

James' Place Keep the door to hope open

**BIG GIVE
CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE 2025
CASE STUDY**



Contents

1

About James' Place

Why does James' Place exist?	3
What we do	3

2

Planning & Production

Objectives	5
Pledger Funds	5
Timeline	6
Co-creating our message	7
Mobilising support	9

3

The Campaign

Website updates	10
Email marketing	11
Social media	12
Thanking	14

4

Results

Donations	15
Return on investment	15
Social media analytics	16
Email analytics	18

5

Evaluation

What went well	19
What did not go so well	19
What would we do differently	19

About James' Place

Why does James' Place exist?

In December 2006, 21-year-old James began feeling suicidal after an operation. He went to A&E for help, where he was assessed as low priority. After waiting several hours, James left without being seen.

A few days later, he took his own life.

Sadly, James' story is not unique. In the UK, **suicide is the leading cause of death for men under 35 and three out of every four deaths by suicide are male.**

Many men find themselves suddenly in suicidal crisis after challenging life events, like relationship breakdown, bereavement and job loss. These men are at a very high risk of taking their own lives, but, like James, are often unable to access support quickly. Those who are suicidal or who have attempted to take their own life are frequently sent home from A&E unless they need psychiatric treatment. They may be referred for NHS Talking Therapies, which are often inappropriate for them due to their urgent need and high risk.

Without James' Place, there is not sufficient support readily available for men when they need it most.

What we do

James' Place stops men dying by suicide.

We provide **free, life-saving therapy to men in suicidal crisis** at our safe, welcoming centres across the UK. We are quick to access, aiming to see men in crisis within just **two working days** of their referral.

Across six to eight therapy sessions, our professional suicide prevention therapists help men understand and resolve their crisis and develop strategies to cope with future challenges. Our therapy is unique and **proven to work**; men who come to James' Place consistently report improved mental wellbeing and lower levels of emotional distress.



The clinical effectiveness of our therapy is assessed by



4,300+
men helped since 2018

6,900+
free therapy sessions delivered last year

Ken's Story

"Two years ago, my wife passed away in her sleep, unexpectedly, aged just 49. It was such a shock. She was everything to me, my best friend, and we'd been together for 35 years. I tried to put on a brave face and get on with things after the funeral, but to be honest, I took it very badly. I just went into a massive depression spiral. There seemed to be no other option other than to take my own life. I was referred to the crisis team, which I saw for a bit. I tried group therapy, but that wasn't for me; I needed help rather than to listen to other people's problems. Then I got referred to James' Place.

My therapist was fantastic. She immediately put me at ease and I was able to open up and express my feelings for the first time. I think I was in tears for the first three sessions. Having someone there who was qualified to deal with my situation made me feel very comfortable and safe. **James' Place helped to open my eyes that my life was worth fighting for.**"



At James' Place, **we know that suicide is preventable** — with the right support.

It costs **£2,000** to support one man through our life-saving intervention. We rely on **voluntary donations** to deliver our service for men in suicidal crisis quickly and free of charge. December is a critical fundraising period for us.

Planning & Production

Objectives

James' Place last took part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge in 2023, when we exceeded our £15,000 target.

Since then, public awareness about James' Place has increased and our Fundraising Team has expanded to include an Individual Giving Executive. Due to these additional resources, we were excited to see what we could achieve with a more sophisticated social media campaign and decided to set a higher target.

In our application, we requested £10,000 in Champion Funds and committed to raising £10,000 in Pledger Funds. This would have made our target for online donations £20,000 and the total fundraising target £40,000. Big Give amended our application to £7,500 in Champion Funds (generously pledged by the Reed Foundation), lowering our **overall target to £35,000** and bringing our **online donation target to £17,500** (£10,000 more than our online donation target in 2023). £35,000 would cover the costs to provide **free, life-saving therapy for 18 suicidal men**. We felt it was an ambitious target but within reach.

To meet our fundraising objective, we knew we needed a compelling, creative campaign message, co-created with James' Place clients, that would resonate with existing supporters and reach new audiences. In addition to driving donations, we identified the opportunity to increase awareness about James' Place and so set our **secondary objectives and KPIs** as listed in the table on the right.

Objective	KPIs
Co-create a compelling video asset with former James' Place clients that conveys our life-saving impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ViewsReachEngagementVerbal feedback
Reach and engage new and existing supporters via social media and email marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social media views, reach & engagementEmail open & click through ratesConversion of email audience to donorsFollower increase

These objectives highlighted that the benefits of a successful campaign would reach beyond the Christmas Challenge.

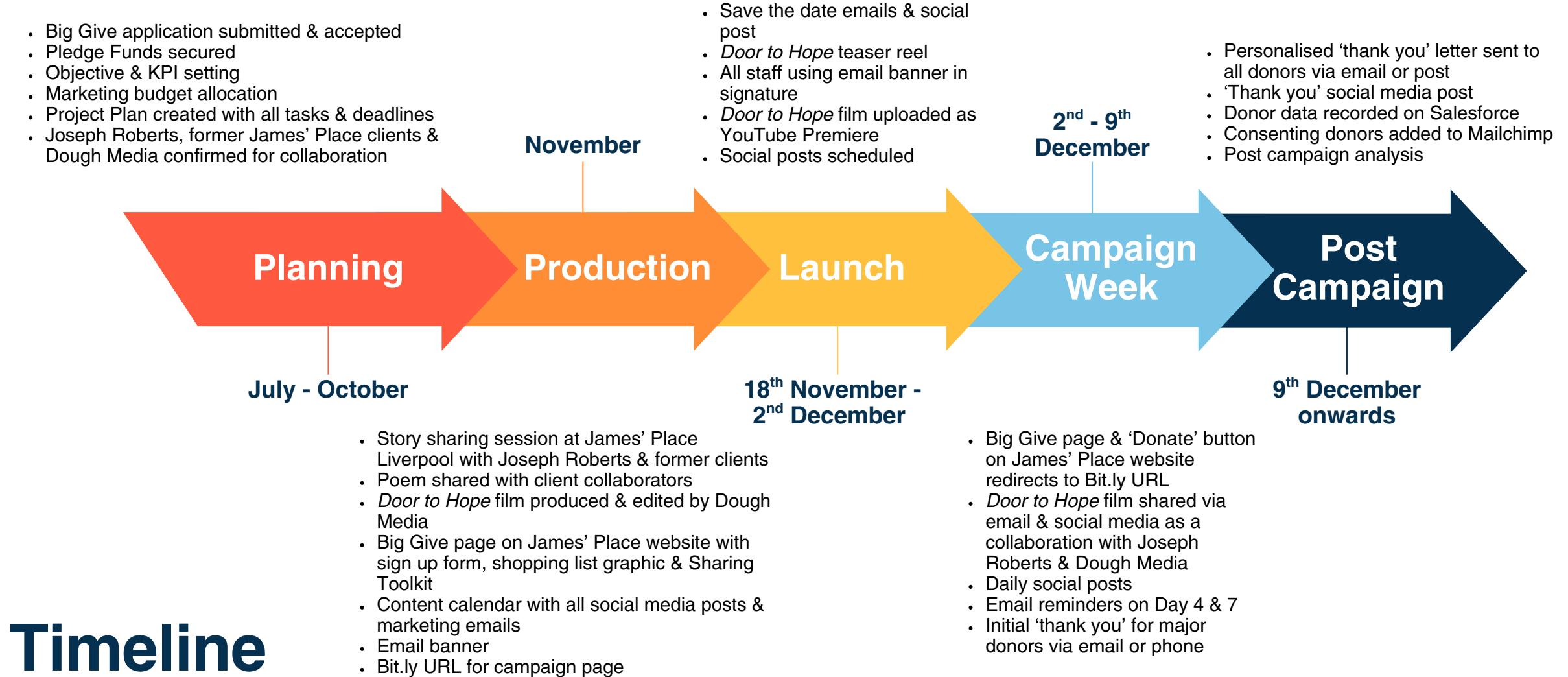
Our team typically creates all communication materials in-house. However, our ambitious fundraising target and secondary objectives provided a rationale for **marketing investment**.

We used a **total budget of £2,500** (in line with our ROI margins) to produce our hero video asset. This was the most efficient use of our budget because we could adapt and reuse what we created in future projects. We did not pay for any social media ads, relying on our compelling storytelling to connect with people and expand our reach organically.

Pledger Funds

We compiled a list of major gift donors within the last three years to speak to about the Christmas Challenge. The **match funding element of the Big Give was a key motivation** for our Pledger Fund donor, leading them to pledge the full £10,000. By sharing progress updates pre, during and post campaign, we have strengthened our relationship with this donor and they now have a deeper understanding of our work and aims.

Our conversations prior to securing the Pledger Funds led to **several large online donations from existing supporters** during Big Give week, providing opportunities for thanking and stewardship to further develop these relationships.



Co-creating our message

It was important to us from an ethical standpoint that the campaign message authentically conveyed the **lived experience of our beneficiaries**. We set out to co-create our hero asset with men who have come to James' Place for help.

Fundraising research has shown that **stories capture attention** far more effectively than statistics alone, leading to higher rates of engagement and donations. We often share stories from the men who use James' Place as case studies, however, for this campaign, we knew we needed to do something different to stand out in crowded social media feeds.

Poetry is especially powerful at **engaging emotion** and imagination — the very things that help a message cut through social media noise and move people to act. We set out to co-create a poem with our former clients that would resonate with donors and the men who use James' Place.

Two of our former clients who were part of the co-creation process kindly shared a quote about the experience:

“I’d like to thank the team at James’ Place for asking me to participate. It was very warm and welcoming and I felt like my contribution was valued. It’s a very worthy project and Joe is a very talented poet.” – Anonymous

“Sharing my experiences was another part in healing process and a chance for me to give something back to James’ Place.” – Darek

We contacted **Joseph Roberts**, a brilliant poet and composer from Liverpool who writes about mental health and masculinity, to invite him to be part of our campaign. We felt that Joseph’s direct poetic style and emotive delivery would appeal to both target audiences and so we were thrilled when Joseph agreed to write and perform an original poem for James’ Place.

Joseph visited our Liverpool centre to **meet with three former clients**, who shared their stories of suicidal crisis and the life-saving support they found at James’ Place. The conversation was recorded and turned into a transcript. Joseph then used their words to write the poem **Door to Hope**, which we shared with the men ahead of the campaign launch. This collaboration was essential to create something that **centred the lived experience of the men who use James’ Place**.

The poem title inspired our campaign tagline and imagery: **Keep the door to hope open for suicidal men**.

Our Big Give campaign page banner:



When we reached out to several Liverpool-based creative agencies asking for help producing the *Door to Hope* film, we received an enthusiastic offer from **Dough Media**, who explained that James' Place had previously supported a member of their team. We felt that this lived experience would bring invaluable insight to the filming process.

Dough Media shot and produced a beautiful film at our Liverpool centre. This meant that, **from conception to production, the *Door to Hope* poem and film were co-created by former clients of James' Place**. We have no doubt that this was key to the effectiveness of our campaign message as it brought an **authenticity** that connected with viewers on an emotional level.

We are extremely grateful to the men who generously contributed their time and words to create *Door to Hope* — on behalf of everyone at James' Place, **thank you**.

“Working on the film was a powerful experience, but what made it truly meaningful for me was seeing its wider impact on men’s suicide prevention. It’s a genuine honour to contribute to such an impactful cause.” – Niall, Dough Media

Watch the film



Mobilising support

With no budget for paid ads, we knew we needed to mobilise support and increase the number of people promoting our campaign beyond our small fundraising team. We identified two key groups: James' Place clinical and operations **staff** and **public supporters**.

Supporters

Not only did we want our supporters to donate during the Christmas Challenge, but we also wanted them to help **widen our reach**. Therefore, instead of relying on facts and statistics, we prioritised **emotive storytelling** to highlight James' Place's life-saving impact in our social media content. This generated a significant amount of **engagement** through likes, follows, comments and reposts (see Results section).

We also posted a **Sharing Toolkit** on our website for supporters who could not donate or had already donated. It included an **email template** and a **match funding shopping list**. Although we could not track how many people used these, it was a useful resource as it provided a clear destination when people asked for information, such as trustees.

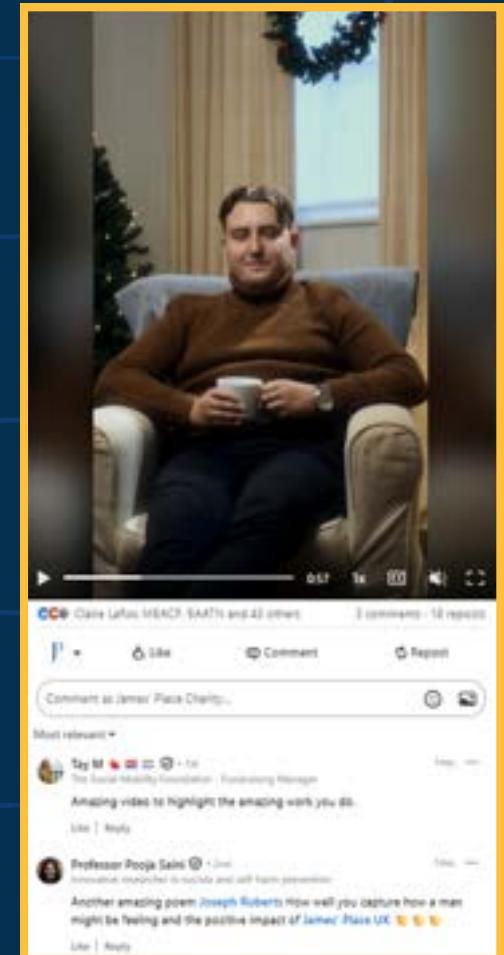


Staff

Sharing information about what we were trying to achieve with the Big Give campaign during all staff meetings helped to cultivate a **shared interest** in the campaign's success and make it clear how people could support.

One week before the campaign began, we requested that all James' Place staff include the banner below in their **email signature** with a hyperlink to the Big Give page on our website. This meant that email recipients could easily find out more about our campaign and how they could support with just one click.

We encouraged staff to **repost Big Give-related social media content** in the lead-up and during the campaign and to forward information to family and friends. It was great to see support for the campaign from across the organisation, especially on LinkedIn, which boosted our reach.



The Campaign

When it came to launching our Christmas Challenge campaign, our detailed **Project Plan** and **Content Calendar** made the process as smooth as possible.

The Project Plan listed every task that needed to be completed, assigned to a person and a deadline.

In the same spreadsheet, the Content Calendar listed every piece of content, the date when it would be shared, the platform where it would be shared (e.g., Instagram, James' Place website, Mailchimp), the copy/caption, a link to the graphic or video file and any notes (e.g., accounts to tag or collaborate with). This ensured any last-minute edits to captions or graphics could be found easily and all our pre-made content was posted on time.



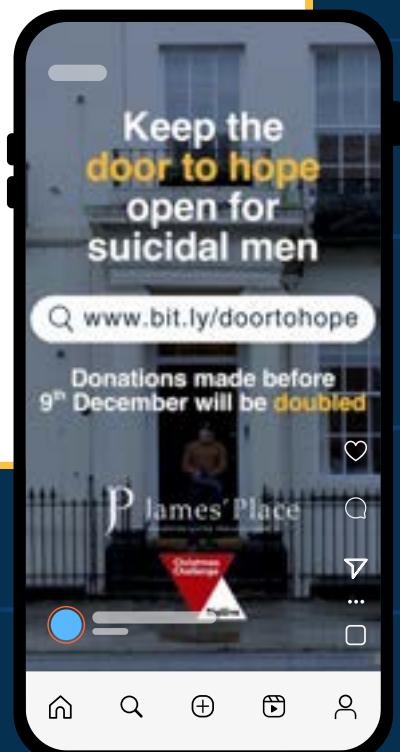
Website updates

Inspired by the Big Give case studies we read during the planning stage, we created a dedicated page on the James' Place website to display all Big Give-related information. This included a shopping list graphic illustrating the power of Big Give's match funding, an **embedded sign up form** for people who wanted to be reminded to donate during Big Give week, our fundraising target and the Sharing Toolkit. All calls to action in our pre-campaign comms directed people to this page (www.jamesplace.org.uk/biggive).

When the Christmas Challenge week began, **we redirected the [www.jamesplace.org.uk/biggive URL](http://www.jamesplace.org.uk/biggive) and our regular Donation page to our Big Give campaign page** to maximise traffic.

We also created a **memorable Bit.ly URL** for our Big Give campaign page (www.bit.ly/doortohope), which we used in the *Door to Hope* film and all comms during Big Give week. This made it as simple as possible for people to find our campaign page and reinforced our campaign tagline.

A screenshot of the James' Place website. At the top, there is a banner for the 'Big Give Christmas Challenge (2nd - 9th December): Double your donation'. Below the banner, there is a section titled 'James' Place' with three cards showing donation amounts: £25, £55, £1,000, and £2,000. Below these cards is a section titled 'One donation, twice the impact: sign up to be reminded to donate during the Big Give Christmas Challenge'. It includes fields for 'Email address' and 'First name', and a 'Contact Consent' checkbox. At the bottom of the page, there is a section with a 'Help us reach our Big Give Christmas Challenge target of £17,500 to be match-funded to £35,000 - enough to provide free, life-saving therapy for 18 suicidal men' and a 'Donations made before 9th December will be doubled' message.



Email marketing

Since May 2025, James' Place has been building an **Individual Giving email database** on Mailchimp consisting of donors and fundraisers who opt in via various fundraising platforms. Since people could donate at different times during the week, we used **audience segmentation** to avoid sending irrelevant donation reminders to those who had already donated.

To build momentum and anticipation for the campaign, we sent a **2-week save the date email** to the Individual Giving subscribers on 18th November, which included an impactful quote from one of our former clients and a clear call to action: "Sign up to be reminded when the Christmas Challenge begins." The link directed people to the Big Give page on our website, where they could enter their name and email address into the form. Subscribers were tagged by Mailchimp, creating a **Big Give Reminder segment** within the Individual Giving database. We sent a 1-week save the date email with the same call to action on 25th November, segmenting out the email addresses that had already signed up.

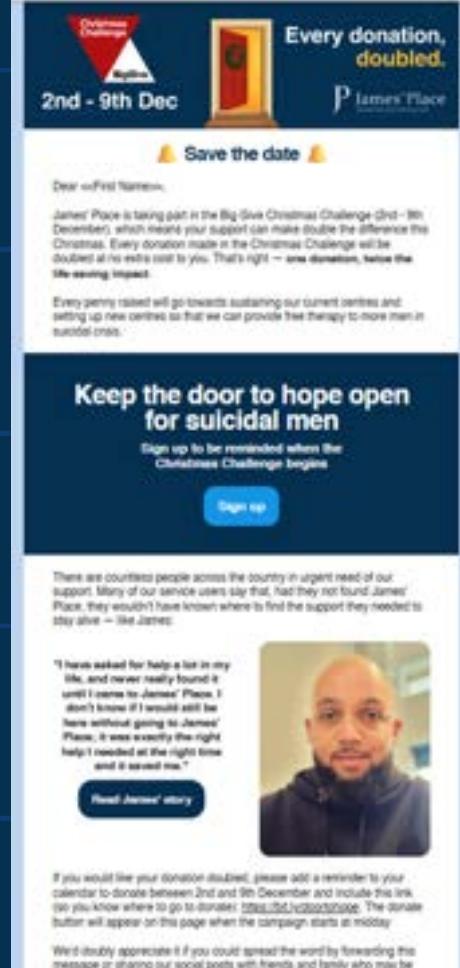
We use Postcards to design our emails and Mailchimp to personalise the greeting. All emails included the campaign banner, call to action and tagline.

In addition to our Individual Giving audience, James' Place has an email database of **Newsletter subscribers**. We included a save the date in our November Newsletter with the same call to action, which generated **three new subscribers** to the Individual Giving database via the embedded form. We also sent an email on Day 1 of Big Give week, sharing the *Door to Hope* film. Since not all Newsletter subscribers are interested in fundraising campaigns, we did not send any subsequent reminders.

We manually tagged any Individual Giving subscribers who donated to create a **Big Give Donors segment** within the database. This segment was then excluded from emails sent on Day 4 and Day 7 of Big Give week.

The following table outlines how we segmented recipients of each email sent before and during Big Give week:

Date	Email	Audience
18/11/2025	2-week save the date	Individual Giving
25/11/2025	1-week save the date	Individual Giving excluding Big Give Reminder
02/12/2025	Day 1: Watch <i>Door to Hope</i>	Individual Giving excluding Big Give Reminder
02/12/2025	Day 1: It's time to donate	Big Give Reminder
02/12/2025	Day 1: Watch <i>Door to Hope</i>	Newsletter
05/12/2025	Day 4: The story of James' Place	Individual Giving excluding Big Give Donors
08/12/2025	Day 7: Last chance to donate	Individual Giving excluding Big Give Donors



The screenshot shows two main sections of the website:

- Save the date:** A banner for the "Big Give Christmas Challenge" from 2nd - 9th Dec. It features the James' Place logo and a red ribbon icon. A "Save the date" button is present. The text explains that James' Place is taking part in the challenge to raise funds for men in suicidal crisis.
- Keep the door to hope open for suicidal men:** A section with a "Sign up" button. It includes a quote from someone who found support at James' Place and a "Read James' story" button. A photo of a man is shown.

Social Media

In our social media content, we prioritised **real-life stories** to connect with people emotionally and, consequently, drive engagement and inspire donations. We created our content with Instagram in mind because it is our most-followed account, but posted the same content on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Bluesky and YouTube as well.

We uploaded the *Door to Hope* film (landscape version) as a **YouTube Premiere** with a countdown to midday on 2nd December and directed people to the page via Instagram stories.

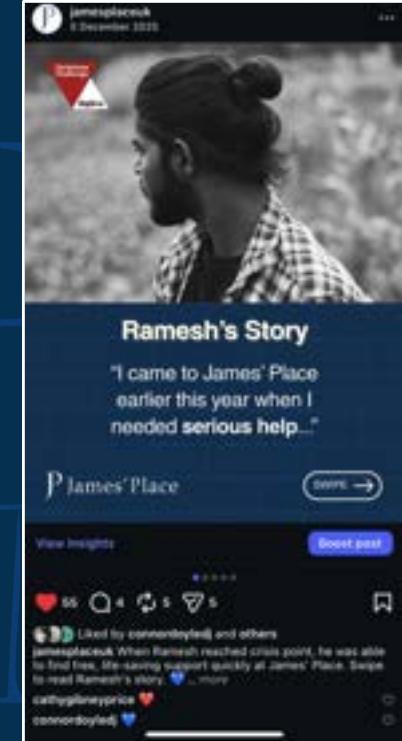
We created all posts, reels and captions in-house (besides the *Door to Hope* film).

For our **daily posts during Big Give week** (excluding Sunday), we highlighted stories from three former James' Place clients — **Ryan, James and Ramesh** — incorporating quotes and the match funding shopping list graphic to bring to life the profound impact of every doubled donation.

On Day 5, we shared a post telling the **story behind why James' Place was founded** and a quote from Clare (James' Mum), which performed exceptionally well (see Results section).

All posts are listed in the table on the right.

Date	Platform	Post	Call to Action
20 Nov 2025	Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Bluesky, X	Save the date	Sign up to be reminded to donate
28 Nov 2025		<i>Door to Hope</i> teaser reel	
2 Dec 2025	YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Bluesky, X	<i>Door to Hope</i> film	
3 Dec 2025	Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Bluesky, X	Ryan's Story	Keep the #DoorToHope open for suicidal men by donating at www.bit.ly/doortohope
4 Dec 2025		James' Story	
5 Dec 2025		Ramesh's Story	
6 Dec 2025		Story of James' Place	
8 Dec 2025		Last chance to donate	
9 Dec 2025		Thank you	N/A





jamesplaceuk
6 December 2025

In December 2006, 21-year-old James began feeling suicidal after an operation. He went to A&E for help, where he was assessed as low priority. After waiting several hours, James left without being seen.

A few days later, he took his own life.



View Insights Boost post

2,184 75 53 77

Liked by trippettspolo and others

jamesplaceuk Many men find themselves suddenly in suicidal crisis after challenging life events, like relationship breakdown, bereavement and job loss. These men are at a very high... more

calzy.foundation charlescostaofficial Phenomenal work you do

jamesplaceuk
3 December 2025

www.bit.ly/doortohope



"A few months ago, I stood at the edge of something vast and terrifying. I was exhausted; mentally, emotionally... James' Place gave me back my life."

Ryan, Former Client

View Insights Boost post

129 1 9 74

Liked by connordoyldj and others

jamesplaceuk Struggling with a break up, an overwhelming new job and ADHD diagnosis, Ryan reached crisis point. "I called 999 because I didn't know what else to do in that... more

jamesplaceuk
3 December 2025

James' Place

You donate £25

Big Give match funding turns it into

£50

Covers the cost of a welcome assessment with a suicidal man

www.bit.ly/doortohope

View Insights Boost post

129 1 9 4

Thanking

During Big Give week, we sent an initial ‘thank you’ to major donors either by email or phone.

We sent **official, personalised ‘thank you’ letters** to all donors after the campaign closed by email or post (depending on the contact information donors submitted). The letters included the total amount raised and celebrated each donor’s contribution.

We received some lovely replies from donors, including former clients, which felt incredibly rewarding after the many weeks of planning that had gone into the campaign.

‘Thank you’ letters ready to be posted:



Two donors were happy for us to include their replies in this case study:

Thank you for this [redacted] Will always support James Place after my experiences this year. I would not be here without the Charity's help.

Will hopefully be in touch in the new year to discuss some fundraising ideas
Thanks
Nathan

Thank you, I really appreciate your personal message.
We really admire what you do, and have close personal experience of the support you provide to men in suicidal crisis.
Thank you for all you do.
Best wishes,
Karen

A screenshot of a Facebook post from the page 'James Place Charity'. The post features a photo of a man with a beard holding an orange mug. Overlaid on the photo is text that reads 'Total raised: £38,872' and 'Thank you!' in large yellow letters. The post has a like button and a comment section below it. The Facebook interface shows other interactions like comments and shares.

Results

Donations

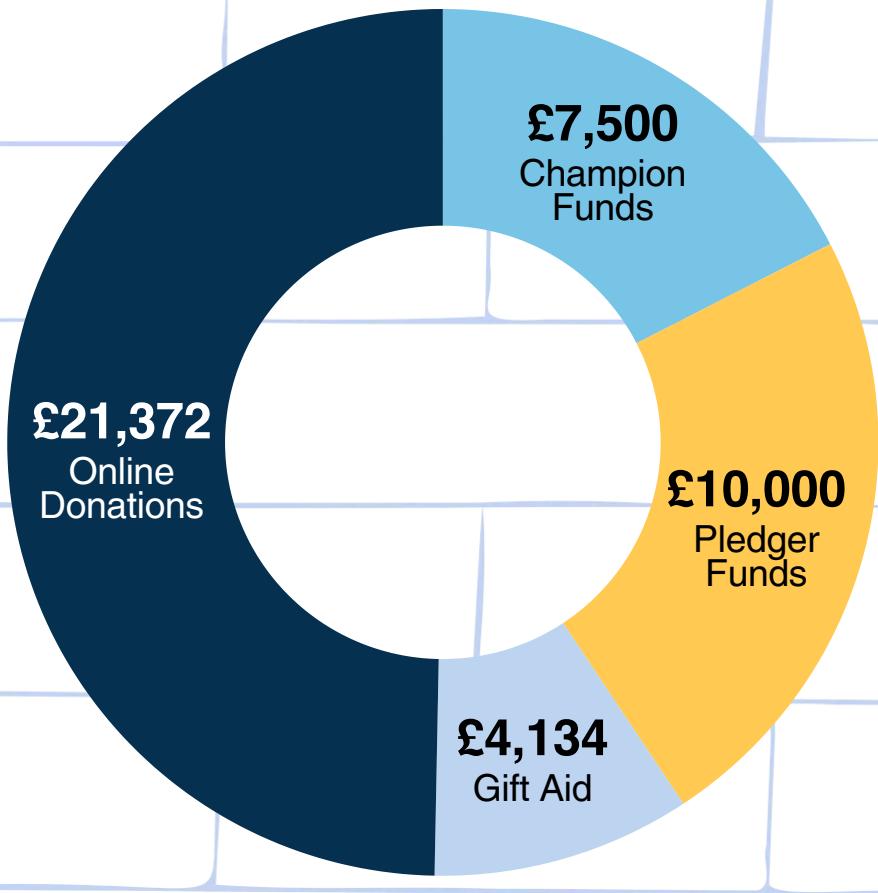
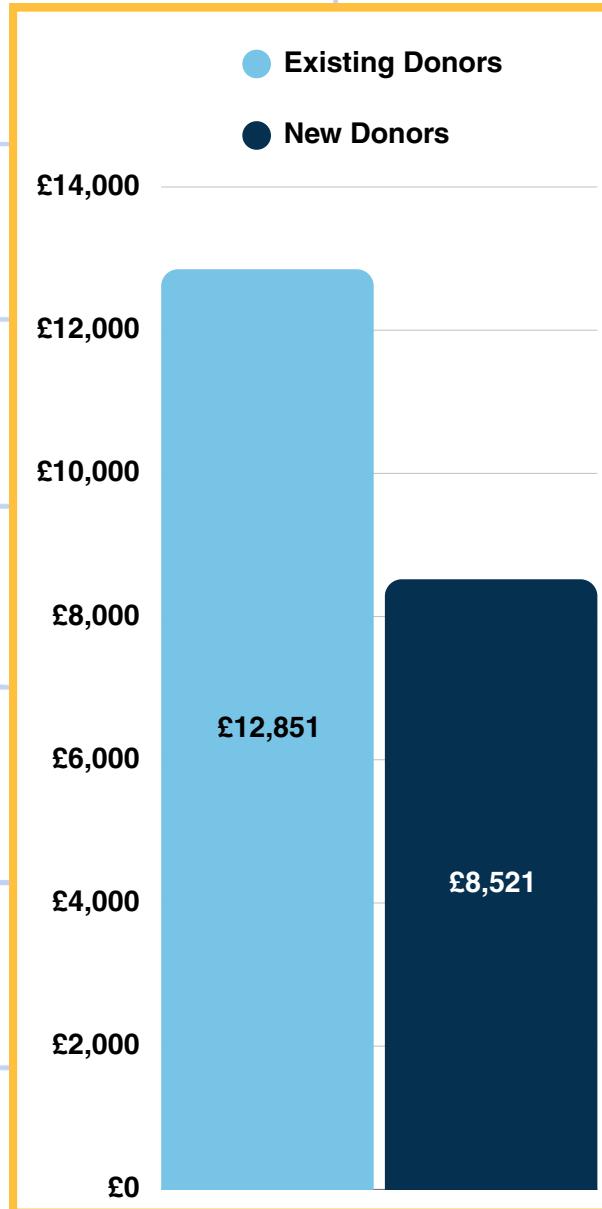
The campaign exceeded its primary objective, raising 111% of the overall target. This result demonstrates the strength of public support for our work and the effectiveness of the campaign strategy.

An additional positive outcome was the high proportion of new supporters, with **66% of the 101 online donors giving to James' Place for the first time**. This highlights the campaign's success in extending our reach and introducing new people to our life-saving work. We were very encouraged that the **second-largest online donation came from a completely new supporter** and another first-time donor has since set up a monthly donation.

In addition to income, the campaign delivered long-term value. **60% of donors opted in to receive marketing communications**, enabling us to continue building relationships and share the impact of their support.

Return on investment

Based on a net total of £42,374.88 (grand total minus fees), **every £1 spent generated a return of £16.95**. This strong return on investment reflects the power of our storytelling and the efficiency of the Big Give match funding model.



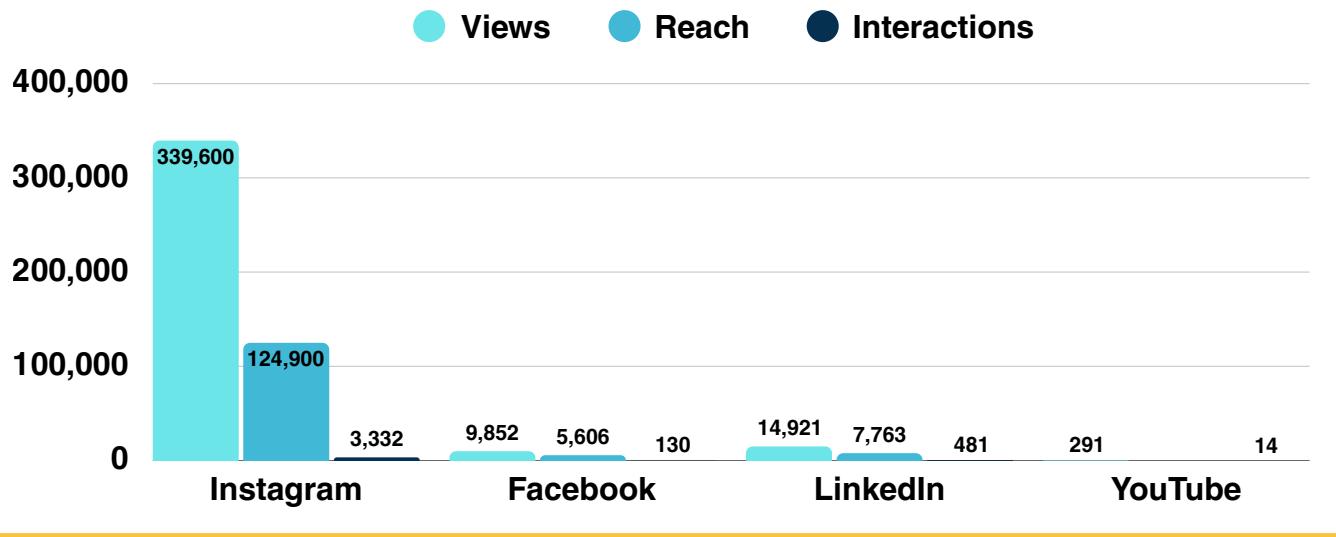
£43,006
Grand Total

Enough to provide
free, life-saving
therapy for
21 suicidal men

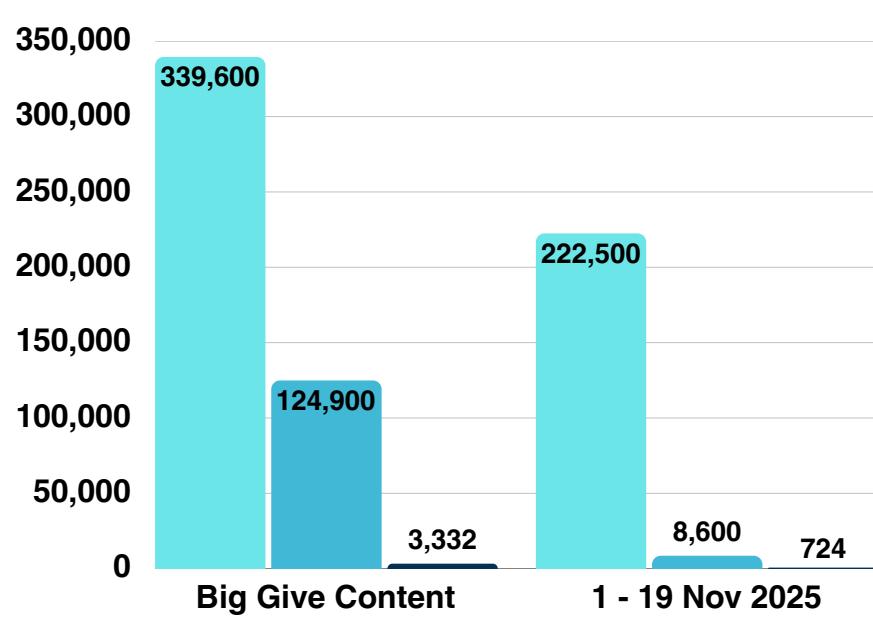
Social media analytics

Instagram was the standout platform for the campaign, significantly outperforming all other social channels. While we anticipated Instagram would be our strongest platform, we were surprised by how well the Big Give content performed compared to our standard content.

Performance on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, X and Bluesky was consistent with our usual benchmarks. While these platforms did not show the same uplift as Instagram, they continued to provide steady visibility of the campaign messaging for our followers.



Views Reach Interactions

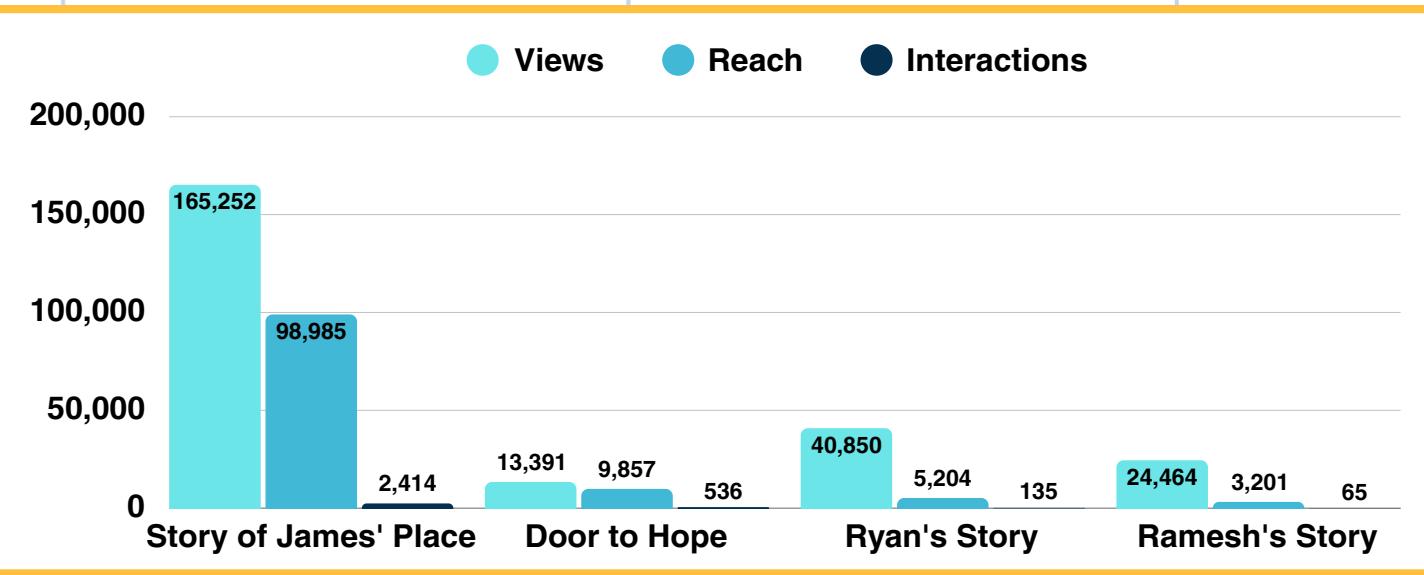


Instagram breakdown

The table on the left shows the cumulative views, reach and interactions for our Big Give content (posted between 20th November and 9th December) and for all Instagram posts over the previous 19 days.

Our Big Give content generated **1.5 times as many views** and **5x as many interactions** and reached an **exceptional 15 times the number of people** compared to our standard posting before the campaign.

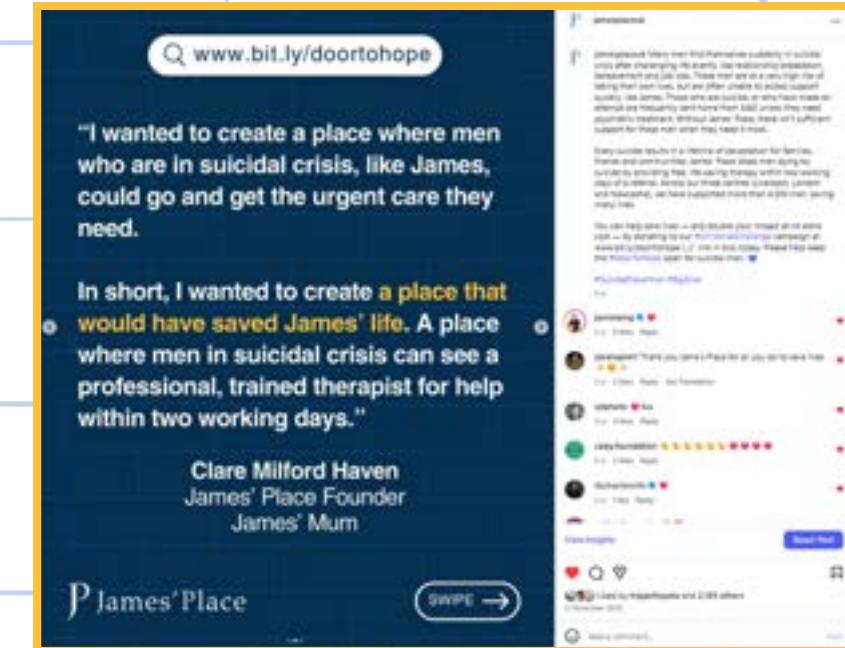




The table above shows a breakdown of the most effective Big Give posts on Instagram. The Story of James' Place post and *Door to Hope* film reached the most unique accounts and generated the highest volume of interactions. In fact, the **Story of James' Place post is our best-performing social media post ever**, driving 2,414 interactions, 840 profile visits, 167 new followers and 103 external link taps.

The **comments** left by supporters, former clients and high-profile individuals were deeply moving and demonstrated how strongly the content resonated with people.

This organic engagement helped amplify the campaign's reach and credibility, contributing to an increase of over **1,800 Instagram followers** during the campaign period.



A comment on the *Door to Hope* film from a former client and fundraiser:

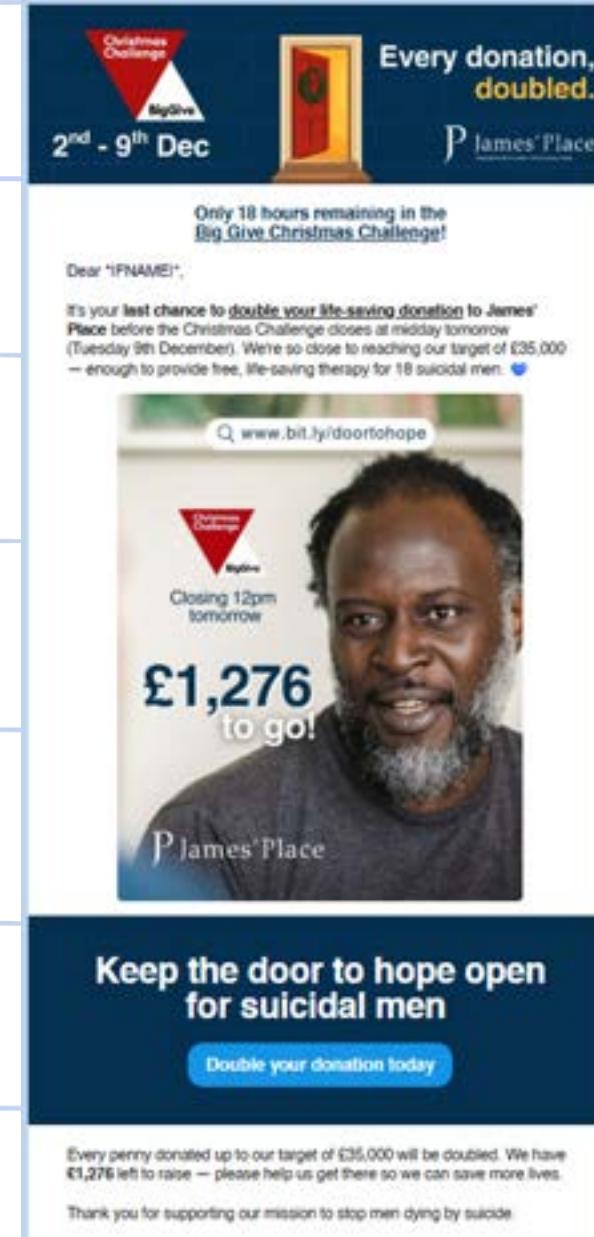
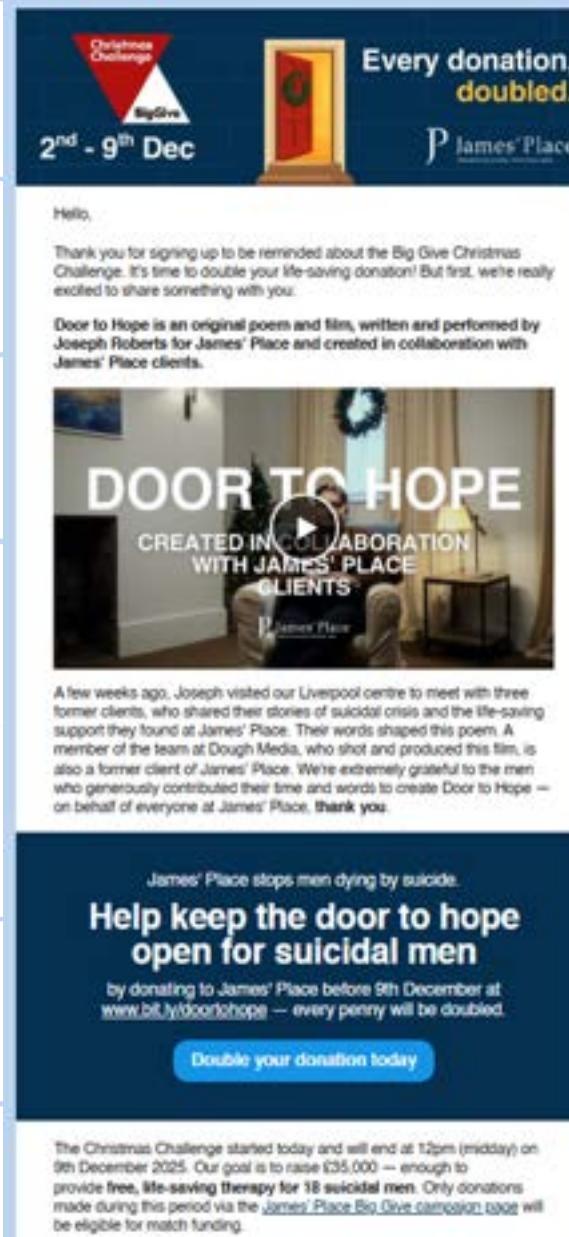


Email analytics

Email marketing played a key role in driving donations. Campaign emails sent to our Individual Giving audience achieved an average **click through rate of 4.7%** (the upper end of industry benchmarks). This suggests that the messaging and calls to action were compelling and relevant to recipients.

The average **open rate was 21.9%**, slightly lower than our usual performance. This was likely due to the strong 'Donate' call to action, which may have triggered marketing filters preventing emails from reaching subscribers' primary inboxes.

Despite this, email proved highly effective in converting interest into action: **5.2% of our Individual Giving audience donated** to the campaign and **35% of online donations came from mailing list subscribers** (across the Individual Giving and Newsletter audiences). This reinforces the importance of email as a reliable and high-converting channel during major appeals.



Evaluation

What went well

As the results show, we successfully **exceeded our primary (to raise £35,000) and secondary objectives** (see Page 5).

The **co-creation of *Door to Hope* with former James' Place clients** was particularly impactful. The Instagram metrics show that the film **resonated strongly with donors, supporters, other former clients and James' Place staff**. We received a high volume of positive verbal feedback. The process of creating the poem and film initiated new creative relationships with Joseph Roberts and Dough Media and was an enjoyable and empowering experience for those involved. Everyone was invited to the Festive Celebration at our Liverpool centre, which was a great opportunity to say 'thank you' and celebrate the campaign's success in person.

Reach and engagement on Instagram exceeded expectations, significantly expanding our audience and attracting many **new donors**.

Email marketing performed well in terms of **click through rates and conversion to donors**, confirming its effectiveness as a fundraising channel. The significant number of **new subscribers opting in** via Big Give will enable us to continue the supporter journey.

What did not go so well

Email **open rates** were lower than our usual averages, indicating we need to improve deliverability during fundraising appeals.

Social media performance on platforms other than Instagram remained relatively **static**, suggesting that our campaign approach did not translate as effectively across all channels.

What would we do differently

In future Big Give campaigns, we would set a **more ambitious fundraising target (>£40,000)** in line with the strong results achieved.

Our **social media strategy should be adapted** more deliberately for each platform, rather than taking a uniform approach.

We will **trial different email tactics** throughout the year to improve open rates so we can ensure our subscribers are made aware of fundraising appeals.

We would test encouraging supporters to hold **fundraising events** during Big Give week to further boost income and engagement.





Thank you to Big Give
and to all our donors,
fundraisers, supporters
and staff who are keeping
our door to hope open for
men in suicidal crisis.

J James' Place

