

# eddoes

THE NATIONAL VOICE  
OF T.H.O.M.A.S UK

**Inside...**  
*From heroin  
to helper*



**Leading  
by example**



*A bed  
that can  
change  
a life*



**Faye: I can be  
a mum again**



# Welcome

**In the words of Dale Carnegie “any fool can criticise, condemn, and complain – and most fools do.”**

His core belief was that it is possible to change other people’s behaviour by changing one’s reaction to them. His writings continue to influence self development in the contemporary organisation of the 21st century. His famous quote “stop worrying and start living” is a mantra for our modern day. In this edition of Edges we read about people who have stopped worrying and are now living. Although the obsessive compulsion of drugs and alcohol has led them into the darkness of utter despair, we see the manifestations of human life searching for meaning and purpose.

Many of our service users are the victims of a turbulent lifestyle with a cocktail of low self esteem, broken relationships, and an inability to be understood with a copious combination of lost opportunities. This propels a revolt from the established norm that constitutes stability, leaving people severely excluded and outside the sustainability system that most of us take for granted in day to day life.

Drugs and alcohol provide escapism, anaesthetising the reality of existence, leading people further and further into an unfathomable void.

It is inspirational to watch people discover their potential and manoeuvre from the cul-de-sac of despair on to the road of transformational change. This requires altering and expanding the limiting mindset of irrational beliefs and behaviours by embracing the incremental process of a new beginning.

Our rehabilitation programmes are intended to help people reinvent themselves by helping them to see how their frames of reference, thinking and behaviours have produced the negative consequences from programmed actions.

**A fundamental shift is needed where the individual reshapes the underlying patterns of current thinking and behaviours.**

In this edition of Edges we have positive stories that reflect real change. Our recovery programmes provide a “looking glass” coined by the psychologist Charles Horton Cooley who, back in 1902, developed the idea that individuals learn about themselves in every situation by exercising their imagination to reflect on their social performance.

Our culture provides objective evaluations, observed and interpreted by a group dynamic

process. This facilitates a deeper human consciousness that breaks into automatic functioning and leads people into a manual way of behaving so that the automatic system of functioning can be reprogrammed.

**As a developer of people, schooled in the disciplines of psychology and sociology, the ultimate driving force stems from my Christian theological heritage that views each person as a unique individual, both sacred and social.**

The inherent dignity of the human person is the starting place to bring about change. This principle is grounded in the idea that each person has the potential for a covenantal relationship that is not time bound but timeless.

As an organisation we are committed to walk with people for as long as it takes. Please continue to support our work.

Have a happy and peaceful Christmas.

**Father Jim McCartney  
Founder of THOMAS**

# A bed that can change a life



**James, aged 19, was homeless and nobody would fund his treatment. Thanks to THOMAS sponsors we have been able to offer him a bed.**

Before I came into treatment I had a drug and alcohol obsession, I was drinking on a regular basis, and I wanted to drink every day. My life was out of control but, by coming here, I have learned how to stay off alcohol and drugs. I have been here three months now.

I was adopted at the age of three because my mother died from an overdose of medication, which she was addicted to, as well as alcohol. Me, my brother and sister were adopted and I was ok until the age of twelve. I was kicked out of school because I had a drug problem - I was taking cannabis, missing lessons, and going out drinking at dinner time. I got in with the wrong crowd and there were things in the past, like being adopted, which meant I used to do silly things and dwell on the consequences. I just drank more, took more drugs, and my life was just out of control. I was scrounging off people.

I had no roof over my head, no family or friends, and I fell out with my foster mum and dad because I lost them through using. It wasn't a good time really. I heard about treatment and decided to go for an assessment. I am not sure about funding or how it worked. I was on the streets and in bedsits, anywhere. It was horrible really because I had no money, no food, and I was on my own in the cold.



**The worst time was last Christmas: I was freezing, and I had to support myself.**

The hostels I thought were good at the time because I had a roof over my head and food but, looking back, they were full of addicts and people like myself who had alcohol problems. I had people knocking on my door at three o'clock in the morning, so I was getting no sleep. I was getting up late in the morning and I got thrown out of college so I

was back to square one. It was off the wall in the hostels. I'd wake up in the morning and start off with 2 litres of cider and by ten o'clock I was on spirits and vodka (two litres a day) and whatever else I could get my hands on. THOMAS has helped to save my life. I never realised I had a disease, but this helps, because I am now building up ties with my family and visiting my daughter. I am meeting people who are clean and talking to them and I am not used to talking to people who are drug and alcohol free and it helps. Waking up in the morning now that I am clean, I am not thinking about drinking or with a hangover, I am like a different person. I feel more normal now that I am not taking drugs or drinking. And I don't have to think about it, or getting it, or worry about people knocking on the door trying to get money off me. They would be targeting me for money.

People would look for me or send others to find me: they knew when I got paid and where I would go. It was hard work and some days I would end up with nothing, so I had to borrow money to feed my habit and it was just a vicious circle. I felt depressed and anxious and had daily thoughts about committing suicide. It's sad to say that at my young age, but now my life is getting organised again through THOMAS.



# I can be a mum again thanks to THOMAS

Faye (right) with her mother.

It's hard to say when I really started drinking because at the age of 16 and 17 everyone was doing it. I guess I'd be 18 when I first started going that extra mile and needed to get in more of a state than everyone else. Then I'd carry it on. When people were calming down on a Monday, I wouldn't, and it just progressed from there.

**“I'd go through stages of being sober but then I'd start trying different things because I never truly felt comfortable in my own skin.”**

I was always trying to escape my own head, and that's literally what it was. It didn't matter if it was alcohol or something else, I was fighting a constant battle with myself because I felt like I didn't fit in, and it became a vicious circle.

I drank excessively, and dependently, for about 10 years. When I fell pregnant, I was sober briefly through my pregnancy and did a detox. But it wasn't particularly intense, and I didn't go to rehab afterwards as had been suggested, so I quickly found myself back at square one.

I went into supported accommodation for a while and that's when things seemed to get worse. Because of the isolation in my accommodation - I wasn't allowed any friends from outside or anything like that - it was just me and

my son. I made a friend in there, who was a heavy drinker and user, and that just made it acceptable for us both to do that with each other so, instead of getting better, it just got worse. In the end, I was drinking stuff I wouldn't have dreamt of - the cheapest, most horrible cider, and about six litres of it per day. On some days, when I was feeling that way out, there would be spirits mixed in too. It was absolutely horrendous. I didn't want to drink, but I had to drink.

I tried another detox but that didn't work either, and that's when I hit rock bottom. I got arrested when I was in charge of my son. I was highly intoxicated and unfit to look after him so he was taken into temporary foster care, and it was decided he couldn't be returned to me until I got myself sorted out.

That was such a shock, I knew I had to do something, so I decided there and then I didn't want drink. After several failed attempts, I ended up doing a seven-week detox through Librium, which sorted out my physical dependency. But that wasn't the main problem. The real issue was me, what was in my head in terms of the mental addiction, and the cravings.

I was then pointed in the direction of Lune Street, and THOMAS. It was a total abstinence course and very structured - Monday to Friday 9 to 5. At first I found it really hard and wanted to get into any other group but that one because I was thinking I just can't do it. But then I thought, 'No, I really want this so I'll give it a shot'. The fact the facilitator, Kev, had actually been there and done it, rather than reading from a text book, meant I instantly had respect for him and that helped me get focused on the course. After that I knuckled down and I can't believe what I actually achieved in those 12 weeks.

**“I needed to change how I was thinking, and that's what THOMAS has done for me.”**

Now I feel like a completely different person and, best of all, my son is living with me again.

It's a million miles away from where I was six months ago. Then I was in a mess, feeling so poorly that I felt I had to drink, but it was the drink that was making me poorly.

I'd be shaking when I got up at six in the morning and I needed to have a pint of cider to function. Now the thought of that makes me feel sick. But that was my life - and I had a small child in tow as well. He'd be watching me being sick and wondering what was wrong. It was a case of him looking after me, rather than me looking after him.

**“Now he's back with me and we are back to being best buds..”**

He looks up to me, and I'm looking after him, which is how it should be.

I'm looking forward to my first proper Christmas with my son

- and my first sober since childhood. Last Christmas I'd just done a detox and was sober in the run-up to it, but then I started drinking again and didn't tell anybody. When it got to Christmas, the truth came out. I'd had a bottle of wine before I even turned up to my mum's and I ended up ruining the whole day. It was a big shock to them because they all thought I'd been doing really well. I turned up in a state and can't imagine what my son must have been thinking. It was supposed to be the day when Santa comes with all his toys, and everyone enjoys themselves. Instead he saw me making an idiot of myself and upsetting all the family. But this year, thanks to THOMAS, it's going to be completely different and I'm actually looking forward to Christmas for the first time in years.



Faye on graduation day.

## Become a THOMAS supporter!

Whether you would like to support THOMAS on a regular or one-off basis, you can donate via our website

[www.thomasonline.org.uk](http://www.thomasonline.org.uk)

or

by completing the form on the back cover.

**Many thanks to our existing supporters. Your generosity makes a great difference to the people we help.**



[www.thomasonline.org.uk](http://www.thomasonline.org.uk)

# A new business development manager at THOMAS



Mary Carley

Hello, my name is Mary Carley and I have recently joined THOMAS to lead on fundraising and business development and expand the generous charitable support that we receive from our wonderful donors.

I am delighted to be with THOMAS. I was impressed by the work of the charity when I was working in Blackburn several years ago. Since then, THOMAS' work has extended into Greater Manchester and beyond. The need for our work continues to grow.

**“Fundraising is very important for THOMAS.”**

We are working with more local authorities and other partners, however we need charitable income to add value to these contracts and really put our mission into action.

All too often we find that someone who approaches our recovery or rehabilitation services is not eligible for a funded place.

We do everything that we can to get statutory funding, but if that fails we will often fund the place ourselves.

**“We do our best not to turn anyone away.”**

Charitable donations mean that we can help people not supported by statutory funding; this makes the difference between life and death for many people.

Some of our projects don't currently receive any statutory funding at all, such as our Drop In Centre in Blackburn, our Volunteer Service and the training and development of our Recovery Leaders. These rely entirely on donations from our EDGES readers, charitable trusts and local businesses.

We are very grateful indeed for this generous support.

Before coming to THOMAS I worked for national charities and for the local authority in Blackburn with Darwen so I have a good understanding of the differing pressures faced by charities and the public sector. THOMAS has a great deal to offer to the people we help, to the charities we work with and the public sector whose contracts we deliver.

**If you would like to help THOMAS in any way or would like to know more about our work please do not hesitate to contact me.**

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# Herbert Parkinson supporting THOMAS all the way!

**THOMAS is very grateful for the generous support of our sponsors and supporters and none more so than Herbert Parkinson in Darwen.**

*(Herbert Parkinson is a subsidiary of the John Lewis Partnership.)*

Debbie Hall, Herbert Parkinson's Community Liaison Co-ordinator has been key in making it all happen.

Debbie has encouraged her colleagues at Herbert Parkinson to take part in a number of fundraising events to raise money for THOMAS whilst having a great time themselves. Fundraising events have included a curtain sale and a family funday.

Debbie has also raised money for THOMAS from across the John Lewis Partnership, including a grant from the John Lewis Divisional Community Investment Committee and the Herbert Parkinson community fund. So far over £11,000 has been donated to THOMAS thanks to Debbie, her colleagues, Herbert Parkinson and the John Lewis Partnership.

Golden Jubilee Volunteer at THOMAS Charlie Shingadia, an employee at Herbert Parkinson, volunteered to support THOMAS through the John Lewis Partnership Golden Jubilee Trust. (John Lewis Partnership established the Golden Jubilee Trust in April 2000 to celebrate John Lewis' Golden Jubilee.

The scheme allows staff to be released on full pay to work for a charity in their area.)

Charlie's gardening and DIY skills seemed the perfect fit for a secondment with THOMAS at St Anne's House, where the garden needed transforming. Charlie expected to learn plenty about growing vegetables but what he didn't realise was how much he would gain from hearing about the lives of the people using St Anne's House.

Charlie said: "As soon as I started work on the garden I was joined by volunteers from the project who were keen to get involved. It was giving them something to do and I know that the garden will be in safe hands when I get back to work."

However Charlie's secondment didn't finish as quickly as he might have expected! After finishing the garden, Charlie then started work on turning a disused garage into a health room for Drop-In centre visitors to use, when meeting health



Debbie Hall and Charlie Shingadia from Herbert Parkinson collect a Lancashire Telegraph Business Award for their work with THOMAS

Charlie learned about the work THOMAS does through the Drop-In Centre to reach even the hardest to engage members of society. The drop in centre is the service used by those who are still involved in drug and alcohol use.


By attending the Drop-In they are able to enjoy a healthy cooked meal and they can start to access health and other services.

In due course some move onto THOMAS' recovery and rehabilitation services.

workers, and also a shower and other facilities. Staff at St Anne's House are delighted with the results and Charlie is pleased to have made such a worthwhile contribution to THOMAS.

**Thank you to Charlie and to Herbert Parkinson for making this possible.**

**If your business would like to support THOMAS in this way please contact Mary Carley (details page opposite.)**



## George Bernard Shaw wrote that 'youth is wasted on the young.'

This might seem a bit shallow, or even cynical, but in a society that has suffered from intense cultural fragmentation and an eclipse of the sacred, we do see the pitiable consequences of this, especially in the young.

All the different coverages of the recent riots which apparently surprised many (can't think why), came from so varied and different perceptions and perspectives. Knee jerk reactions, all trying to satisfy the general public's disgust at such behaviour was briefly satisfied by the court handing out larger sentences than usual. Along with this, thankfully, came more intelligent reflections on what it was all about and it certainly didn't come down to one thing.

It is interesting, even if somewhat trite, to observe that it wasn't the local 'Waterstones' at Clapham Junction that was looted but the designer clothes shops and hi-tech stores. There was no desire on the part of the looters to improve their education or appreciation of culture by stealing the complete works of Shakespeare or Tolstoy's War and Peace. And yet problems in the education system seem to be a factor in inner city schools, where often there is a breakdown in discipline and the growing sense of alienation and anger at just not having all the material things that other people have in the wealthier areas of our cities; things that our celebrity culture tells us we really need to have if we are to be anyone. Gangs are an obvious bolt hole if you feel you don't belong anywhere else.

Sadly though, this sub-culture breeds a malaise for even wanting to get involved in a more constructive way with anything positive. There also seems to be an impassable gulf between the people who do advocate

'the big society' and those who in reality have given up on it or even ever considered it as a possibility. Sometimes we don't even speak the same language.

Our hope here at THOMAS, particularly in the Drop-in with the redevelopment programme we have initiated, is that we can somehow begin to bridge that gulf by offering more rather than less and challenging our young people to risk going further than even they thought possible, going further than the Benefits System, or dealing with the pains and problems of their everyday by other means rather than drugs and alcohol. There must be a better song to sing and if we do care deeply for them we will provide the song sheet to sing from. This involves a long process of education, therapy and, I believe, spirituality.

## We need to meet their souls as well as their bodies and psyches; otherwise we will ultimately fail them. It is about nurturing values, virtues and moral principles.

Michael Holman, former headteacher and head of the British Jesuits, wrote: "Three years ago a report from UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, put the United Kingdom near the bottom of the list of children's well-being in developed nations and there were warnings then that our young people's values were shaped too much by their peers and not enough by significant adults'. Along with our adult team's input I would like to see more young people from sixth forms and universities who have strong moral and faith convictions offering themselves as volunteers to engage with our young people who come to our Drop-In. Young people

who are quite different from them in a way and have chosen a different style of living their lives with the potential for happiness and success through hard work, commitment and faithfulness. Fellow peer mentors who are in recovery are good of course but so are other groups from totally different backgrounds. It's a wide and varied world out there and it would be good for us to tap into it.

All of us together, I believe, have an obligation to challenge this often ignored under-class who have been caught up in a perverse morality and a loss of self-worth, where there is nothing to lose in this life style of taking whatever you want with no moral consciousness, or worries about the consequences including no real fear of the penal system.

As well as food and practical help I don't see why a creative approach to faith should not be on the menu. Of course they would need to experience it in those of us who see it as a life-giving, energising and relevant way of living, that is not just something for the private forum or something we do behind church doors. This challenge from within is also at the same time a radical challenge to the political and economic conditions in our society, some of which threaten to dehumanise large numbers of young people by suppressing or ignoring their human dignity. An inner faith speaks loudly of personal dignity and the rightful place we all have in creation and society.

In the gospel story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man goes to Hell not because he was rich but because he never even noticed the poor man at his door. Well, the riots are a big shout to be noticed and what we see daily at our Drop-In is a more pained cry to be noticed, and there is an urgency for what we are called to do in our organisation. We should not keep the poor waiting because this says they don't really matter; many of these young people have not got that sort of time anyway and their needs are immediate; somewhere to stay tonight; someone to talk to now; somewhere to eat today. The Drop-In is a wonderful gateway for so much more and we need to remind ourselves that it is a privilege to be able to offer what we offer, not a burden or a chore, not to be done grudgingly or judgementally but quite simply from the type of loving service that is not looking for anything in return, where we go more than willingly that extra mile without even being asked.





# Drinking nearly cost me my family

ONE of the biggest problems with addiction is the affect it has on your family.

It's not just you who suffers; it also affects those closest to you.

I probably had my first drink at the age of 13, and I drank until I dropped basically. I did try to steer away from it, initially, but every time I did drink, I drank until I got drunk.

I never felt comfortable in my own skin. If I went to parties or family dos, I always needed something just to make me feel comfortable, to give me that bit of confidence, and to take away all the fears that I had.

I lived in fear, basically.

As time went on, the drinking got worse and my two daughters ended up leaving home because of it. They'd be around 15 and 18 at the time. I wasn't a nice person.

Whenever my youngest daughter did come to see me, it was out of duty, not love. She never knew what to expect because I'd promise so many times to put the bottle down, but it

never happened. Then she'd come back and see me in a state again. It was just a vicious circle.

**"I'd keep thinking to myself, 'Right, that's it. It's never going to happen again'. But then I'd go back to the bottle again."**

There were times when my family didn't speak to me for a number of months, but I was also isolating as well. I didn't want them coming around because they were eating into my drinking time.

Eventually, I became so isolated that I didn't go out at all and, once you're in a state of isolation like that, all you are bothered about is you. It's poor, poor me, you're full of self pity, and self loathing, and it's really not a nice place to be.

I reached the point where I knew I was beaten. I wasn't at my rock bottom, but I knew I was beaten, and I knew that nothing could stop me from

drinking – not myself anyway because I'd tried that so many times. I needed other people, and I needed support, and, thankfully, that's what I got from THOMAS.

I ended up going into detox for three weeks and that's where my recovery journey all started. I did a relapse prevention programme in Leyland first, then moved across to Lune Street, where I did some SMART and some CALM rehabilitation programmes, before eventually getting referred to THOMAS. It was a 12-week abstinence programme and it completely changed my life.

I think a lot of us think it's the alcohol and drugs that are the problem, but it isn't. It's you that's the problem, and THOMAS, through the 12 Step programme, allows you to find that out.

It was only when I went through the programme, and realised all these character defects that I have, that I was able to start working on them.

Now I'm a lot better person as a result, and I've got my family back. The relationship we have now is fantastic. I make a point of spending time with them now, and we are starting to feel like a proper family again. My daughter spent the day with me the other day, we went out for lunch, she came back to mine and stayed over night. That bond is back and it feels great to have them back in my life again.



Margaret (far right) reunited with her family.



# Drop in centre

When THOMAS was originally founded 17 years ago, it started out as a Drop-In centre for the homeless.

Our aim was simple: to provide a hot meal and a place of shelter for those on the margins of society.

During the intervening years, THOMAS' reach has extended far beyond that original vision, to the point where we are now providing residential programmes for hundreds of addicts in recovery.

But our Drop-In centre is still very much at the heart of what we do, providing a vital service for some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

**Currently, more than 300 homeless are registered with our Drop-In, which gives them access to a hot meal five days a week.**

Hanif Ali, who is a Support Worker at THOMAS, said: "The Drop-In was the very first project for THOMAS – that's how it started off – and we are very keen to develop it and keep it moving forwards.

"More than 300 people are registered with us at this moment in time, and once they

are registered they can have meals five days a week.

"The kitchen is run by volunteers and we try to concentrate on the five-a-day criteria. We even grow our own fruit and vegetables in a garden behind the centre.

"Basically, the whole point of the Drop-In is it's a hook to get people into other services.

"The vast majority of those who access it are vulnerable, statutory homeless, who need a bit of a helping hand in sorting their lives out.

"They are usually quite chaotic and don't normally attend their basic appointments.

"What we try to do is partner up with other agencies like the NHS Outreach team, who will come and do their Outreach stuff here, or the Oral Health team, who will come in and do their oral health stuff.

"Substance Misuse Services will also meet their clients here, and sometimes the Probation Service meet clients here too.

"That way at least they know they are safe and the whole point is to keep that contact so they don't go underground.

"Then, whenever they are ready to access those services, we can make them available to them."

Many of the people who access the Drop-In are battling an addiction.

For some it's substance misuse; for others it is alcohol.

**What the Drop-In aims to do is act as a bridge between that life of chaos and the road to recovery.**

Hanif explains: "The aim for us is to eventually get them into the other side of the building, and onto our reduction programmes, so they can start to get their lives back.

"Once they access that side of the building, they are not allowed back on this side because it's all about progress.

"Then it's down to their key workers to get the appropriate services in place.

"If they're doing anything illegal, for instance, then the first step will be getting them onto legal. If they're taking drugs, it might be getting them onto medication.

"The other thing we try to do is if someone is falling, then we'll stop them, try to support them at that level, and build them back up.



# THOMAS

Developing people for a brighter future

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“We support them from housing to basic living skills, to managing accommodation etc.

**“The whole aim is to get people to live a crime-free, independent, responsible lifestyle.”**

“What THOMAS can actually say is we pick people up right at the rock bottom and then take them right through to becoming contributing members of society.”

If finances allow, we have plans to extend our Drop-In, and the range of services we can offer to those who access it, over the next few years.

“We’ve already expanded the Drop-In over the last 12 months so we can now cater for more people. A shower unit is also being created so we can help clients with personal hygiene,” said Hanif.

“We have major plans for the future and hope to be able to open it up to more and more agencies so we can provide things like counselling sessions and stay open more hours. Down the line we don’t want it to be just about feeding people, we want to be able to offer things like basic awareness courses, and help people to develop living skills.”

In the meantime, one of the biggest challenges we face is finding the money we need to continue doing what we are doing already.

Hanif added: “We are totally dependent on donations. If it wasn’t for the kind hearted people who are already giving to us, and we really appreciate that support, there is literally no other outside funding coming in to support this project so it would have to stop.

“I come from a totally different background and didn’t previously know about substance misuse. I used to be one of those people who constantly thought if you are using drugs and you are homeless then your benefits are paying for it so just let them be.

**“But what I’ve since learnt is I’ve been fortunate to be at the right place at the right time in my life and managed to avoid drugs.”**

“If you are approached with drugs at the wrong time then it does grab hold of you, it quickly becomes a slippery slope, and then it’s all about survival.

“I’ve worked with a lot of people in substance misuse and when you start working with them they are as good as any other human being and should be given a chance.

“When I started working here, we were getting 50 or 60 people a day at the Drop-In and I was expecting a lot of trouble because many of those who access it are chaotic.

“However once you start giving them respect, they will give you respect back, and I do know that they really appreciate and respect this place.”

**Become a THOMAS supporter!**

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# Breaking the cycle

**THOMAS Chief Executive Fr Jim McCartney has created a tool for engagement called DIF (Dynamic Intelligence Framework) with the aim of looking at new ways of working with complex offenders.**

Through DIF, THOMAS aims to enter into dialogue with leading figures from government, commissioning bodies, the police force, and probation service to find a better way of breaking the cycle of reoffending.

Fr Jim explains: "It's about

acknowledging that there are complex people out there who are causing problems for the system, and it's how we communicate with those people so we can create a system that will help to change their lives.

"That's basically what DIF is for. It's about entering into dialogue with many different types of people to look at new ways of working with complexity.

"Through our work in Salford, where we are currently case-managing more than 200 addicts across the city, we believe we are developing a model that could be rolled out to other parts of the country.

"The programme is run by our Recovery Leaders. These are people who came to us straight from the prison gate and, after graduating through the THOMAS programme, they have now become Recovery Leaders,

using their own experiences to help others."

THOMAS has already entered into dialogue with Andy Rhodes, the Assistant Chief Constable of Lancashire Police, about how we can develop a pilot.

Assistant Chief Constable Rhodes said: "The Integrated Offender Management board has identified that it wants innovative ways of integrating the end-to-end process for chaotic offenders, from prison community through residential rehabilitation, into support, into mindset, into employment, into creating capacity.

"I think THOMAS has put together an offer that is consistent with what we are trying to do.

"It's not going to sort out all of Lancashire but if this pilot works then I can see it being rolled out."



# From Heroin to doing God's work

Dave

It all started at the age of four. My mum and dad split up and I was brought up by a bunch of addicts – aunts, uncles, cousins, and my mum – who put me in front of a TV whilst they all took drugs in the kitchen. They were injecting heroin and crack and that basically did my belief system in because I thought that was acceptable.

I picked up my first substance when I was nine years of age. My sister and her friends used to go clubbing and they'd take ecstasy and drink beer, so I'd go over and pinch their beer, take it upstairs and sip away at it, thinking that was normal. Then later on I started smoking weed and by the age of 10 I was doing an eighth a day. That then led me down the path of picking up other substances. Between 10 and 18 I took just about every recreational drug there is – cannabis, drink, amphetamines, LSD, magic mushrooms, ecstasy, cocaine, benzodiazepine – because I thought it was acceptable. When I hit 18, I got introduced to heroin, which I'd previously said I'd never do, because I saw family members taking it and it was easy to get hold of.

I then went to prison for a serious crime – I got three and a half years for robbery – and stayed there until I was 21. When I got out, I hooked up with my mates again and thought I could change and start doing what they did, which was having a drink and sniffing a bit of coke. But it always ended up taking me back to the same thing - heroin.

I ended up in psychiatric wards on anti-psychotics, steroids and methadone scripts, so I've had a lot of chemicals in my life. I've been sectioned three times in total. The third and last time my dad had just started taking heroin at the age of 48 so I decided to join in with him, and that's what brought me to my knees. We were taking heroin together in a flat, and isolated ourselves from the rest of the world. That led to me getting sectioned and they wouldn't let me out because I'd become a danger to myself and to the public.

I got offered detox and a rehab but wasn't willing to do it because I was still taking all sorts of drugs. It was mainly other people's medication - I didn't even know what it was most of the time - but that's the addict in me. I'd take anything as long as it changed the way I felt. Eventually, I did decide to do the detox and something happened to me whilst I was there. Basically, I'd had enough.

**I'd stopped using and I just wanted to die because my life had become completely unmanageable.**

After the detox, I got offered the chance to go to a rehab and that's how I ended up here. I'm now on stage 10 of THOMAS' 12 Steps Programme. Fourteen months ago

I was a broken man. I had nothing to offer and was spiritually bankrupt. I couldn't interact with people, and had low self-esteem. But what THOMAS has taught me is it's an inside job. It's not about what's going on on the outside, it's about what's happening on the inside, and that's what the 12 Steps Programme teaches you.

I've started doing a lot of voluntary work, such as feeding the homeless, and I'm giving something back to the community. I call it doing God's work and I want to help others like me through this process.

I feel fortunate that I was able to get this help at 28 because if I'd carried on using, I probably wouldn't be here now.

I was very suicidal and tried to take my own life on a number of occasions because I'd had enough and didn't know who I was anymore.

Thankfully, I am starting to find out who I am through THOMAS. I've been clean for 14 months now and I've never experienced being clean for this amount of time before. I've got everything back in my life again, such as positive family members like my nieces and nephews, and I've got a new partner, who is going through this process as well. THOMAS has quite literally saved my life and I can't give back to THOMAS what THOMAS has given to me.

In my culture  
you're not allowed  
to talk about your  
feelings... it's a  
sign of weakness

## Sufian's story

THINGS started to go wrong for me in my final year at school.

I failed my exams and then began to get involved with criminals, from the age of 15 to 24. I had some decent jobs during that time but I used to get involved in crime on the side. It was mainly white-collar stuff – I committed loads of fraud. I just never knew what to do with the money so I ended up using.

It started off with alcohol and cannabis. I smoked cannabis every single day, until it became like a cigarette. The alcohol was once a week initially. Then it became a weekend thing, and eventually progressed to every day. I did cut down but that was when class A drugs were introduced to me, which was cocaine and crack. At that point I thought

'I've found the wonder drug I've been looking for'. It was once every blue moon to begin with, but then I started isolating myself away from my friends and, because I enjoyed taking it, it soon became once a fortnight, then once a week.

**"Before I knew it, it was every day and I quickly reached the stage where it made me think, 'if I don't have it then I can't function'."**

I tried everything to kick my habit. My parents took me abroad to try to get me off drugs after a rehab in India was recommended to them. But I never went to it.

I also tried the religious route, but that never worked.

Eventually, it got to the stage where my mental health got the better of me, drug use went out of the window, and I ended up in a psychiatric unit.

I'd lost everything. I'd lost several jobs, I'd lost my identity, I'd lost my family – they didn't want to know me – and I just felt completely broken.

I actually thought I wasn't human anymore – that's what the drugs had done to me – and started to think I would end my life in that psychiatric unit by taking an overdose.

But, thankfully, I got a lot of help and support in the hospital. They helped me through it.

That was also when I heard about THOMAS.

I must admit I didn't think it would work for me. I just saw it as a bit of a break and fully expected to go back out and start using again.

## But something has dropped for me and I'm still here after six months, ready to move on to stage 2.

When I came to THOMAS I was still involved with a lot of criminals but they gave me a lot of help and support, in terms of getting me out of the circle I was in without any conflict.

From the cultural side of things, I can't talk about my weaknesses in my culture.



## Now I can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and a brighter future ahead.

I'm hoping, going forwards, that I can help others who are still suffering. I want to get my life back on track and do some of the things I missed out on because of my addiction: things like going to college and studying.

I also want to pass the message on to others.

It's not so long ago that I actually thought I wasn't going to live for more than a couple of months because I'd probably end up killing myself. But, thanks to THOMAS, now I can see a future ahead of me.



## Young people taking the Challenge to support THOMAS!



St Anne's House was delighted to receive the help of a group of determined young people during the summer. Despite the bad weather, they transformed the front gardens to make the centre more welcoming for people visiting the Drop In and other services.

Not content with that, they researched the needs of the people supported by THOMAS and staged a sleep in in the town centre to raise awareness about the problems faced by those who are homeless.

## They collected over £800 for THOMAS.

Even better some of them want to continue volunteering with THOMAS to help with online fundraising and marketing.

If you would like to volunteer to support THOMAS at one of our centres in the north west, or to help raise funds or awareness of our services in other parts of the country, please contact:-

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# Leading by example

**On November 3 some of the latest THOMAS graduates completed their 12 Steps Programme. Here Kevin McLaughlin, himself a THOMAS graduate and now one of our Recovery Leaders, talks about the emotions of the day.**

Normally speaking I'm not an emotional person I have been to the bottom and nothing really fazes me. But when you see a group of people graduating at the end of a THOMAS programme, it can be very emotional it's a really proud day.

When a person first comes to the programme and you see them all down, you can see in their faces, and in their expressions, that they are in some form of

pain. They have no confidence, and their demeanour is closed.

Then 12 weeks later, as a result of working through the 12 Steps programme, when you see the same people sat there smiling, talking about getting their families back in their lives, and actually daring to plan for the future, it makes you feel proud of what they have achieved.

**“The transformation and personal development is there for all to see.”**

One girl on our latest programme (Faye) came and said her goal was to get her child back but she's actually got a lot more than that through THOMAS. She's discovered who she is, and she has realised she actually does have the capabilities to be a mother. It's not just thinking she's a mother; it is being a mother and being able to give her child love and guidance. And she has only got that through the work she has done on herself.

Before I came to THOMAS myself, I was on methadone for 15 years because that was the model at the time. I became involved with drugs at the age of 13, but it all really started when I was a bit younger than that. I grew up in care and didn't have any decent role models in my life.

I lived at a pub so my play-time activities generally involved building dens out of crates of beer. I started early and it was always a problem.

It started off with alcohol, magic mushrooms and cannabis. Then, as I grew older, I progressed onto amphetamines, heroin, methadone, benzodiazepines and temazepam. Then crack cocaine.

I was married with two children but my wife left me, and I then lost contact with my kids, so I became isolated from my family, and isolated from my friends.

The last five years I spent living on the streets with a dog, begging in the streets of Manchester.



I ended up committing a crime, and when I woke up in a cell, and discovered what I'd done, I was completely shocked. I just thought, 'Oh my God, have I really done this?' I really felt that I'd offended myself so I must have hit something, some core value, or something inside me.

When I went to prison, that was when I asked for help. I went onto the 12 Steps programme and basically learned that I was powerless over alcohol and drugs, which scared the Hell out of me I thought if I'm powerless over it then I have no solution.

I got told about THOMAS so when I left prison I went straight there that day and they were able to offer me a bridge, and a chance to learn a lot of tools. I learnt how to pay bills, and how to re-educate myself. Underpinning all that, I had support all the way through. I also had someone to look to as a goal-setter because there was always someone in front of me who had done what I'd done. That's what I needed, and I gave it my heart and soul.

After completing the programme, I became employed by the organisation four years ago and I've since worked in Witton Bank and floating support. I was also given a project to develop in Blackpool. From there, I was then given another project to develop in Preston and that's what I do now: I develop programmes for THOMAS and then deliver them, based on what I have learnt and been taught.

My key worker from 25 years ago was here today, which was amazing because I didn't know that he went on to become a commissioner. When I spoke to him after the ceremony, he couldn't stop smiling.



Kevin with some of the latest graduates from the THOMAS programme.

He said to me, 'You were chaotic, you were on death's door, you were so depressed, your marriage was falling apart, and you just couldn't see it. You thought you could handle it all.' He was one of the people who always had something for me and could see what I couldn't see. He saw my potential but I couldn't see it for many, many years. Even my partner leaving, and losing my kids, didn't stop me from using, and I didn't know why.

Thankfully, THOMAS showed me why. There was something wrong inside. The drugs weren't the problem, it was me. I just didn't believe in myself.

I stopped using when I was 40 so I have been clean for six years and, thanks to THOMAS, I have turned my life around.

I see my children on a regular basis now and that's all part of me rebuilding. I want to fix what I broke and if I don't do that then I'll sit with feelings of guilt and low self worth. I've got to try to put right the wrongs I was responsible for because if I can do that, then I can stand proud and move forwards, without having to worry about the past. If I can't rectify it, then I can't rectify it, but at least I'll have tried.

**“That's what THOMAS does. It helps you to deal with and face up to your problems so you can move on with your life.”**

## Please consider remembering THOMAS in your will

At THOMAS we understand how hard it is to lose a loved one. Sadly we do lose some of the many people we support each year to drug and alcohol addiction.

But at THOMAS our focus is on helping recovery. We help many people who have made the decision to move on from addiction towards recovery. We work hard to turn lives around and bring light into darkness.

We give help where many other services are unable to offer support. When the public purse can't pick up the bill, we commit to make a difference.

We know how important it is that the generous donations we receive make a real difference. We don't waste money on big offices but use our resources wisely so that we can help as many people as possible.

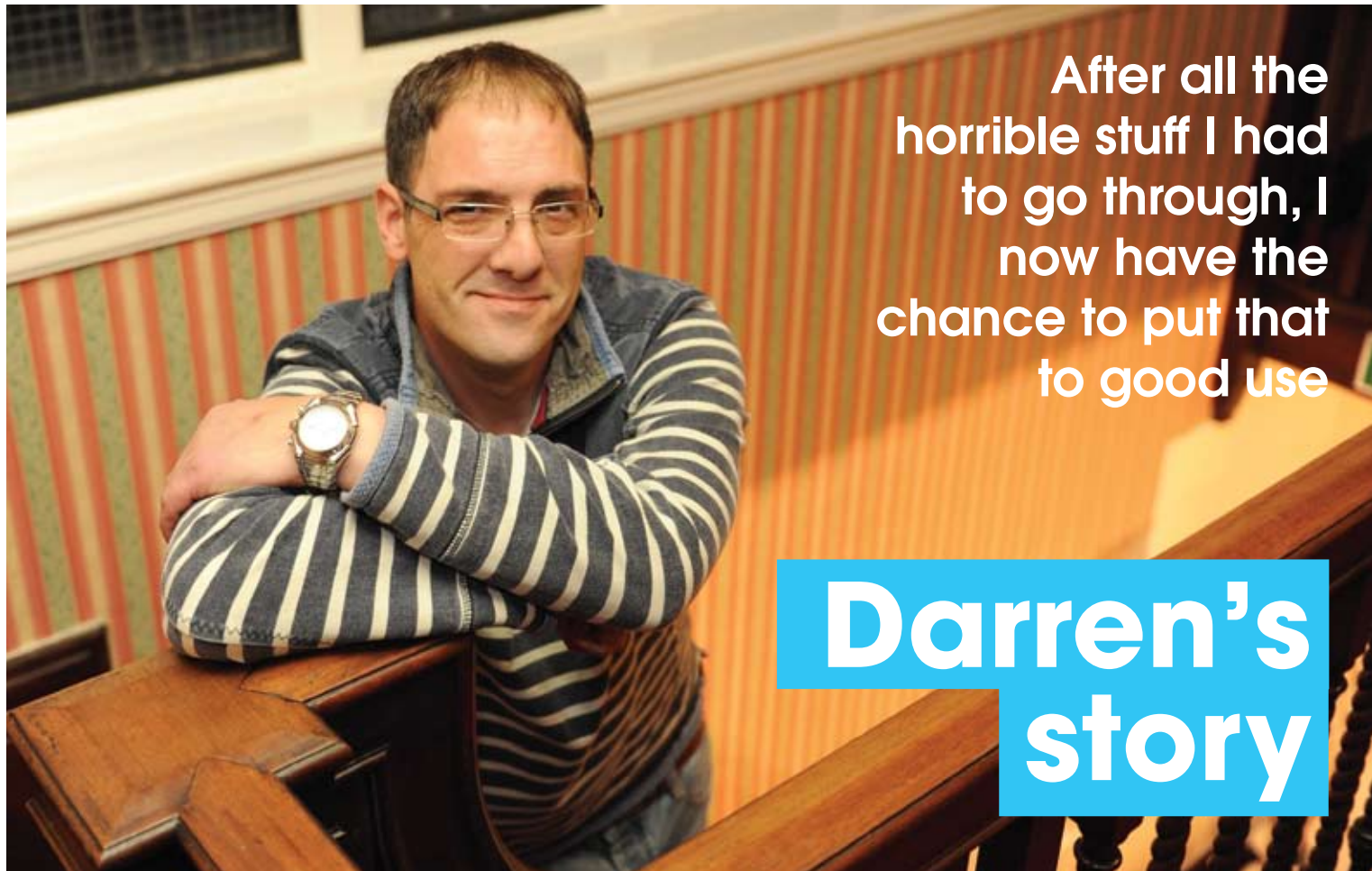
We help people from all over the country and we try hard not to turn anyone away. As you prepare your last will and testament, please consider remembering THOMAS.

**Thank you for your help, it will help us to save lives! Please contact**

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After all the horrible stuff I had to go through, I now have the chance to put that to good use

## Darren's story

**After a long history of substance misuse and alcoholism, Darren Parry came to THOMAS following his release from prison in 2007. Now four years on, Darren runs the THOMAS Recovery Centre in Salford, drawing on his own personal experiences to help others turn their lives around.**

ONE of the biggest strengths of THOMAS is it is peer-led. Most of the support staff who run the programmes are former addicts, like me.

I was born with a cleft pallet and a hair lip and I ultimately rebelled in school because of that. I also associated with people who weren't interested

in school either, and that took me down a road which introduced me to drugs. I was inquisitive and wanted to fit in with other people so, basically, there was a progression to drugs.

I'd class myself as a poly-user - I'd try anything that was on offer. I just wanted to get out of my face and - in the beginning - have a good time. But at some point I crossed the line and drugs then became a problem. They were very much in my life and became the catalyst for all the decisions and choices that I made. Alongside the progression of drugs there was also a progression of crime to feed the habit, and towards the end I was doing stuff I wouldn't have dreamt of doing had I not been using.

The big thing for me was it was never about the drugs: they were a symptom of what was going on for me. I had low self-esteem, I didn't like myself very much, I didn't like a lot of the things that I was doing, and, ultimately, the drugs masked that. It was

only when I came to THOMAS that I was able to deal with those issues and grow emotionally, mentally, and spirituality. I came here in April 2007 after a long history of substance misuse and alcoholism. The way my life was then, all my family ties had been broken down, I'd tried every open door but all of them had been shut on me, so THOMAS was my last port of call. THOMAS gave me a great deal of the support I needed in relation to benefits, health issues, and family support, and I was subsequently able to build up family rapport. I also started to look at myself in a new light through the 12 Steps model and was able to change lots of the attitudes and behaviours I'd picked up during active addiction.

I then moved on to second stage and once again I also got lots of support, from managing my own bills to general lifestyle skills such as cooking. But perhaps the biggest thing for me was the support I received in terms of furthering my own education.

I left school at 14 with nothing: I had no qualifications and generally rebelled against the system. But, whilst in second stage at THOMAS, I identified that I maybe had the potential to help others who were following my pattern.

That soon became my goal so I wrote a four year plan. It focused on what qualifications I needed, and what I needed to do to achieve my goal of becoming a Support Worker.

In second stage I was able to take my GCSEs again. It was basic stuff, like Maths and English, and I also did an IT course because at that time I couldn't even turn a computer on. Then, after completing those courses, I identified Health and Social Care was what I really wanted to do so I did my NVQ levels 2 and 3, which took two years to complete.

Whilst I was doing that, THOMAS offered me a voluntary position, which I did for about 15 months, and that gave me a lot of practical experience. Gradually, I began to feel more and more comfortable and confident in my work, to the point where I decided I

wanted to do a degree in it. I've since completed year one of that degree course and I'm now in year two. Throughout all this, THOMAS has provided ongoing support and they've really allowed me to develop. They've identified my weaknesses and strengths and helped me to nurture them but, at the same time, they've also given me the freedom to make my own mark, particularly in relation to this project in Salford.



I've been working here for two years now. I started off as a volunteer, then I did support work, and now I'm at the point where I'm running the Recovery Centre on a day-to-day basis, with plenty of support from my manager Gavin.

I really love what I do. There are times when it can be tiring but it's also very rewarding because helping others is what I am here to do. It kind of makes all my previous wrongs into a positive, if you like. After all the horrible stuff I had to go through, I now have the chance to put that to good use by helping others to make that same change.

## I guess what we sell at THOMAS is hope.

For many years whilst I was in addiction, I always used the fact my key workers had learnt everything out of a textbook as an excuse. 'These guys don't know me, they are textbook people, they have no idea where I've come from, so how can they tell me what I need to do?' I used that as an excuse to shut people out of my life and just carried on self-destructing.

But when people see that the teachers we have at THOMAS have actually been there, it gives them hope. They start to realise 'if this guy can do it then so can I'.

## In memoriam donation

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Because of the generous support we receive, we can give help where many other services are unable to offer support. When the public purse can't pick up the bill, we commit to make a difference.

We know how important it is that the generous donations we receive make a real difference. We don't waste money on big offices but use our resources wisely so that we can help as many people as possible.

We help people from all over the country and we try hard not to turn anyone away. We know that at a time of bereavement it can be comforting to know that a charitable In Memoriam donation can make a real difference and offer hope and new life.

If you would like to remember your loved one with a charitable collection, please think of THOMAS.

If you would like to make an In Memoriam donation or arrange a collection please contact

### Mary Carley

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