

**For release 31/1/2021**

## **Lepra celebrates 25 years of its historic partnership with Blue Peter on World Leprosy Day**

COLCHESTER, Essex - Twenty-five years ago, Lepra was selected as Blue Peter's charity of choice and a staggering £2,635,405 was raised for leprosy.

Lepra was able to use the funds to upgrade and modernise its laboratory in Hyderabad, which became known as the Blue Peter Public Health and Research Centre. The centre has since become a cornerstone of leprosy research and treatment across India.

Lepra is asking for the public's help, on the 25th anniversary of that historic fundraising appeal, to raise £1 million this year to continue their vital work.

Stuart Miles, former Blue Peter presenter and Lepra ambassador, visited the centre in 2018 and says the impact his visit had on him was profound.

He says, "When you see the doctors arrive and take the hand of someone with leprosy, reassure them and issue a simple course of drug treatment to help cure them, it's inspirational. Something so simple that many of us take for granted, the reassurance of a medical professional, made me realise the importance of Lepra's work.

To think that something you were involved with has made a difference to people's lives, does make you feel a part of something hugely important."

Leprosy remains one of the least understood and most widely neglected tropical diseases in the world.

Lepra's work supports people affected by leprosy through prevention, diagnosis, disability aids and mental health support.

Stuart says, "This year, I have found myself thinking often of people affected by leprosy, for whom healthcare is already less accessible and for whom the pandemic is just one more thing to add to their list of concerns."

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on leprosy services, with 63% less cases diagnosed in the last two quarters of 2020, compared to the same time in 2019.

The number of women and children being diagnosed with leprosy has decreased by 70%, compared to this time last year.

Lepra's historic partnership with Blue Peter has enabled them to reach even more people affected by leprosy, and the Blue Peter Public Health and Research Centre has been instrumental in the fight against COVID-19 as well as leprosy.

To find out more about Lepra's Blue Peter appeal and how the public can get involved, please contact us on +44 (0)1206 216700, email us at [lepra@lepra.org.uk](mailto:lepra@lepra.org.uk) or visit the landing page [www.lepra.org.uk/get-involved/blue-peter-25-years-on](http://www.lepra.org.uk/get-involved/blue-peter-25-years-on)

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**Notes for Editors**

**About Lepra and leprosy**

Our Vision - A world free from prejudice and disability due to leprosy

We are secular, open to all religions, races, classes, gender. A positive decision to favour no one and everyone. We support those who are subject to the most neglect from existing services, as well as continuing to work with those who are not specifically marginalised or ignored.

Since 1924, we prioritised being evidence-led. Being evidence-led culminated in the adoption of Dapsone after it was observed being used by veterinarians. Thus Lepra working with the Indian Government, became the first to find and use a cure for leprosy. Being evidence-led in the contemporary context, means remaining committed to doing what is best for people affected by leprosy.

Lepra works internationally across the leprosy spectrum including transmission, disability prevention and medical rehabilitation (DPMR) and advocacy. Active case finding is critical, a fact which people now recognise as the COVID-19 pandemic rages.

Lepra works to beat leprosy in India, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Zimbabwe by finding, diagnosing and treating people affected by the disease. By raising awareness, pushing for early detection and supporting people living with disabilities caused by leprosy, Lepra works towards a day when this disease no longer destroys lives.

Last year, the charity reached 260,893 people through diagnosis, treatment and care. It reached a further 995,659 people through health education and events to raise awareness of leprosy and other neglected diseases.

Find out more about Lepra on its website and social media channels:

Website: [www.lepra.org.uk](http://www.lepra.org.uk)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LepraUK>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LEPRAUK/>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LEPRAHinA>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/LepraUK/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/lepra/>



We will beat  
leprosy together