

I CARE FOR YOU

James Anderson, plumber and founder of DEPHER speaks about what really matters in life.

Words by James Anderson and Louis Bohrtlingk

James Anderson became shocked and saddened to discover the low quality of life many of his elderly, disabled, vulnerable and low income customers endured due to poor quality heating and plumbing. As well as being ineffective, in many cases it was potentially life-threatening.

In 2017 he set up DEPHER – Disability and Elderly Plumbing and Heating Emergency Repair. The organisation relies on public donations to cover the cost of labour and materials, allowing it to provide free services during winter months and discounted services at other times. DEPHER provides urgent emergency works such as repairing gas leaks, installing new boilers and heating systems – and providing running hot water to those without it.

Since DEPHER was launched, they have supported over two million people and during the pandemic also branched out into helping distribute personal protective equipment and food to his community. In 2021, DEPHER and James were awarded a Points of Light Award by the Office of the Prime Minister.

JAMES SHARES ABOUT HIS LIFE



“I left home when I was 18 and I ended up sleeping on the streets. To get out of that situation, a couple put me up in the garage and gave me a job. It saved my life.

The feeling to know that somebody actually cares, is priceless. Knowing that someone will stop, and even sit down for a minute and says: "Come here, let's talk, why, how, what do you need?" That's all it takes.

He shares: “We're helping an elderly gentleman who's got mental health issues and he's been without heating and hot water for six years. His boiler basically broke down. Everyone said no to him. Everyone said they can't help, won't help, so we've said yes. He couldn't afford a new boiler. A job like this would usually cost around about £2500 - £3500, depending on the amount of adjustments on the pipework. We cover all costs of the materials, and we cover all costs of the labour as well. And this Christmas he's going to be warm, have hot water, and be a happy guy. It saved his life.”

“The importance of giving back to the community and the importance of looking after vulnerable people is that; you could be Bill Gates, you could be Lord Sugar, you could be the richest man on the planet. But when you're born you're born with nothing. When you die you can't take it with you. You can't take your big house, your big flat and your big car, you go with nothing. You either go in the ground or you get burnt and that's it; you're gone.”

What you do in life, let's you live forever. People remember what you've done.

“We have a responsibility as human beings to be humane to each other and to care for each other. It doesn't matter about your colour; it doesn't matter about your religion; it doesn't matter about your beliefs. It doesn't matter what area you come from or what language you speak. What matters is: do you love me; do I love you; do we help each other? That's what it's all about and that's what should be happening now.”

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