



Launchpad shortlisted for 'Outstanding Contribution to the Community' award

Launchpad has been shortlisted for the Thames Valley Business and Community Awards for 'Outstanding Contribution to the Community'.

12 other organisations are in the running for the award, with the finalist being selected at a prestigious award ceremony at The Hilton, Reading on Thursday 31 January 2019.

Launchpad was founded in 1979 by students from Reading University and started life as one of the town's first soup kitchens. The charity has developed over the years and now houses 100 people and supports over 400 every year.

Ian Caren, Launchpad's Chief Executive, said: "Our overarching aim is to ensure that everyone in Reading has their own home and the opportunity for a positive future. Some people come to us for advice on things such as benefits, rent, issues with landlords; others come to us in desperate situations.

"We house those that need it and provide tailored support programmes to help them with fundamental life skills, employment and ultimately into long-term accommodation. We believe life skills combined with a safe, clean home give people the very best chance of success.

"We are delighted to have been nominated for the 'Outstanding Contribution to the Community' award, and to be shortlisted is a huge acknowledgement for the work we do at Launchpad. Winning would be the icing on the cake."

Launchpad employee Jason McMahon has also been shortlisted for the category 'Lifetime of Achievement of the Year'.

Jason had a successful career in commercial sales, but following redundancy, divorce and the death of his mother, his life took a different path. After struggling for work, he applied for a 6 month maternity cover role at Launchpad and four years later he is now a permanent, full-time member of staff.

Working as Launchpad's Corporate Partnerships Manager, Jason visits businesses in and around Reading, speaking to over 5,000 people every year to educate, inspire and raise support to help people have a second chance in life.

Jason said: "Soon after starting at Launchpad and hearing some of our clients' stories, I realised that we all can be so close to slipping into a sudden crisis; a change of circumstances, financial difficulties, family breakdowns, affording a place to live. It can so easily spiral out of control.

"Launchpad has given me the stability and purpose I needed to move forward and have a better quality of life. In return, I can hopefully change perceptions and raise awareness of homelessness.

"Being recognised for such a prestigious Thames Valley award as a local boy is an honour. I have met amazing people who are all connected through Launchpad. This nomination recognises everyone who has inspired me on my journey and everyone at Launchpad who have helped thousands of people in Reading get their lives back on track."