

# Sleep rough fundraiser comes home

**A fundraiser who slept rough for eight weeks has raised more than £200,000 for a charity he founded to help those affected by homelessness or addiction.**

Richie Roncero, 40, slept rough in eight different cities to raise funds and awareness for Steps to Hope, which aims to open a 15-bed recovery facility to help people get off the streets

He left Edinburgh on 5 December with a sleeping bag and spent his first week on the streets of Glasgow, relying on the public to give him money each day to eat.

He then moved on to Belfast, Cardiff, Blackpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Inverness and finally Dundee, keeping in touch with loved ones only via Facebook and occasional phone calls.

On Saturday he arrived by train back in Edinburgh to a hero's reception, after raising a total of £213,589 on his [JustGiving page](#).

He told of the harsh reality of sleeping rough, fearing for his safety and suffering in freezing conditions.

He also revealed the cruelty and also kindness he experienced on the street, and the hope that drove him to complete his challenge.

Speaking on arrival at Waverley Station, he said: "I'm home. I feel safe."

“Loads of times I wanted to give up but this is bigger than me, I believe. I just kept focusing on Hope House and how many people’s lives this is going to change.”

Richie, who once fought addiction to drugs and alcohol, spent Christmas in Cardiff and New Year in Blackpool.

He celebrated his 40th birthday on the streets of Dundee.

During his challenge he also marked nine years clean and sober.

He said: “The hardest part has been dealing with my mental health going up and down, having to beg to survive and watching the harsh judgement from the general public.

“I’ve been threatened, I’ve had someone standing over me with a bottle and been told to go back to my own country.

“People have tried to take my phone off me and said they were going to do me in and I’ve been moved from spots while I tried to sleep.

“I’ve been petrified – I’ve developed a heartbeat in my throat – with every footstep coming around the corner while I lay vulnerable in a sleeping bag with only my head exposed and unable to get my arms out quickly to protect myself.

“And the cold, in minus four temperatures with snow in my sleeping bag.

“I’ve been in a ball so tight, shivering and having to get up at four in the morning because it’s too cold to lie there, and running around the streets waiting for somewhere to open so I could get inside to a bathroom or get a hot drink.

“On Christmas morning I was wandering the streets of Cardiff in the rain with no-one else around for four hours before I could get inside a McDonald’s.

“It was also in Cardiff where I celebrated nine years clean and sober.”

He added: “I’m an advocate of the 12 step recovery programme, and that is what kept me going. It’s a life tool and allowed me not to act on my current emotion. Whatever I was going through, I was able to calm myself and use meditation and a faith in a power that I’m going to be ok.

“Probably the most important thing was an understanding that ‘this too shall pass’. Rather than go one day at a time, sometimes I was going one hour at a time – ‘Can I get through the next hour? Yes’. I would get through that hour and just string the hours together.

“There were also moments of kindness. The services I have used along the way have been lifesaving and the support from social media – the funds we have raised are remarkable.

“We also helped people along the way. We managed to get a couple of girls off the streets of Blackpool and a man off the streets in Manchester.

“But I’ve learned that the system needs to change, it’s not just a case of taking people off the streets, and there’s loads that we’re going to be challenging along the line.”

Richie was greeted at Waverley Station by dozens of people, including some he met while sleeping rough all over the country.

A piper played Caledonia on the platform as he was reunited with loved ones and supporters.

Richie’s fiancée Siobhan Campbell, 32, told of her pride in his achievement after being apart since he started his fundraiser.

She said: “I’m so proud of Richie. It’s been hard spending Christmas and New Year and his birthday apart but he wanted

the experience to be as authentic as possible. Genuine rough sleepers don't have their loved ones around to go and see them on special occasions.

"We had contact on the phone and we were able to follow his journey on Facebook but it's overwhelming to welcome him back and see everyone here to cheer him home."

The money Richie has raised will help the non-profit charity Steps to Hope achieve its aim for Hope House, which he hopes to relaunch in May "to help more people into a new way of life".



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at Waverley Station Edinburgh

With fiancée Siobhan

PHOTO Alan Simpson Photography



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station

PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station  
PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at Waverley Station Edinburgh

With fiancée Siobhan, daughter Courtney with partner James and dog Blue.

PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station

PHOTO Alan Simpson





3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at St Cuthbert's Church Edinburgh

PHOTO Alan Simpson



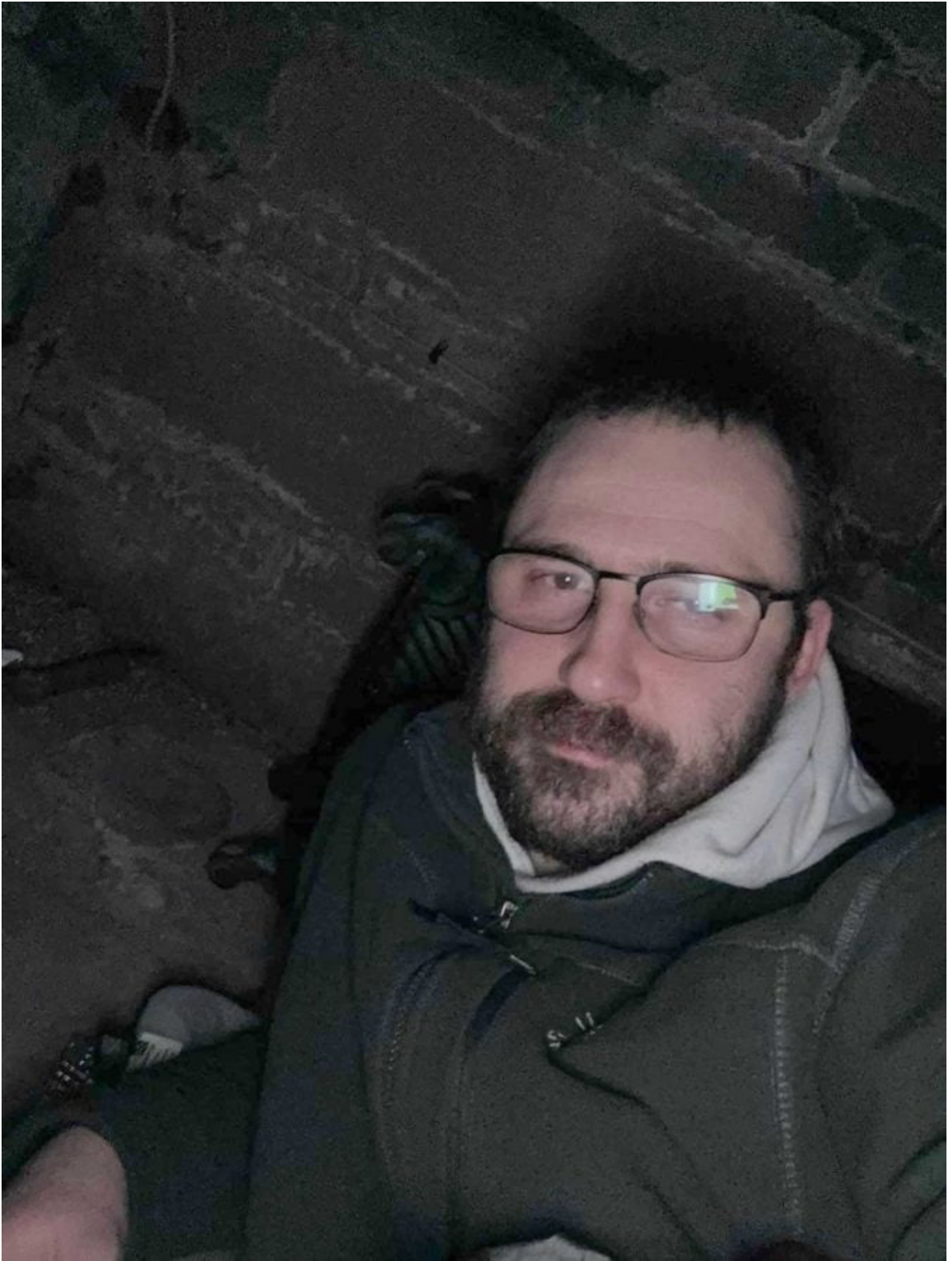
Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road



Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road



Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road



Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road



Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road



Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road



Richard Roncero of Steps to Hope on the road





3/2/2024

Supporters welcome Richie at St Cuthbert's Church.

PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Supporters welcome Richie at St Cuthbert's Church.

PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at St Cuthbert's Church Edinburgh

PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at St Cuthbert's Church Edinburgh

PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at St Cuthbert's Church Edinburgh

PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at Waverley Station Edinburgh

With fiancée Siobhan, daughter Courtney with partner James and dog Blue.

PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station  
PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station



PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station

PHOTO Alan Simpson



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at Waverley Station Edinburgh

With fiancée Siobhan

PHOTO Alan Simpson Photography



3/2/2024

Richie on arrival at Waverley Station Edinburgh

With fiancée Siobhan, and daughter Courtney

PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station  
PHOTO Alan Simpson



Supporters welcome Richie at Waverley Station  
PHOTO Alan Simpson

Supporters welcome Ritchie at Waverley Station