

Frontline

Summer Edition 2023

“It helps my mental health”

Lisa's experience at our pet friendly accommodation

PAGE 2

Also in this issue:



Learn about our Life Changing Care report

PAGE 4



Find out how we're breaking down barriers for the Roma community

PAGE 6

St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Thank you!

We're so grateful to have your support this summer.

Because, although the sun is shining, the cost of living crisis still looms large.

And there are lots of people coming through our doors, who might never have dreamed they'd need our help.

But with you here, we can continue to be there for them. Whether someone needs short term help getting back on their feet, or longer term support to build a brighter future.

In this issue, hear from Lisa, who lives in our pet friendly accommodation with Marnie the poodle, and is gradually working towards a more independent life.

Find out how Lewis and Ken benefit from professional care, at one of our registered care homes.

And learn how our Roma Rough Sleeping team are breaking down barriers for one of the most marginalised communities on the streets.

All of these stories prove that together, we really are changing lives.

St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Contents:

- P2 Take the Lead
- P4 Championing better care
- P6 Meet the Roma Rough Sleeping team
- P8 Help in the heat

Keeping best friends together

A pet can be a lifeline for someone recovering from homelessness. That's why we're one of the only charities to offer pet friendly accommodation.

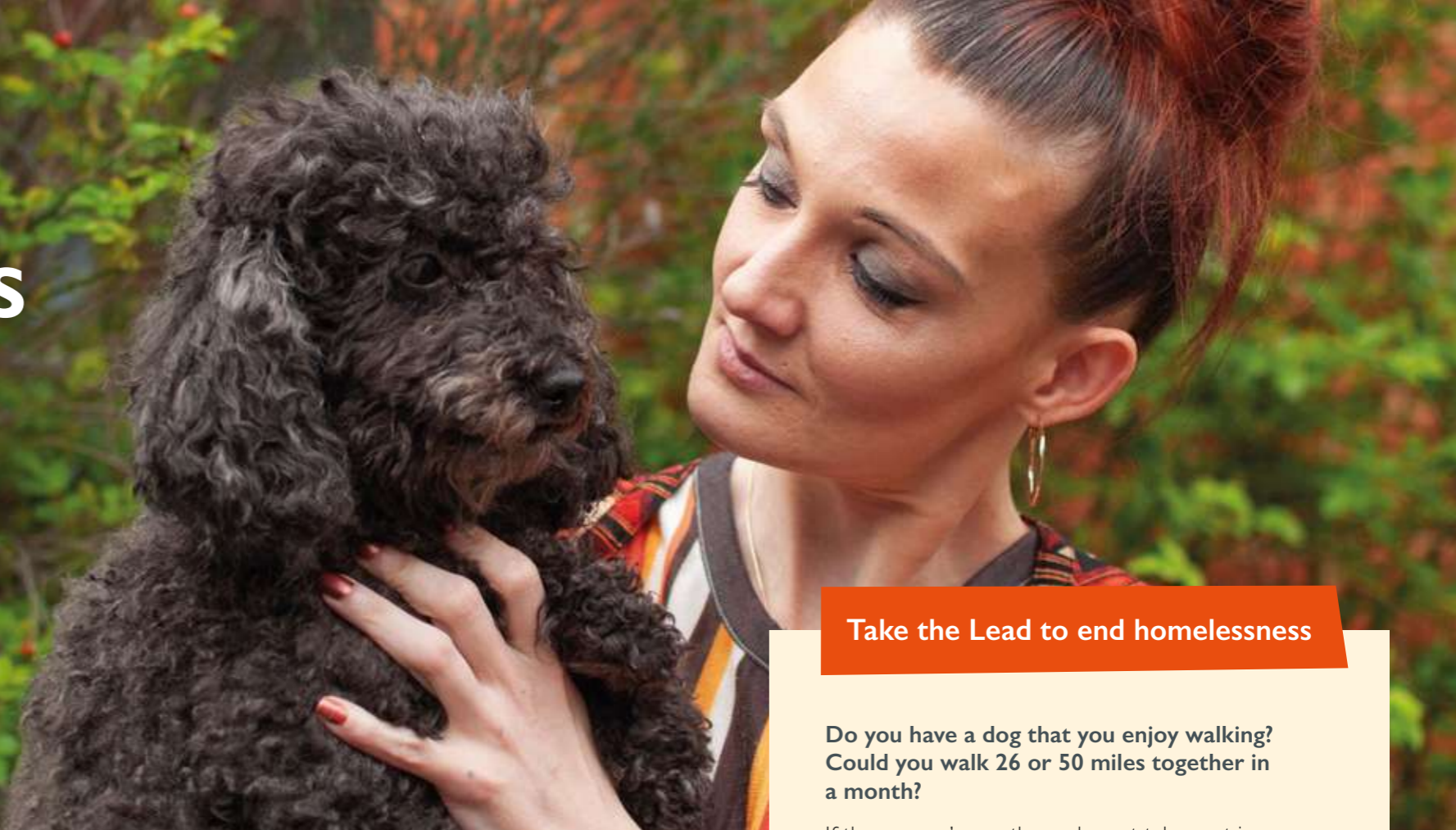
Having Marnie the poodle really helps Lisa – she keeps her company and gives her motivation. Lisa shares her story:

"I started sleeping rough after leaving care at 16. I'd been going to the West End in London with an older girl since I was about 13, and it was always exciting. There were all these older adults and I thought they were looking after me.

"One day, they said "do you want to try some crack?", so I said yes. I didn't have a clue what it was, but it was nice, and I carried on doing it.

"A group of us used to sleep down by Leicester Square. There was an old cinema that had shut down, and we would be in front of the doorway. To be honest, at the time it seemed quite exciting because I'd never experienced any of that before. But as I got older, I realised it wasn't exciting. It wasn't exciting having to wake up and get money for drugs every morning.

"I'm 38 now, and I've stayed in lots of hostels over the years, but this is the best hostel I've ever been in. The minute I walked through those doors, it's like a proper community. You can come down for breakfast, they do wellbeing group, and the Recovery College is just across the street.



"They do arts and crafts and cookery groups. The managers are so friendly, and the staff will help you any way they can.

"It's so nice to have Marnie, my mum's dog here too. To be able to have a little companion. When I'm on my own I just want to stay in bed. Because I'm not using drugs anymore, I'm on methadone. But when I've got Marnie with me, we've got a nice little routine. I couldn't stay in all day with her, it wouldn't be fair. She'd get bored.

"In future, I'd like to get my own place, with my own dog. I love staffs. I'm also trying to get into voluntary work – I want to do anything working with dogs. My support worker's very encouraging, and he's helping me look into it."



Take the Lead to end homelessness

Do you have a dog that you enjoy walking? Could you walk 26 or 50 miles together in a month?

If the answer's yes, then why not take part in our dog walking challenge, Take the Lead this August? And help raise vital funds to end homelessness.

Choose to walk either 26 or 50 miles in a month with your four legged friend. You can take on this paw-some challenge anywhere, in your own time and at your own pace.

You could choose to go on short walks every day, or go for longer distances at the weekend – it's your challenge, so you can decide when and where you clock up the miles.

Register for free today to receive a St Mungo's T-shirt and mile tracker. Plus, get a funky St Mungo's dog bandana if you raise over £50.

As one of the only charities to offer pet friendly accommodation, you'll be helping to keep more friends like Lisa and Marnie together.

Visit [takethelead.mungos.org](https://www.takethelead.mungos.org) to sign up now.



Starting August 2023

Championing better care

It's no secret that people experiencing homelessness can face significantly poorer health outcomes than the general population, and often experience frailty earlier.



Matt Bawden, Regional Head for North Region and Physical Health explains how our two CQC registered care homes support clients, and shares the findings of our recent care review:

“People who've experienced long term homelessness often have multiple physical and mental health needs, and higher levels of drug and alcohol use. All of these things can prove very challenging for a mainstream care home to support.

“That's where St Mungo's registered care homes come in. Our staff are trained in managing challenging behaviour, understanding complex traumas, and working in a psychologically informed way. So rather than evicting people when they show challenging behaviour, we're able to meet them where they are.

“For example, many of our clients use alcohol problematically.

“But rather than banning it, which wouldn't work, we deliver a harm reduction model – supporting clients to reduce their alcohol in a controlled and sustainable way. This not only helps improve their physical health, but also reduces the risk of conflict with staff or residents.

“We produce alcohol agreements with clients so they can agree on the amount they will drink when they move into the home. It's about creating a joint effort rather than telling them what to do. And that helps them to be more open to all the other support that we're able to offer.

“Our clients are often frequent users of primary care services like A&E before they move in, but we often see a reduction in use over time, because they're getting the support they need. If we excluded them for drinking, they wouldn't get that support.

“Another benefit that's quite hard to measure, but is really important to us, is an increase in dignity. If someone has issues with things like personal care or incontinence, living in a hostel is not ideal. We regularly notice an improvement in people's appearance and self-confidence when they move into one of our care homes.”



Chichester Road had a beautiful garden

Our care review

Our care homes are a great example of how the right care, delivered in the right place, can transform a person's quality of life and support them to leave homelessness behind for good. Sadly, there are very few services like this available.



Last year we decided to carry out a care review, to find out more about the care and support needs of clients across all of St Mungo's services, and see if there is a need for more specialist care homes.

Our review found that the main challenges to accessing the right care are:

A lack of specialist care homes

Currently, there are simply not enough beds to meet demand.

Long waits for the Care Act assessment

When someone needs care, our staff will refer them to the council for a Care Act assessment. But a large proportion of St Mungo's managers described long delays in waiting for assessments and decisions, and increasingly high assessment thresholds.

A lack of understanding of complex needs

Many St Mungo's services found external care teams to be unresponsive and inflexible when working with people with complex needs, such as clients with experience of drug and alcohol use.

We are sharing the findings of the review in our report, *Life Changing Care: The role, gaps and solutions in providing social care to people experiencing homelessness*. It will be shared with policy makers and sector professionals to raise awareness and promote much needed change.



You can read the full report at mungos.org/life-changing-care

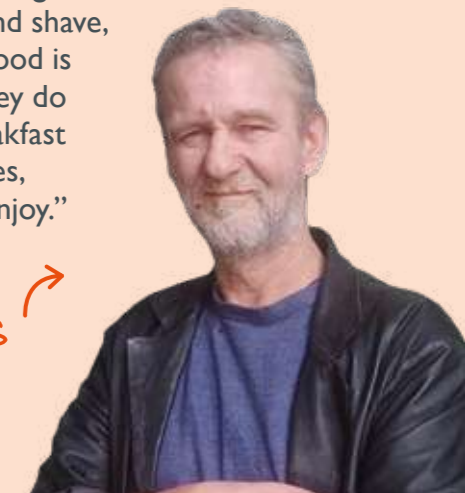
“I've lived here just over a year. I was sleeping rough for a while, and to come into somewhere warm, it's real cosy.

“I've stayed in some places where you're really not supported at all, but I feel properly supported here. You get your own room, can have your own independence, but you can also be social. You've got a pool table, TV. And we have residents' meetings where we can bring up any problems. But I don't have any – I'm really grateful to be here. I would give it 100/100.”



Ken

“I've lived here for over 10 years now. I was in a more independent place but then I became ill. It's good – they help you manage your money, you get a regular haircut and shave, and the food is good. They do a big breakfast sometimes, which I enjoy.”



Lewis

Challenging prejudice against Roma people

We believe that nobody should be left to face the streets alone – no matter where they're from – and our Roma Rough Sleeping Service aims to tackle the unique issues that Roma face. Manager, Nico shares their achievements so far:



"I joined St Mungo's as an Outreach Worker in 2020. My colleagues were finding it hard to engage with Roma people who were rough sleeping, because they didn't have the cultural understanding or speak the language. Roma tend to stick together in groups and that can make them difficult for outreach workers to approach too.

"Having previously worked with Roma across Europe, and being Roma myself, the skills and experience I was able to share really helped us to break through to this community.

"Then, in December 2020, we received our first funding to pilot the Roma Rough Sleeping Service. For that year it was just me and one other colleague, so we were very busy.

A shocking 87% of Roma rough sleepers have struggled to access homelessness services.

"Since then, we have become a permanent service, growing to employ three mediators, one coordinator and a manager.

"We support clients to access immigration advice – making sure they are referred to the right services, and going with them to appointments so they feel supported. We can also translate for them if necessary.

"Another big area of our work is health – getting clients registered with a GP and access to health services. We also help people with benefits, employment and housing, and so far we've supported 20 people into accommodation, which is a huge achievement.

"One of our strongest skills is knowing how to navigate between the two systems – the British system of law and services and



Frequently Asked Questions:

Who are Roma?

There are an estimated 10-12 million Roma currently living in Europe. Historians believe that Roma first arrived here from North West India sometime around the 12th century. Roma have a common language, Rromanëš, which has different dialects.

How are they affected by homelessness?

Roma have faced a long history of prejudice and organised persecution since arriving in Europe. In some countries, Roma were enslaved until the 19th century. They were targeted by the Nazis during the holocaust, and between the 1970's and 1990's, the Czech Republic and Slovakia sterilized Romani women against their will.

Unfortunately, prejudice is still widespread and today, and 80% of Roma in Europe live below the risk of poverty threshold. This, alongside culture and language barriers, has created a sense of distrust amongst Roma communities, making it harder for them to access mainstream support like housing services.

What's the different between Roma and Romanian?

Roma does not mean Romanian – it is a coincidence that the two words are similar. But Romania has one of the highest populations of Roma in the world, which is why this is a common misconception.

What's the difference between Roma, gypsies and travellers?

Roma are often wrongly called "gypsies". This name came about because people assumed they were Egyptian, and shortened this to "gypsy".

Roma shouldn't be called "travellers" either. Irish and Scottish Travellers have their own unique identity and culture which is very different to Roma. And whilst Roma travelled from place to place in the past, most of the population is now settled in one place.

everything, and the Roma cultural system. That's why my colleagues are called mediators, because they are in between the two. It's the first time we have Roma mediators hired in the UK, so St Mungo's is really breaking through.

"Another skill we have in this team is that we are advocates for our clients. We can see where the system doesn't work, and the barriers that are created because of stereotypes and discrimination, and take action. The team have trained hundreds of practitioners across London on Roma history and culture, and how to work with Roma rough sleepers.

"I'm very proud of my team because in a very short time, we have succeeded to really touch the lives of our people. Seeing people I met in 2020, who never dreamed to have a house here and are now inside accommodation, is the highest reward we can get in our work.

"And our work is being recognised by others too. Last year, we were thrilled to receive a letter from the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, commending our service."

"Your work has had a real impact on improving engagement and trust between Roma people sleeping rough and mainstream services."

Sadiq Khan,
Mayor of London

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How to help in the heat

Hot weather can be deadly when you're rough sleeping.



Here's what you can do to support someone outside this summer:

Offer water or sunscreen

You could make a big difference to someone's wellbeing, and prevent them from becoming seriously ill.



Contact StreetLink

Download the StreetLink app from Google Play or the App Store to alert outreach teams of someone sleeping rough, so that they can get essential support.



Call 999

If someone is seriously unwell and needs urgent medical assistance, contact emergency services straight away.



Volunteer with us

Check out our current volunteering opportunities, and give your time to help us end homelessness this summer at mungos.org/volunteer.



Donate to support our Outreach teams this summer at mungos.org/donate-frontline

Thank you for reading this edition of Frontline. We hope you enjoyed it. If you have any questions or feedback, feel free to contact us using the details below.

Supporter Care team

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St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

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Housing Association No. LH0279

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