



James Place and The October Club, Impact Report, April 2021

At James' Place our mission is to stop men dying by suicide. We believe that every suicide is a preventable death, yet suicide is the leading cause of death in men under 50.

Every day, we work for a world where every man who is facing a suicidal crisis can get the support he needs. Each year over 6,000 people die by suicide in the UK, and three quarters of these are men, but there is no specialist therapy available on the NHS for men at risk of taking their own life.

At James' Place, we help men in crisis to understand what they are going through, get through it and find hope for the future. In 2018, we opened our first centre in Liverpool, and have already supported more than 450 men experiencing suicidal crisis.

James' Place was founded by Clare Milford Haven and Nick Wentworth-Stanley, following the tragic loss of their son, James. He went looking for someone to talk to about his suicidal thoughts but didn't find the urgent help he so desperately needed. Our work is informed by their loss, ensuring we give men help when they are at crisis point.

The need for our work is greater and more urgent than ever. Rates of suicide in the UK were increasing before the pandemic, going up during 2018 and 2019. We do not yet know how the pandemic will impact on these figures, but we do know that factors which are linked to suicide including isolation, debt, relationship breakdown and family problems, have intensified for many people over the last year and that those who were vulnerable before the crisis are only more so now.

Our vision is for every man facing a suicidal crisis in the UK to have access to appropriate specialist support.

The work we have done with The October Club has made James' Place London a reality and has enabled us to make a significant step towards achieving this vision.

James' Place London

James' Place applied to The October Club because we wanted to take our work to the capital, making our intervention available where we knew there was unmet need and crucially also where there was enthusiasm and support from the professional community. Opening a new centre in London has been a strategic objective for us and the support of The October Club was the breakthrough we needed to bring this transformational project to life.

The relationship with The October Club has raised £700,000 in support of our work. This is a fantastic result and far better than any of us could have expected, given the restrictions on fundraising events during 2020.

We would like to thank the committee and everyone at The October Club for the energy and commitment they put into fundraising for James' Place. The 'Distributed Dinners', the auction and the live webinar were fantastic initiatives and their success is a tribute to the creativity and hard work of all those involved.

Before we secured the support of The October Club, we had already established a relationship with the East London Foundation Trust (ELFT). This is a key relationship which enables us to establish referral pathways from A&E and GPs in the area covered by the trust, and to map the need for our work onto the provision of other services in the area. So we knew that there was demand for our work in London and we knew that key NHS contacts were keen to work with us.

The support of The October Club has raised the funds we need to set up the new centre, recruit the team and establish the new service.

Our work during the Covid 19 crisis

At the beginning of the Covid crisis we adapted our existing services so that we could continue to offer support throughout the first lockdown, and we were able to continue with the development of the new London service, thanks to the support of The October Club.

The service in London is now live. We launched James' Place London as a virtual offer (based on video and telephone therapy) in July 2020 and we have been providing this service since then, initially taking referrals from A&E and then widening our pool of referrers to include GPs.

We brought forward the opening of the London service as an online offer so that we could start providing a service to those who needed us more quickly. We are limited by the capacity in our current temporary space so we are not yet taking self-referrals in London as we do in Liverpool.

From the announcement of the new lockdown measures in 2021, James' Place has been operating a hybrid model in both centres: when it is clinically appropriate, we see men virtually, but when we know that a man can't be safely seen online, we will welcome him to the building.

Progress on the new London centre

Since the October Club's support was confirmed we have accelerated the opening of our service in London and recruited the team we need to bring this transformational project to life.

Centre Manager Dan Bracken joined the team in February 2021, having previously worked as Clinical Director and Interim CEO of Mind in South London and bringing extensive experience of work with a similar client group. We have also recruited two experienced Senior Therapists who are now seeing clients and working with Dan on the development of the service. Centre Coordinator Rosie Barrett has also joined us and she will be leading on the administrative side of establishing the new centre and working on the refurbishment of our permanent home.

Zorana Halpin is a counsellor, accredited with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. She has worked with a wide cross sector of people dealing with acute mental health crises, drug and alcohol addiction and gambling issues. Zorana has joined the London team as one of two Senior Therapists.



Zorana described her work at James' Place in a recently published article:

"Once a man is accepted by the service, he will have an hour-long assessment with a trained therapist within two working days. What I've noticed in assessments is that clients are willing to talk about wanting to die, sometimes without being prompted. Perhaps the reticence to discuss suicide and the silence that seems to accompany suicide is not the reticence and silence of those contemplating it but of those around them. After all, those considering suicide, are dealing with thoughts or impulses to die on a daily, hourly or even minute by minute basis. They are making plans, buying equipment. If therapy works for suicidal men, could it in part be linked to the relief of being able to talk so openly?"

We have now moved into a temporary space in London so that we can offer both face-to-face and online sessions while the refurbishment is carried out on our permanent building.

Since the launch of the London centre we have been working with clients and with referrers to make sure that we are getting the right kind of referrals. This ongoing work with GPs and A&E referrers is vital to ensure that we are getting high quality referrals; seeing the right men at the right time, with referrers providing detailed and accurate information to help us make the most of the resources we have. When the centre is at full capacity we will be able to work with 450 men per year, employing six full time therapists.

A permanent home for James' Place London

To get to this level of capacity we will need the right space and we have now secured the lease on a building in Bunhill Row, near Old Street, which will become James' Place London. The location is ideal, being easily accessible from all parts of London, and at a point where Hackney, Islington and the City come together. This central location will enable us to extend our reach and offer help to more men as we embed the service in the local community over the coming years.

The view from James' Place London:



The building itself is a Georgian town house like our centre in Liverpool and is ideal for our work. The rooms are light and spacious, and the site overlooks a large green space. We are currently looking at designs for the interior, the brief for which is focused on creating a calm, safe space to support our therapeutic intervention, and to make the most of the space that we have so that we are achieving the maximum possible impact with the investment that has been made in James' Place London.

20 Bunhill Row will become James' Place London. When the refurbishment is complete the building will give us six therapy rooms as well as working space for the team in London.



Our impact

Robust, in-depth, independent evaluation has been built into the James' Place model from the outset and we are committed to using our experience to develop our service and share what we learn with others working in suicide prevention.

An independent evaluation published in the Autumn of 2020 showed that our work has a significant impact, on average reducing symptoms from severe to mild, a drop of 40 points on the Core 34 Outcome scale, a widely used model used to measure the outcomes of therapeutic interventions. This academic evaluation, led by Dr Pooja Saini of Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), recognised the positive impact of the charity's therapeutic model to men experiencing a suicidal crisis, their families, their communities and the wider system. This evaluation was based on the work of our Liverpool centre, over its first year of seeing clients. The detailed learning we have gained

from this work will inform the development of our intervention across all of our work in the coming years.

Alongside this work with LJMU, we are developing a collaboration with University College London to evaluate the work of our London centre and engage with the wider research community around suicide prevention.

As we have done in Liverpool, we will be carrying out an evaluation which addresses the key questions of whether and to what extent our intervention can be shown to be effective. We are also looking at how we might be able to take this work further to look at the effectiveness of our work against standard counselling models and beyond this to look at factors which may increase propensity to suicide and how these could be addressed in our intervention.

As well as working to improve our own intervention, we are committed to working with others in our field to develop our practice and share our experience, with the aim of transforming knowledge of what works to address suicidal crises. We have continued to work with the National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group (NSPAG) and The Alliance of Suicide Prevention Charities (TASC) to support the wider sector. We have published and presented our work in these settings and continue to develop opportunities for knowledge sharing with others who share our goals.

Next steps

The refurbishment of the new premises will be a key area of focus in the coming months, as we transform the building into a calm and welcoming space for our work. We are looking at two designs for the interior, both of which have addressed the project from the perspective of the service user and worked through the whole experience of coming to James' Place; being welcomed, cared for and listened to.

As mentioned above the team are already taking referrals, both for online sessions and in a temporary space in Farringdon, and in the time between now and the autumn, when we hope to move into our new home, we will be working on our referral pathways to make sure that we are using our capacity in the most effective way possible and that the right men are coming to us at the right time.

Outreach for key groups

As we develop our service in London, we will also be focusing on targeted outreach to key groups who are at high risk of suicide and who could benefit from our intervention.

We work with men of all ages, but two groups are particularly over-represented, being those aged 18-25, and specifically students, and those aged 45-55. As we open the centre this year we are launching a project aimed at reaching students in London. Our experience in Liverpool, backed up by ONS statistics, shows that students are a key at-risk group. We also know that the services available to them are limited.

The Student Outreach Project will work with a group of universities to establish referral pathways by developing links with other mental health and pastoral support services, as well as directly raising awareness of our service among students through key touchpoints. Two therapists will work directly

with students referred through the project, which will act as a pilot in advance of a wider rollout of this service.

We would like to launch programmes of targeted outreach work for the other key age group and to other key at-risk groups. Alongside the key age groups the other groups we have looked into include LGBTQ men, military veterans, specific ethnic groups and groups defined by occupation.

As with the student project, we will focus our outreach on these groups by dedicating resource to developing communications work and referral pathways which can reach them, engaging with existing services and by assigning specific therapy resources to these groups.

By raising awareness of our services in this targeted way, we will be able to ensure that those who are coming to us are those most at risk and most able to benefit from our work.

The future

Through our targeted outreach work and in the context of our work with academic partners we will continue to use our experience to contribute to the wider body of knowledge about what works to address suicidal crisis and how we can influence policy to support the needs of all those affected by suicide. We will continue to work in partnership with others in our field and to be active members of relevant coalitions working in this field.

We are also pursuing our ambition to open further centres around the UK to ensure that no man should have to face a suicidal crisis alone. We are looking at a number of cities as the potential sites for James' Place three, four and five and we are working with potential funders and referral partners to make this a reality.

Thank you all so much for all your wonderful support. With your help we are making James' Place London a reality and transforming provision for men facing suicidal crisis. We look forward to showing committee members and supporters around the new building in the coming months as the lockdown continues to ease.

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