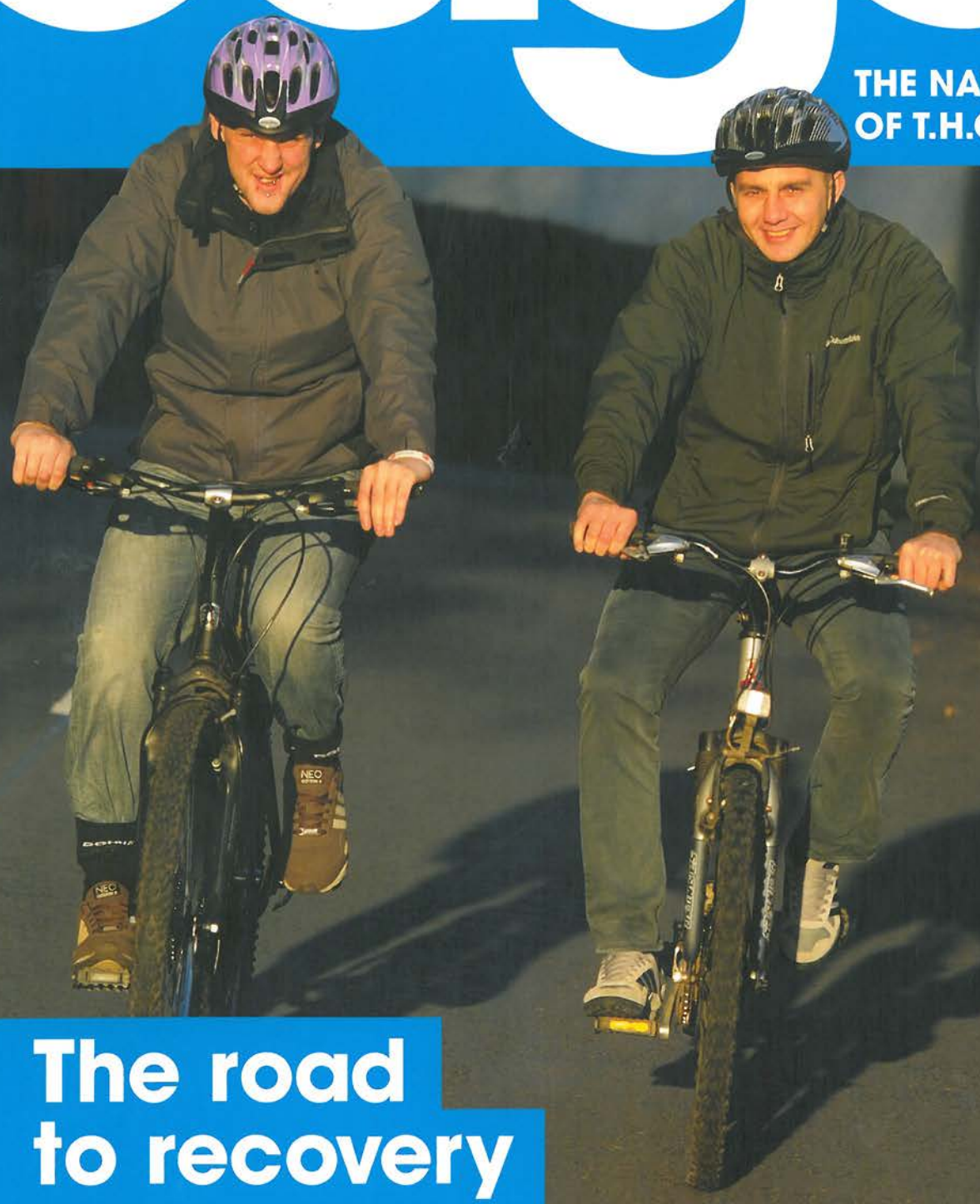


# edges

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



## The road to recovery

Chris and John get on their bikes

**Inside...**  
*Finding THOMAS brought me back from the edge*

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**The holistic approach**

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**Back from the dead**

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Cover story

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# The road to recovery

RESIDENTS at our Witton Bank rehab centre are on the road to recovery – thanks to the help of Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council.

The council's Health and Wellbeing department have kindly provided us with eight push bikes, which are being used by service users to aid their recovery.

Rachel Walker, Care Manager at Witton Bank, said: "The bikes have been a great addition. It's true what they say: healthy body, healthy mind."

"When you're in therapy, it can be mentally exhausting so it's good to be able to get out into the fresh air and burn off some energy from time to time.

"We've also set up a greenhouse project at Witton Bank because some of our service users find gardening to be very therapeutic.

"Doing activities which require some sort of physical effort is good for the soul and we can see the difference it makes in terms of the recovery journey."

**"Our service users enjoy getting out in the fresh air and going on bike rides."**

## Remember a loved one and think of THOMAS

Losing someone you love is always hard. At THOMAS we know that we will not always succeed. We do lose some of the people we help; we take comfort from the difference we have made and try to learn how to better help others in the future.

We help hundreds of people every year find new meaning in their lives, overcome their addictions and give something back to their local communities. With our help, many go on to gain new skills and qualifications.

They are able to volunteer with us, gain the confidence to help others and sometimes, find a job.

We rely on the generous support of our donors so that 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 are grateful for the generous donations we receive and 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 think of others.

A charitable In Memoriam donation offers hope and new life to some of the most marginalised people in our society.

**If you would like to know more about making an In Memoriam donation please contact:-**

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Fundraising Manager

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Father Jim McCartney  
Founder & CEO of THOMAS

**Belonging is a fundamental human need. Instilling a profound sense of belonging, deeply embedded, collectively experienced and dynamically operative, in the life of THOMAS, is the pivotal driving force for me. Attempting to change human behaviour answers the deepest, broadest question of why we exist as THOMAS.**

To empower and liberate people is the absolute goal. Our culture is inclusive and respectful, generating opportunity for people to unleash their potential and build new life. I am most privileged to be part of a therapeutic community.

This is a 24 hour, 7 day a week, learning environment that influences my quality of thinking, opening the doors to new ways of working. Many of our service users have left the battlefields of addiction, with the scars of regret, deeply rooted in memory, instilling a broken state of helplessness, yet distilling an undefeated human spirit of hope. In our rehabilitation communities across the North West, you discover a profound sense of awakening, as people descend through the curves and winds of past mistakes, broken relationships, criminality

# Belonging is the Stepping Stone for Change

and chronic drug and alcohol addiction. Suddenly, the tortuous years of perennial emptiness, manifest in the enduring reliance on substances, stalking its prey, begins to fade away. A wide open space of new beginning is created within the human mind. Forgiveness appears to be touchable, offering undiluted faith with optimistic courage and prospect.

Numerous graduates from our therapeutic programmes begin to take their place, yet again, in the world, this time no longer as bystanders but as active participants.

In this edition of Edges we share our successes. THOMAS encapsulates deep acceptance of one another. We are a family of realistic understanding. By offering each member the safety of knowing that they are accepted for whom they are, uniquely gifted and special.

The demands of the 21st Century can be intricately difficult, even for those of us who are equipped with what I call the sustainability factor. In our crowded cities and towns, crammed with expectation and demanding relationships, the addict can struggle to connect; survivability becomes dependent on substances that block out the deafening requirements of face to face relationships that necessitate responsibilities.

Addiction is a complex condition. Scientific evidence on neurobiology gives insight to the pathological mechanisms of brain function, linked to

negative emotional states and compulsivity. The dysfunction of neurochemical elements impact multi motivational drivers; consequently, moving the individual into negative reinforcements of reality.

For the last 12 months I have been working, intently, on Dynamic Intelligence, a new framework that combines emotional, social, spiritual, and static intelligences, into a unifying paradigm of people development. I hope we will see the benefits of this in the months ahead. Our clients are encouraged to accept their addiction, develop and adopt spiritual values, work with cognitive concepts, but most importantly, develop a fellowship with others in recovery. Living as part of a community gives the individual a social identity, a sense of belonging to a social world, triggering a cognitive process of self-categorisation and transitional change manifest in new behaviours and a transformational value system.

In THOMAS we work with a plethora of multidisciplinary theories in the development of people. Yet for me, the starting place stems from my social catholic teaching, in that the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone, capable of self-knowledge and freely giving self into a covenant relationship with other people, with the world and the higher power of God.

**Father Jim McCartney**  
Founder & CEO of THOMAS

**Chief Executive Invitation:** I am always keen to hear from our former service users, sponsors and people who are interested in our work. Email me at [james.mccartney@thomasonline.org.uk](mailto:james.mccartney@thomasonline.org.uk) and share your thinking with me.



Pete

**It was actually through reading Edges magazine that I arrived at THOMAS. I was in prison at the time for GBH, feeling very desperate, and I begged the CARATS team to help me with my heroin and crack cocaine addiction. I'd got to a place where I was feeling so low, I either wanted to die or was willing to commit a serious crime to extend my time in jail. I was deeply depressed, angry, and felt like I had no life in the outside world.**

I was handed lots of leaflets for different rehab centres, but the one that stood out to me was Edges. The magazine had travelled all the way to my hometown of Hull from Blackburn, and when I read one particular story about a man in recovery I was really taken aback. This guy's story was so similar to mine, I actually felt as if he was telling my story.

I connected with him straight away and read about how he had really turned his life around by becoming totally committed to the programme, surrendering himself to it. This had helped to get his family, and all the people closest to him, back in his life after a period when they didn't want to know him. His story really inspired me to do something about my life – I thought if it worked for him, it can work for me, and it really has.

The first drug I ever took was at the age of 10 in a children's home. I started on glue but by the time I was 12, I was injecting speed. It wasn't an experiment for me; I went straight into it, which resulted in me being sectioned by the age of 16 for a nervous breakdown, which had been brought on by the effects of the amphetamines.

When I was young all I wanted to do was grow up and be older. I grew up in an abusive household. I remember being four and just wanting to be an adult so I could be strong enough to protect my mam from my step dad, who I knew was this powerful figure. I didn't have the chance to enjoy a normal childhood because of this. I imagine children to have this innocence about them where they are unaware of growing up and can just enjoy being a child. That is how it's supposed to be, and I think the reason I initially turned to drugs and alcohol was due to my messed up childhood and adolescence.

However, after completing my 12 steps, I can now see that I can't keep blaming my past as the reason for why I used drugs, although it is obviously linked. I got to a stage where I

enjoyed using drugs, because I liked being nasty, and being a bully, because it meant I had control over my life and what I did to myself. It isn't nice to admit, but I had to be like that to survive.

I'm 31 now and nothing has ever worked for me like THOMAS has – there's just something magic about it that is keeping me going. Being with other addicts who are going through the same thing, helping each other, and really opening up to one another definitely helps. It has completely changed my personality – I can shed tears now, show compassion and emotion, and do it openly. It just wasn't like that before: I wouldn't cry in prison - it was unheard of to talk about your feelings - and I was empty inside.

I'm at peace now and feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I am a brand new person who is ready to start living life, and I can't wait to see what the future holds. One thing in particular that I am really looking forward to is training to become a volunteer at one of the treatment centres. When Father Jim invited me to head office to offer me the opportunity, I was completely overwhelmed. I was so proud to be asked because he obviously has a lot of trust in me and believes that I have it in me to help and inspire others.

I was totally committed to the programme and knew exactly what I needed to do to get to where I wanted to be. Jim was with me every step of the way and saw me improving in every aspect of life, including being honest with myself, which is very important during recovery. I want to pass on everything I have learnt about myself to other people who

need help; it is a fantastic opportunity for me and will give me something to get stuck into and work towards.

The future looks bright for me now, I have my daughter back in my life so I go home and visit her. The first time I went home was a scary experience. As I looked ahead, it brought back all the bad memories, and I was filled with fear that I might bump into someone I knew. As the months have gone by, that fear just isn't there anymore. I feel confident and solid in my programme. I have attempted many things trying to get clean, and THOMAS is the only thing that has worked because it teaches you about the disease. Addicts think differently to normal people, it's as if we have a magnet strapped to our feet, pulling us back to drugs even though we don't want to use. THOMAS keeps you on your road to recovery. I can



honestly say whilst I have been here I haven't had cravings or obsessions around drugs because I understand my recovery process, and what I need to do to avoid relapse.

I would love to go to college to do social care because I am so passionate about my story and what THOMAS can do. I am much more confident in my abilities now and I have really enjoyed doing computer courses. I used to think I was dumb but I just didn't realise the effects the chemicals from the drugs were having on my brain. It's no wonder I couldn't think. I now have the patience to sit down and get stuck into learning.

**THOMAS  
has taught  
me to value  
my life and  
I don't  
want to ever  
let go of  
the person  
I have  
become.**

## 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.

 **THOMAS**  
Developing people for a brighter future  
[www.thomasonline.org.uk](http://www.thomasonline.org.uk)

# Taking the holistic approach



Rachel Walker,  
Residential Rehab Manager  
at Witton Bank

**Rachel Walker is our new registered manager at Witton Bank; she comes from an NHS background. Her previous role was in the development and management of a Health Outreach Team, specialising in the delivery of health care to the homeless. She brings a new dimension into the life of THOMAS.**

She spoke to Edges about the transition from working with the NHS to a full-time role at THOMAS, and what makes THOMAS the best place for recovery.

Rachel says: "I predominantly spent my NHS days working with homelessness and addiction. Prior to this, I set up a homeless nursing service in Blackburn and worked with hostels and b&b's delivering health care.

"Obviously, this was a similar environment to THOMAS, but I was shocked when I came here by how laid back everything was

compared to working with the NHS, a statutory organisation.

"Like everywhere, even including THOMAS, the NHS is very bound by governance. The difference, however, is that THOMAS is a lot less rigid, and is a lot less constrained in terms of what we can and can't do to help. THOMAS looks outside the box and takes a much more holistic approach.

"Here, we aren't bound by a commission service where we can't step over the mark because we aren't being paid for it. This is especially needed with the client group we have who have multiple needs. We can't just stop caring about certain problems that they have; THOMAS is all encompassing and considers absolutely every need.

"The staff are there for the clients every step of the way and go the extra mile and a half with everything they do for them. They get to the heart of what the

issue is with a client, and it's a service that doesn't stop at five o'clock at night.

"Staff will come down at weekends to watch a game of football and hang out with service users. It's not just about getting them to recover, it's about building good relationships and gaining their respect and trust - that is how THOMAS works.

"From my perspective, it's a much more compassionate environment than the NHS, and we focus more on emotions and feelings, whereas the NHS is very prescriptive."

It is becoming increasingly difficult to get into rehab nowadays as everyone has their hands tied financially, so there are very few funds available.

Rachel explains: "The whole situation surrounding the lack of money available is a very short sighted view in many ways.

"If somebody is out there, getting caught up in the madness and chaos of their own lives, they are in and out of hospitals, prisons, courts, and hostels and overall it costs a damn sight more than helping to fix them and making them contributing members of society."

It is therefore vitally important to keep places like THOMAS up and running because of the amazing work we do, and the results we achieve.

Rachel says: "I have learnt so much about recovery since I have been here, it is unbelievable. It has made me realise that during my work with the NHS in previous years, I, along with others, have been enabling people to stay in their own chaotic environment.

**"We need places like THOMAS to lift them out of this. We can only do this if we really get to know the person.**

"Here at THOMAS I have learnt that no client is the same. They all come in with a label – that might be a drug addict or an alcoholic - but underneath these stereotypes there are people with a million different reasons and personalities.

"Things change a lot here and I learn something new about the recovery world every day. Every day is a learning curve for me – some days are great, and others I go home with my head in my hands, but this is all part of recovery - it's not an easy journey.

"Overall, it is a good journey to be on. I see people getting well all the time. They come in

broken, and leave with a life and aspirations."

We employ many of our graduates as support workers in our rehab centres. This is the reason why our success rates are so high, and what makes THOMAS stand out from other providers.

Rachel says of her colleagues: "I couldn't do my job if it wasn't for the team I work with. I love working at THOMAS, and it's great managing a staff team who are in recovery themselves. I've had to teach them a lot of the basics that were drummed into me as a nurse, such as record keeping etc.

"But, this has been a new and exciting challenge for me.

"Here life experience is combined with a professional background and we work together to create a fantastic team.

"I think it's absolutely wonderful that the people who go through the programme then come here to volunteer. It's not for everyone. Some go off and do other things to develop as people and that's fine.

"What is really exciting is the ones who do come back are very passionate about their recovery and use this to help others do the same thing. They want to give back and this is recognition of THOMAS's truly inspirational and amazing work."

**At THOMAS,  
we rely on  
the help of  
our generous  
supporters  
and donors.**

Some choose to make regular donations, others send us whatever they can afford when they are able. All our donors are important to us. We share the stories of the people we've helped with our supporters and keep them up to date with our plans.

Sometimes supporters come together, through churches, youth groups or fundraising groups. We receive support through sponsored events, fundraising sales and street collections.

**There are so many ways to support THOMAS.**

One of our regular supporters, John Bateson-Hill, explains why he helps us:

**WHY I CONTRIBUTE TO T.H.O.M.A.S**

I first came across THOMAS, while waiting for someone in our church porch at Corpus Christi Brixton. I picked up a magazine called EDGES that happened to be lying there and began to read. The articles often written by the young people themselves described the totally destructive nature of drug and alcohol addiction. It was certainly not easy or comfortable reading yet in some way it was compelling. It told a story about the lives of people we ignore, neglect or are simply afraid of.

But what really impressed me was the fact that THOMAS, a relatively small charity with a Christian ethos, was actually doing something about it and in the process it was turning people's lives around.

There was no quick or simple fix but you could see that something good was happening here. I instantly felt this was an organisation that I liked and wanted to be a part of in some way. It was local, it was real, there was a clear sense of dedication amongst its leadership and team and it was not operating on a grand scale with all the costs this often involves.

# Endless Possibility

A reflection from The Rev. John Michael, a Franciscan who is part of the THOMAS team.

The recent documentary 'Trouble on the Estate' was filmed here in Blackburn. Our team here at THOMAS recognised quite a number of the people who were interviewed and whose lives for good or bad were laid bare before millions of viewers. The programme was of course not balanced - documentaries of this sort rarely are. Nonetheless it did show the deep-seated problems that exist in our society, which are for the most part hidden from the day to day experiences of most people, until they erupt in riots or the like.

The social problems that were documented in the Panorama programme are familiar; unemployment, lethargy, drugs, crime, and a general feeling of hopelessness. They challenge any of us who care for people and the growth and development of the human person.

I sometimes feel that with a few notable exceptions the larger institutions like Government and the Church can seem out of touch with what is really happening. Having said that, many of the great social and religious reformers of the past came from privileged backgrounds, so we mustn't write them off completely.

**An unbelievable statement recently by Iain Duncan Smith to restrict child benefits to families' first two children only demonstrates just how out of touch and ignorant the bullying tactics of this Government really are.**

The two main charities working in this area, THOMAS here in Blackburn and Maundy Grange in Accrington, are meeting families like this - the ones who have children to survive financially and the ones shown in the Panorama documentary - on a daily basis. That is why we can say with some authority that such government solutions will not work.

In our Drop-in at THOMAS we see first hand the demoralising effects of increasing poverty, not only for those who are unemployed but on those working in low paid jobs with little prospects. This grim experience of poverty on a daily and crushing basis shows itself in an increase of depression and other connected illnesses. And the glaring illness for me, and the one that we rarely have the courage to tackle, is the illness of meaning - the loss of a spiritual vision of what is possible for the transformation of the human person. I would take it a step further and say it is a 'religious' problem too; and one of the depressing symbols of religion for me is our locked and poorly attended churches on or near the estates where many of these people live. If we are going to jump in and

really begin to make a difference then we need real communities of people of faith who are willing to live in these depressed communities and offer a vision based on the faith we have in being made in the image and likeness of God - in other words, endless possibility for the human person.

The many young people who come to us here are just like any other young people - but they have often settled for less rather than more. I constantly say to them 'you are worth more than this and it is really possible to go further than you ever imagined'. Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, in his recent book 'Faith in the public Square' writes 'Humanity is undermined... by material wretchedness and privation and the constant struggle for subsistence, and it is right to work for a world in which there is security of work and food and medical care for all, and to try and create local economies that make local societies prosper through trade and innovation'. And he goes on to say 'The Christian story lays out a model of reconnection with an alienated world... of a community where life together seeks to express within creation the care of the creator'.

This is the real challenge, whether for us here at THOMAS or for the Government: we are being given a choice from our more privileged positions, between good and evil, between life and death.

**If we choose good and life and shun the culture of death, including the death of the soul, then we will resist being assimilated into an empty and purposeless future.**



# Margaret's Story

**TWELVE months ago Margaret had just completed her 12 steps programme.**



Margaret

One year on, she is now a volunteer with THOMAS at our Wigan rehab centre, working closely with people struggling with addiction, and passing on her knowledge and first hand experiences.

It hasn't always been an easy ride but Margaret has never felt better, and every aspect of her life has improved over the past year. As she continues to move forwards, Margaret sat down with Edges to tell us all about her recovery journey.

Margaret says: "Right now life isn't good, it's great. Everything has changed for the better. The biggest change has been in myself, which has had a knock on effect on everything I do and all the people around me. People trust me again; they see me as a close friend, as a mum and a daughter.

"I have realised that life is for living and not for sitting and dwelling on bad things that happened in the past. I'm not filled with resentment anymore, I've got everything I need in my life and that is all thanks to working through my 12 steps programme.

"I know how important it is to follow the 12 steps programme if you want recovery, so to be given the opportunity to volunteer and help people who are in the position I was in 12 months ago is just amazing.

"I get a lot out of being a volunteer and it feels very rewarding to watch these people grow from strength to

strength, not only in themselves but physically too. I am on the other side now and can see the positive changes in their appearance and health as each day goes by.

**"It also confirms over and over again for me that it really does work. Recovery is certainly achievable if you put the work and action into it.**

"Being prepared to change is a massive factor. I was never in that place before I came to THOMAS, and it is only possible if you genuinely want to transform your life. Experience has taught me that you can put down the substances but if you aren't 100% in it for yourself, it won't work.

"Drawing on this experience for the sake of the people in rehab now is one of the best things about being a volunteer. Being able to give them guidance is extremely fulfilling, much more so than any paid job would be."

Margaret's relationships with her family are also continually developing, just one of the many things that has improved significantly since her graduation.

Margaret explains: "It's nice to feel comfortable around my family now. I actually enjoy the time we spend together instead of wanting to leave them just so I can go off and do what I want to do.

"Even though I know they have their own lives to live, I am keen to make up for lost time and do whatever I can to try to get together, especially with my two daughters and my mum.

"I go to their houses for dinner, we go out for meals or to the cinema. I know that's where I'm meant to be and what I'm meant to be doing. I am there for them now, and they are there for me again.

"My social life has improved massively too. I have a good bunch of friends around me, which has built up through networking in recovery. I don't have to avoid situations or people anymore because I am comfortable in my own skin."

Margaret is looking forwards to a bright future and is content with the way things are going.

"I can't ask for much more at the moment - what I have is enough. I hope it will carry on, I suppose more will be revealed as time goes on.

"What I do know is that I have achieved and done things I never thought possible. I'm at college again now and have taken a creative writing class. My nerves were truly tested when I had to perform a piece in front of everyone, which we weren't told about when we started!

**"I would never have had the courage to stand up and read in front of people, but now I've done it I have come to realise just how far my recovery has spread.**

"I feel overwhelmed sometimes about how far I have come. I am still constantly learning and changing, but for the first time I am happy. I amaze myself everyday with what I have achieved through THOMAS and I know I will continue to move forwards, so things can only keep getting better.

"Success is all about continuing on our path to recovery, and maintaining what we have. Just being responsible for myself, such as turning up to places on time and paying bills, is keeping me on that path because I am putting every piece of my life back together. You have to put what you learn into action and apply it to your life in every way possible, and that is exactly what I am doing."



# Drop in centre



Angela Pasquill,  
Volunteer Co-ordinator

**With numbers at an all time high, our Drop-In centre faces a challenging and busy Christmas.**

THOMAS is helping more people than ever before: there are currently more than 600 homeless registered with our Drop-In Centre - a 50% increase in numbers since January 2012.

This is largely down to the current economic climate, which means more and more people can't afford the basic cost of living.

As a result, more people than ever are turning to us for help, which is putting a major strain on our resources, both financially and in terms of manpower.

That's why your help is so important.

Our Drop-In gives some of the most vulnerable members of society access to a hot meal four days a week.

It also acts as a Recovery Access Point one day a week, where we open our doors to very chaotic people. This provides them with an open surgery where we can provide advice about issues such as housing, benefits and harm reduction.

Angela Pasquill, who is the new Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Drop-In, said: "We've registered 204 new people since January. Day to day we have about 60 people using our services, and those numbers are increasing very rapidly.

"The economic issues are impacting on everyone – and we now have young families coming to us who can't afford to eat. It's just as important to offer support to them, as it is to support people living in hostels.

"This means we need more supplies and I have never seen our stocks so low. Our cupboards are half as full as they usually are.

"The kind people who do donate are perhaps only

donating half as much as they did last year, because at the end of the day, they have to look after their own.

"I really don't know how we will go on doing the work we do if the economy remains like this - we are feeling the pinch at the moment.

"Looking forwards, if numbers keep growing at the rate they currently are, then without more donations, it's going to be difficult to find the funds to keep going."

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

For some it is substance misuse, for others it is alcohol. The Drop-In centre aims to act as a bridge between that life of chaos and the road to recovery.

Christmas is often a particularly difficult time.



# THOMAS

Developing people for a brighter future

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

Angela explains: “For these people, Christmas is just like any other day, the celebration side of it is non-existent in their lives.

“We therefore try to make it a really festive occasion for them. This includes preparing a full Christmas dinner with all the trimmings.

“With the help of donations, we buy gifts – it’s usually something like socks or underwear - and have them delivered in a sack by our very own Santa.

“We open for four hours on our Christmas day, which is on Friday 21st December this year.

“This is to ensure that all our volunteers are available to help us out, because obviously the closer we get to Christmas, people want to spend time with their families.

“It is such a great day and we are extremely grateful to everyone who helps us out.

“The problem we face this year links back to the lack of funds we have to cover the amount of people who we want to make sure have some form of Christmas.

“Last year, the Lady Mayoress very kindly bought our turkeys for us but this year I am really struggling to see how we can possibly afford to have a Christmas day.

## “It isn’t all about serving food - the people who come to the Drop-in see us as their community and their social network.”

“I have the volunteers in place, but paying for and supplying the actual meal is proving to be extremely difficult. I have nothing towards it as yet but I really hope it can go ahead.”

Another challenge is finding enough volunteers to help cope with the increase in service users accessing the Drop-In.

Many of the volunteers are in recovery, having just completed THOMAS’ 12 steps programme.

Angela added: “With the rate of relapse as it is, I have to be mindful about how much pressure I put the volunteers under.

“I have to look after them too and we have to pay their travel expenses and feed them. We couldn’t do it without them but the workload is just becoming too much.

“We need to get more community volunteers through our doors because preparation time is getting longer and longer so we need more people here to cover the work we have to do.

“To volunteer you have to be a certain type of person, someone who will listen, smile and treat our visitors exactly like you would any other person.

“Experiencing the Drop-in once is different from being a permanent volunteer here, day in day out, week after week.

“We want volunteers to build relationships with people who come to us, so that they feel comfortable here and really appreciate what the Drop-In can do for them.”

# THOMAS NEWS

## Volunteer with THOMAS

Every year, many people volunteer with THOMAS. Some come to us to develop vital skills and abilities to help them get a job; others want to give something back to their community and have a particular empathy with the work of THOMAS. Whether you are young or not so young, we are grateful for your offers of help and will do our best to help you play an invaluable role in our work.

## 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.

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## The Challenge Network mucks in with House work



In 2011 and again in 2012, THOMAS was delighted to welcome young people from the Challenge Network who spent time during the summer with us in Blackburn and Salford.

In Salford, a number of groups of young people visited THOMAS House over the summer to get to know more about THOMAS' work. The Challenge participants then organised a number of fundraising activities, such as sponsored three-legged walks and 'climbing Everest' style events, where groups completed enough steps to climb Everest. These activities generated much needed funds for THOMAS.

A fantastic 100 young people took part in activities such as painting, decorating and gardening at THOMAS House. They were also able to learn more about the centre by working on these projects with the residents, breaking down social barriers and stereotypes alike.

In Blackburn, on 8th September a team of 12 young people partaking in The Challenge Summer

Programme, met with Angela Pasquill at the Blackburn THOMAS centre at St. Anne's House, where we hold our drop in. The Challenge team worked tirelessly all day, clearing litter and foliage from the centre in order to improve the centre surrounds. The team ended up filling over 10 bin bags full of rubbish and gardening waste and made a huge improvement to the grounds. The team also worked alongside a service user and had the chance to talk about experiences first hand whilst they worked.

The team also ran a sponsorship day on 15th September and raised funds making a musical arrangement out of pots, pans and cutlery, whilst raising awareness of the services that THOMAS provides.



## THOMAS Shortlisted for the Lancashire Business View “Not for Profit” Red Rose Award

THOMAS was delighted to be shortlisted for a prestigious award.

Shortlisted for the  
**LANCASHIRE BUSINESS VIEW**  
**RED ROSE**  
**AWARDS 2012**

After a vigorous selection process THOMAS was shortlisted for the ‘Not For Profit’ category at the Red Rose Awards, which took place at the Blackpool Winter Gardens in spring 2012.

Organised by Lancashire Business View magazine, the Red Rose Awards aim to celebrate the achievements of Lancashire’s top businesses and charitable organisations. After completing a detailed application form, THOMAS was initially long-listed. Our chief executive Jim McCartney was then invited to deliver a presentation to an interview panel, who then decided on the final shortlist.

Although we were not the ultimate winner, (that accolade went to Carers Central Lancashire,) we were delighted to have been recognised.

## THOMAS centre has international appeal



A group of Chinese Government officials, accompanied by Nick Clifford, Senior Fellow in Public Policy and Management at Manchester Business School, paid a visit to THOMAS in Salford in a bid to learn more about the UK’s welfare system. The delegation of officials from China’s National Audit Office are spending six months in the UK as part of a tie-up with Manchester Business School. During their stay, the group hopes to gain a clearer understanding of how the UK’s welfare system works, and how some of its core services are delivered. As part of those

studies, eighteen delegates visited THOMAS to find out more about services for drug and alcohol users.

Nick Clifford commented: “We are indebted to THOMAS for providing us with a unique insight into the services they provide, how those services are funded, and most importantly, how they are then delivered to service users on the front line.

“The visit proved to be an invaluable experience for the students because they got to see a practical example of our welfare system in operation.”



# Back from the dead

## **It took two near death experiences to eventually persuade me that I needed to get help.**

I saw drugs as the only way to ease the pain of my self-loathing and self-pity. I tried to detox many times because I knew what I was doing was wrong. But once I got hooked on heroin, it was hard to escape from its clutches.

I was brought up in an environment where drugs were used and sold constantly. They were everywhere: my mum even kept them in the fridge at home and I remember coming across some one morning when I was making breakfast for me, my brother and my sister.

I'd already started smoking cannabis with my brother when I found a bowl of amphetamines one day, and

I just wanted to try it to see what it did.

I took it to school for all of my mates to try, and really liked the effect it had on me.

## **It took me out of myself and away from the carnage at home.**

It wasn't long before I began to want that rush all of the time, and I guess that's when things started to go downhill for me.

I was putting myself in dangerous situations with gangs and my mum couldn't handle me anymore. She put me in care at weekends and started seeing someone new. I immediately took this as rejection, so it became me against the world.

I was in my own little bubble because I thought if I isolated myself I wouldn't cause anybody any harm. Because of this, I struggled with relationships. Heroin was my way of forgetting about all of my insecurities.

In 2008, after two prison sentences and numerous detoxes, I was just broken. I became suicidal because I'd lost all hope and self-respect for myself. I started another 12 steps programme at Chatterton Hey, shortly after leaving prison, but it was at this point I started drinking. My step brother was an alcoholic and when I went home to visit him I would drink too. I believed that drink wasn't a drug so I thought it wouldn't do me any harm.

I also used drugs one weekend whilst on the programme and I

decided to keep it to myself.

This was one of the biggest mistakes I made, because recovery is all about being honest with yourself, and honest with your peers. I kept it a secret for seven months and it just ate me up inside. I didn't want to tell anyone because I thought they would judge me, and it was for this reason that I decided to leave and go it alone.

One day I was in my usual self-pity mode and just cracked, the inevitable happened, and I accepted a few lines of heroin from an old associate. I've come to learn now that a couple of lines just isn't enough for me. It was all or nothing, and it completely took hold of me once again.

## The dealer's front door used to scream out at me.

I decided to detox again because I was resorting to shoplifting and stealing to get the money to pay for my habit.

Seeing what it was doing to me, and the people around me, just didn't stop me.

## This was when I ended up dying from a heroin overdose - I died twice in three days.

Even after the first time, the thought of a comedown when I was attached to a drip in hospital to clear the drugs out of my system just seemed worse than going to score again. So I did.

After ending up in prison again on a methadone script, I came face to face with what I had become. I had nothing, and that was when I realised I couldn't do this to myself any longer.

That's when I was introduced to THOMAS. I knew straight away it was the place for me when I heard three members of staff at THOMAS had also been with me at Chatterton Hey.

It was good knowing that they knew me and, after a bit of hesitation, I got on the train and came here – it's the best thing I've ever done. I've been honest from day one, even telling Rab, my support worker, that I had used that day he asked me at Chatterton Hey.

## I just wanted everything out in the open so I could start again, because I knew it was the dishonesty which had let me down last time.

I know that if I keep plugged into this programme, I'll be okay. I want a bright future; I want to go to college and University, feel a sense of achievement, and leave a legacy behind me. I've been totally accepted back into my family, I'm a big brother again, and everyone is just happy to have me back, which makes everything I'm doing worthwhile.

# As you prepare your last will and testament, please remember THOMAS

At THOMAS we rely on the generous support of our donors to help hundreds of people a year overcome drug and alcohol addiction.

With the help of people like you, we can enable some of the most marginalised in society to find new hope and meaning in their lives.

We use our resources carefully so that we can help as many people as possible.

Many of those we help have lost their families, their jobs and their homes. We help them find a new life, rebuild their family relationships and eventually find a new home, new skills and qualifications and move into employment. As you prepare your last will and testament, please remember THOMAS.

Please contact **Mary Carley**  
Fundraising Manager

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## With your help, we can continue to save lives!

 **THOMAS**  
Developing people for a brighter future  
[www.thomasonline.org.uk](http://www.thomasonline.org.uk)



# I can be a dad again

John, left

**Coming to THOMAS has been life changing for me. If I hadn't come here, one of three things would have happened - I'd be in jail now, badly injured, or dead.**

My problems started around the age of 13, when I began smoking weed. Drinking soon followed and when I was 15 I used to go down to the local park with my mates and stay out all night getting drunk. Drugs became part of my life quite soon after. I got caught up in the local party scene and was doing speed, LSD and cocaine on a regular basis.

I guess you could say I just got carried away with it all and everything escalated from there. I got to a point where I was drinking every day and making a nuisance of myself. Looking back, I can see I became an absolute nightmare, harassing people when there was just no need for it.

It was a big wake up call when I ended up in jail in 2009 for threatening the manageress at my local pub whilst highly intoxicated. I threatened to burn her pub down and quite rightly she phoned the police and I was arrested.

When I came out of jail, things started to look up. I got back with my ex-girlfriend and we had a little girl in 2010. I began to calm

down and curbed my drinking, but the need for alcohol was still buried inside me - even jail hadn't managed to change that.

The real blow for me was when I spilt up with my girlfriend and lost all contact with my daughter. I felt I had nothing left. I picked up my daily drinking habit again, and was just deteriorating by the day. I wouldn't spend money on food, I'd spend every penny I had on funding my alcohol problem, which was taking over my life. I was slowly slipping out of control and losing all quality of life.

It wasn't until some friends told me I needed help that I knew something had to change. I'd lost so much weight - at the time I weighed just over 9 stone - I was ill and an emotional wreck. I'd got myself into a mess, and I was crying all the time because I was so unhappy.

**The major turning point was a year ago, when my friends made me realise what I was doing to myself.**

**That was when they introduced me to THOMAS.**

This place has helped me turn my life around. The difference in me now, compared to a year ago, is just amazing. I am looking forwards to the future and all the positive things it's going to bring.

I think the special thing about THOMAS is the laid back, family atmosphere, which helps you feel at ease, and makes you ready to talk about your feelings. It's such an honest place and we all look out for each other; we go through the 12 steps as a team. Listening to other people's stories has helped me get to grips with my own issues.

Right now I feel on top of the world and I can't wait for my life to start again. I've been sober for six months, and since I've been here I have totally mellowed out; I want to make something of myself and I am, hoping to go to college to complete a decorating course.

Best of all I have started to get access to my daughter again. She has visited me in here twice and I get to go home to Liverpool to see her next month - I can't wait. The fact she is back in my life again makes all of this worthwhile.





**As a kid I had a promising life ahead of me. I played football for England School Boys, and the Blackpool School of Excellence. If I hadn't let alcohol get hold of me, I believe I could have made a successful career out of my love of football and sport.**

The problems started for me when I was 14 and living with my Nan. I'd just come back from a football tour and all of my mates were bragging about going out and getting drunk. I started to join them because when you're young, you feel like you might be missing out.

I got kicked out of school at 15 and as the years went by, my football deteriorated and any goals and aspirations I had just disappeared. Suddenly, I had nothing to look forwards to anymore, because I had lost my way and given in to peer pressure.

I remember one morning, when I was 18, I took breakfast up to my Nan just like I always did. I found her on the floor of her bedroom - she had passed away in her sleep. From that day on my life became a constant battle with alcohol. I was incredibly close to my Nan and I could tell her absolutely everything. Her death hit me really hard and I can see now that it made me a lot worse.

Even when I had my first daughter

with my long-term girlfriend, nothing took away the pain of my Nan's death. I shunned all the responsibility that comes with being a dad and instead put all my attention into drinking. When I split up with my girlfriend, I agreed to see my daughter every weekend but, instead of spending time with her, I'd drop her at my mum's and go to the pub.

**I wasn't interested in being a dad; instead, alcohol had become my priority.**

By the time I reached 22, I had also started taking amphetamines. Bored of alcohol, the drugs took me to a different place and I enjoyed what they did to me. My mates were doing it so I just thought - why can't they work for me too? Not only was I spiralling out of control, but I also had another daughter with a different partner. I honestly thought this would change my life and make things better, but it just got worse.

Things came to a head when I stole money off my mum two weeks before I went to detox. I tried to pretend I was borrowing it and it really hurts me to think I went that far. I was shaking, I hadn't had a


drink, and I was a mess. I knew I had to change - I was unclean and unkempt and I had absolutely no quality of life. I was in a relationship with another alcoholic and our relationship was extremely chaotic.

**The fact was I couldn't live like that anymore.**

That was when my key worker introduced me to THOMAS.

THOMAS has helped me confront my problems and get my family back in my life. I went on a home visit to see my second daughter and had an absolutely brilliant day with her - it felt truly special to spend time together. I have also spent time with my son and I spent the night at my mum's. I'm so glad I have been given a second chance to make things right with all the people close to me.

I've now got dreams again, and goals I want to achieve. One is to become a sports teacher; I am a sports fanatic and it would be great to inspire other people to be as passionate as I am. I also want to be there for my children and family when they need and want me, and not just when I need them. Most of all, I just want to be a dad again.



HOPE  
Recovery  
HAPPINESS  
BETTER LIFE  
SELF WORTH  
CALMNESS

# Using my experiences to help others

**ONE of the keys to THOMAS's success is that many of the people who work here have often been there and done it themselves.**

I've worked at THOMAS for ten months now and my job involves the day to day running of the Blackburn rehab centre, especially the therapy side. This role includes ensuring all of the therapy sessions take place, and everyone completes the full 12 steps to ensure they get the best out of the therapy and their time at THOMAS.

As a former addict myself, I'm in a position to empathise with the clients and this makes it a truly accessible programme. I have life experience which is similar to theirs, and by working at THOMAS I can set the best example there is - I am living proof of what can be achieved if you believe in yourself and the programme.

I came through THOMAS myself 7 years ago, so it has a special place in my recovery story. I grew up in Scotland in an environment filled with drugs and crime. I lost out on having an education because it just wasn't a priority for my parents. Because of the culture and his lifestyle, my father was murdered, and I lost my mother to a heroin overdose. Eventually I found myself in England and decided to change

## My recovery has also done so much for my family; I have a 16-month-old daughter who is an absolute star in my life.

my ways - I didn't want to go down the same route as my parents and needed to save myself.

THOMAS showed me a new way of life, completely different to the one I knew. The culture I grew up in meant that during moments in my past I thought history was going to repeat itself; I thought I too was going to die through violence or drugs, or spend my life in and out of prison. THOMAS has shown me that there are other options and that a normal, clean life is achievable.

Through me completely changing my life, I have been able to do lots of good things. Giving back to THOMAS through my job at the rehab is one of them. I've been to University and gained training and skills in NLP, coaching, caring and mentoring, which I try to bring into my job role. I did this same job in both Manchester and Liverpool

before I returned to THOMAS, and I have worked with lots of young people.

As much as my story is important to me and those around me, I try not to let it interfere with my work here. It's about helping the people at the centre now, not me, because I have been clean for a long time and sorted my life out. However, the fact they know my story is very similar to theirs helps to create a unified bond between us.

It is satisfying to be in a position to help these people now, and having common ground makes the job a little easier and also more fulfilling.



# My first clean Christmas

**Helping out at the Drop-in centre gives me a real sense of satisfaction. To others it might not seem much, but by giving back in any way I can, and being given the responsibility to help those out who are in the same place that I was eight months ago, means absolutely everything to me.**

I really enjoy getting to know the people here, having a chat and a laugh with them. It makes me feel fulfilled, knowing that they can relate to me, and see me as part of their support network.

Sometimes it's upsetting to see them so low, and it brings back painful memories from my own past. But when you see them smile, it helps me realise what amazing things THOMAS does - and has done for me.

Before I came to THOMAS I wasn't allowed anywhere near my partner or my family because of the drugs. Around Christmas time, I would start taking methadone to put on weight to disguise my addiction so I could see my family. As soon as Christmas was over, I'd go back on the drugs again. The addiction had hold of me so badly I chose drugs over my family. I had no one - and nowhere to go.

Eventually, I got to the point where I'd had enough of my way of life - I had lost everyone that was important to me and I needed help. I was introduced to THOMAS through my DRR funder, who, after I got chucked out of my first rehab, told me I had one last chance. She said if I messed this up, there was nothing more she could do for me. I took this last chance and grabbed it with both hands. In the past I was always too scared to ask for help. As an addict, my head told me I was someone special and I could sort my life out on my own as long as I was making money. THOMAS showed me that if I wanted to improve my life, it was help that I needed.

The idea of doing a 12 steps programme before I came to THOMAS scared me, but after 3 months of being here something just clicked and everything changed. I stopped arguing with others, and myself, and discovered this was the right way to be. I realised that by being stupid and stubborn, the only person I was hurting was myself.

## I live a positive life now. It's a basic way of living, but it's the right way to live.

It's a life I didn't know, and thought wasn't available to me. Being around drugs at such a young age really affects your perception of normality.

One thing that keeps me going is the effect my recovery is having on my family. I remember when my granddad burst into tears when he saw how much of a mess I was. My dad died from drugs and my granddad told me he didn't want to watch me die as well. Knowing he can now sleep at night is a reassurance; I know I'm doing the right thing. He played a huge part in my recovery.

I'm also back in my daughters' lives. They don't know much about my previous life and, thankfully, have never seen me around drugs.

I want to continue to build a good relationship with them, and when the time is right, I will sit them down and tell them about my recovery.

I am now on stage two and living in my own flat, helping out at the Drop-in, keeping busy going to meetings, and meeting lots of new people.

Paying bills and feeling comfortable around your family may seem like an easy, natural thing for most people, but it was virtually impossible for me. It is a big step that I can now do things like this with ease.

THOMAS is giving me continuous support. I am never alone and there is always someone there for me. Obviously I have off days, but I never think of using anymore.

THOMAS is like one big family and you pick and chose what you get out of it. I've met some great people and found my own family here. Without this network of support, I wouldn't know what to do.

Thanks to THOMAS, this will be my first clean Christmas - or the first without being in jail - for 18 years and I hope I can inspire people, including those at the Drop-in, to do the same and be clean in time for next Christmas.

So much will be different this year. I know I will get emotional and end up crying, but it doesn't matter. I have come so far since last year and it is such a massive achievement for me; it means the world to me that I can have a normal Christmas without lying or being dishonest. It will be the best Christmas ever and I can't wait.



# Please support THOMAS and help us save lives this Christmas and throughout 2013.

We are grateful for the help of our generous supporters and donors which enable us to help many who would not otherwise benefit from our services. Whether you are able to make a regular contribution or a single donation, you will be directly helping to make a difference to the lives of those we help.

## Please complete and return this form

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I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to THOMAS for the sum of £

I wish to make a regular payment by standing order.  
Please send me the necessary documentation.

Please make your cheque payable to THOMAS and send to:  
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## You can also make on line donations to THOMAS

please visit our website [www.thomasonline.org.uk](http://www.thomasonline.org.uk)

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# THOMAS

Developing people for a brighter future

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