

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS

CHANGING PATHS AND SIR JOE'S CAFE

One of Tideway's most significant early moves in its support for the project's commitment on people with convictions was to partner with Changing Paths, a Charitable Trust. It also proved to be one of our biggest challenges, leading to Tideway taking swift action to help more than 20 staff who faced losing their jobs when Changing Paths folded virtually overnight.

The trust supported the transition into or back to work for people with convictions and the long term unemployed, focusing especially on the construction and catering sectors. It included on the job induction and training plus supported mentoring. Sir Joe's Café opened in our Paddington offices, followed by catering operations in the project's drive sites in Fulham and Bermondsey.

However, in March 2017 the 27 [check] staff from Changing Paths working on the project received a letter telling them they would be losing their jobs in a matter of days as the organisation was closing. Tideway intervened very quickly, determined that they and the project's commitment to support them would not be abandoned. Led by Tideway General Counsel Celia Carlisle, Tideway put in place interim arrangements for all the Sir Joe's staff and then employed them directly. It also worked with its contractors to ensure the drive site staff also had alternative arrangements in place so they did not lose their jobs.



Kathryn Nethersole was Changing Paths' Commercial Manager at the time. She was also due to lose her own job and was offered a new role on Tideway. She said: "Many of the team employed on Tideway were prisoners released on temporary licence (ROTL) and we really feared that several would react by simply returning to crime. Tideway were incredible, working so fast to find a solution for everyone so they turned up to the same workplace on Monday.

"No organisation has ever transitioned a vulnerable workforce of serving and ex-offenders on the scale achieved by Tideway in 2017. It really was a totally relentless push to do the right thing."

Kathryn continued to drive Tideway's ongoing work in this area, leading on our membership of the Corbett Network; the Ministry Of Justice Business in The Community Group; and The Employers' Forum For Reducing Re-offending (EFFRR). She added: "Changing Paths ended up being a catalyst for an increase in understanding – both for Tideway as client and our Main Works Contractors - of the issues around employing people with convictions."

Celia Carlisle said: "As well as supporting the group in small but important ways like with phone cards or tube passes, it was vital that everyone felt part of the organisation." This included helping project staff transition develop themselves and get new jobs, giving an opportunity for individuals to chase their dreams. One man was supported to make a move from catering into accounting, gaining a new qualification. He said: "My kids can be proud of me now - I will forever be grateful to those who believed in me and gave me this opportunity."

When the pandemic struck and with significant numbers of people working from home and with the number of staff reducing as the project moved towards completion, it was not viable for Sir Joe's café to remain open. However, Tideway looked to its biggest community investment, the Sands End Arts and Community centre in Fulham, to provide some support. We donated most of the kitchen equipment to allow the centre's new Walnut Tree café to open and two former Sir Joe's staff were employed there.

