



2025-26 Impact Report

An introduction from our chair

It's so important that we're able to take a moment each year to reflect on the totality of the enormous amounts of work and achievement that routinely take place within the organization.

In 2025-26, we delivered yet again on the ambitious plans we set back in 2023-24. In this last year, the charity was better able to respond to a sustained increase in homelessness and housing insecurity locally by making 41 new bed spaces available.

Our Client Services team spearheaded new internal provision for those needing to improve their English language skills and those needing mental health support. At the same time, we strengthened move-on pathways through our new transition program, which offers extended and subsidised access to our supported accommodation for those entering employment.

This report looks back on our 2025-26 delivery year and sets the scene for the direction we've set our sights on for the next three years.

James' story

After relationships with friends and family broke down, James (name changed to protect his identity) found himself sleeping rough. While receiving support for his addiction from Change Grow Live, he was referred by Swindon Borough Council to First Choice Housing.

In November 2025, James moved into shared accommodation and was matched with a dedicated Support Worker. Reflecting on his first experience with us, he said, "The staff were so lovely and supportive. They made me feel safe, no longer cold or wet."

Together, James and his Support Worker developed a personalised support plan focused on continuing his recovery, improving his physical and mental health, and rebuilding family connections. To help him achieve these goals, we later supported him to move closer to the town centre, making it easier to attend appointments and spend time with his family.

James continues to engage with Change Grow Live, attends regular GP appointments, and takes pride in maintaining the garden at his property—a passion that reconnects him with his previous career as a landscape gardener.

Today, James is in a much more positive place. He remains committed to his recovery, attends every support meeting, and says, "I can now see light at the end of the tunnel."

Name changed to protect identity.



The local picture in 2025-26

Number of households owed a relief duty by Swindon Borough Council (SBC) by composition (2018-19 to 2024-25 Financial Years)			
	Single Adult		
Financial Year	Male	Female	Couple/two adults without dependent children
2018-19	159 (49%)	142 (44%)	20 (6%)
2019-20	48 (28%)	48 (28%)	17(10%)
2020-21	468(54%)	214(25%)	37(4%)
2021-22	465 (51%)	212(23%)	34(4%)
2022-23	498 (55%)	201(22%)	30 (3%)
2023-24	567 (62%)	182 (20%)	25 (3%)
2024-25	353 (62%)	117 (21%)	17 (3%)
April 2025 – Dec 2025 [GOV.UK Data]	292(61%)	108 (22%)	16(3%)
FCH projections for full 2025-26 FY	382 (61%)	137 (22%)	20 (3%)

How to read the table on the right: The percentages in brackets indicate the percentage of households presenting as homeless at SBC and being found eligible for a relief duty that year who fell into the relevant categories, e.g., 49% of households who were owed a relief duty by the local authority in 2018-19 were single male adults.

As of December 2025,
Homelessness in Swindon
remained above pre-
pandemic levels.

¹ Data collated from Gov.uk Tables on homelessness. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

The local picture in 2025-26

Swindon Borough Council determines that individuals are owed a relief duty when they confirm that the household fits the statutory definition of homelessness, is eligible for public assistance, and has a local connection.

As a result, the data presented above does not represent the total number of individuals who might have required housing support from 2018–19 to 2025–26. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Individuals who may have sought help from the local authority but did not qualify for support, including:
 - Those deemed to have ‘intentionally made themselves homeless’
 - Those who fail to meet the local connection criteria (such as refugees relocated from section 98 accommodation to section 95 accommodation in Swindon)
 - Individuals with no recourse to public funding
- Those who never reach out to the local authority for assistance.



What We

Do

Provide housing to those who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Deliver intensive housing management.

Provide a dedicated support worker to work with each person living in an FCH property.

We support each client to set and meet goals that include improving health and wellbeing including entering or maintaining sobriety, accessing local services, and maximising income.

Please note: To date, all services and support delivered by the organisation are open only to those who live in an FCH property.

2025-26 Impact in numbers



142 clients accommodated in a First Choice Housing property.

50,000+ nights of shelter delivered.

34 clients entered education, training or employment.

21 positive moves ons into the private rented sector, sheltered housing, and social housing.

90% of the 142 clients supported in 2025-26 were men and 10% were women. First Choice Housing supported a higher percentage of women in 2025-26 than any year before.



Meserets story

After seeking asylum in the UK, Meseret (name changed to protect her identity) was housed in temporary Home Office accommodation. When this placement ended, she faced homelessness and was referred to First Choice Housing for support.

Meseret arrived feeling anxious and isolated, with no permanent home or local support network. She was offered a room in shared accommodation and matched with a dedicated Support Worker. She describes her Support Worker as someone who "can listen and help me."

Together, they developed a personalised support plan focused on improving her English, finding employment, and building a social network. At her request, we later helped her move closer to the town centre, making it easier to access local groups and services.

Meseret has embraced every opportunity, attending English classes and activities at The Harbour Project. Her confidence and language skills have grown, and she is now preparing to enter employment as a cleaner.

Today, Meseret is in a much stronger position and is working towards her long-term goal of building a stable life in the UK, with a permanent home and a family.

Name changed to protect identity.

The picture of delivery in 2025-26

Our clients come to First Choice Housing with very different needs and ambitions.

The vast majority of our clients enter the service eager to get in to employment and into independent living.

To be able to achieve this we work with them to address needs as diverse as:

- Enhancing English Language Skills
- Addressing mental health challenges
- Achieving or maintaining sobriety

We do not operate in isolation. There's a fantastic history of collaboration between VCSEs and statutory services in Swindon. No one organisation can or does deliver adequate support to address all of an individuals needs.

Since 2011, we have partnered with several specialist organisations to provide comprehensive support.



Having said that, by late 2024 and like services across the country, a lot of the organizations that deliver this much-needed help were struggling under the weight of shrinking budgets and higher demand.

What did this mean in practice: very long waiting lists and stricter eligibility criteria across services.

In 2025-26, we had to change the way we supported those looking to improve their English language skills and improve their mental health, so we launched internal pilot programs.

By late 2024, waiting times for local NHS Mental Health services was 10+ months and 12+ months for ESOL classes at the local college.

Changes to our delivery in 2025-26

ESOL and Counselling Pilots

6

clients were offered up to 12 sessions of counselling in 2025-26.

4

clients ultimately engaged with the counselling services.

22

hours of counselling attended out of a possible total of 48.

Recognising increasing pressures on local services, and with funding from the Lloyds Foundation, we launched pilot ESOL classes for people with little or no English, providing vital early support while they waited for a place on a local college course.

Similarly, our counselling service offers timely, accessible support to people who would otherwise face delays in accessing mental health services, ensuring they receive help when they need it most.

“I appreciate [these] lessons with the teacher and if there [is] any opportunity just let me know again because I want to improve my english.”

Feedback from ESOL participant

32

hours of ESOL delivered to **6 clients.**

5

laptops loaned to clients to attend ESOL classes online.

Introducing our Transition Programme

Between August 2024 and August 2025, average rents across all property types in Swindon increased by 6.7%. This rise has made it increasingly difficult for local people to access accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS), even for those who are in employment.³

We are incredibly proud to have been able to launch a our transition programme in the autumn of 2025. The programme ensures that clients can continue to access services including subsidised housing for up to 3 months after entering employment.

Within these 3 months clients work with their support worker to maximise their income including by moving into full-time or better paid employment, to understand the requirements and process of moving into the PRS, and to save and budget in preparation for their move on. First Choice Housing is primed to engage with partner organisations who provide

³ Office for National Statistics. (2024). Housing prices in your area.

⁴ FCH Move on Passport - provided to clients as an easy reference guide through the process of moving into the private rented sector.



move-on grants to individuals (this funding enables us to offer up to £650 for deposits or rent in advance for our clients), and we are building relationships with landlords and agencies who can ease client entry into the PRS.



David became homeless after losing his sofa-surfing arrangements and was referred to First Choice Housing by Swindon Borough Council.

With stable accommodation and support, he developed budgeting skills, created a CV, and secured part-time work at McDonald's.

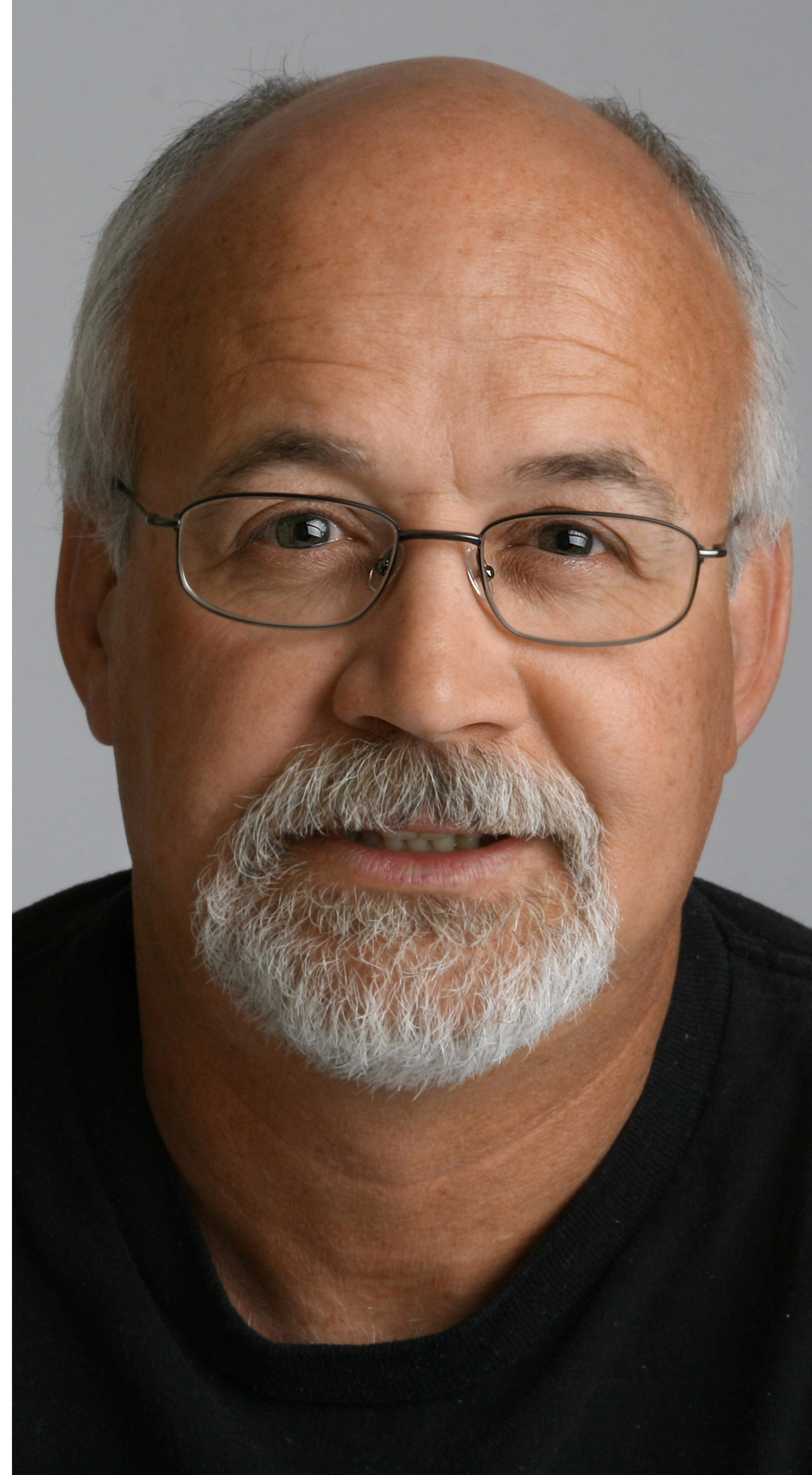
Feeling confident about his future, he later chose to return to Portugal to renovate a family property and start a new chapter.



After being granted refugee status, **Bekele** (name changed to protect his identity) was referred to First Choice Housing by Swindon Borough Council.

With safe accommodation, suitable facilities, and ongoing support, he enrolled on a Master's degree in autumn 2025, successfully completed his studies, and achieved a lifelong ambition by writing and publishing his first book.

Today, he is looking ahead with confidence, using his skills and experience to build an independent future and make a positive contribution to his new community.



Our funders, partners and supporters

We've achieved a great deal in 2025-26. None of it would be possible without the fantastic support we receive locally from our Landlords, charities and community organisations, local trades people, teams within Swindon Borough Council and our Funders.

We remain incredibly grateful to our partners and supporters.





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