmed.

Two sessions were held outdoors in scenic Valentine's Park but the highlight was a couple of sessions led by customers Karum and Timi.

Karum and Timi are now working on plans to hold their own tennis sessions.