



connect

Spring Newsletter 2010

 **The Connection**
at St Martin-in-the-Fields

colin's update



The combination of the economic situation and the cold weather has seen our busiest winter ever.

Our building has been bursting at the seams at all hours of the day and night and we have

broken all records in terms of the numbers coming through the door, with many of these new people. What has been especially gratifying is the willingness and ability of our staff and volunteers to cope with these unprecedented circumstances, and I felt particularly proud that we opened on time every day when the rest of the country seemed to have become snowbound.

Despite the impression of being under siege, we have started 2010 with a renewed commitment to maintain and develop our employment and training services. This may seem foolhardy as one reads daily about even more unemployment. Despite this, entering employment and training remains the biggest single route out of homelessness. With an array of government initiatives in place to create opportunities for training and with the central London economy still looking strong, we are determined to maintain all of our services which are aimed at helping as many people as possible escape out of homelessness.

In the short term we are having some difficulty in securing funds for our services as government contracts seem to be going to much larger and often private providers but we are finding that many of our corporate supporters and businesses are particularly

interested in helping ex-homeless people find work, and in some cases fill their own skills and labour shortages.

We have also practised what we preach, having established a successful social enterprise called the Connection Crew, which employs people in the events industry. After three successful years the Crew is now able to stand on its own two feet, and pay its way (including a percentage of its surplus back to us), and as a result we are now setting it up as independent company and it will shortly move to its own premises.

Finally, we have just been awarded a contract by Westminster City Council to help co-ordinate and develop employment and training provision for homeless people across the whole borough. Our view is that while there is a lot of good work in this area, a lot of hostels are doing the same thing. There is therefore a huge amount of potential for us all to work together to make better use of our resources, and to provide a much better experience for homeless people.

Being seen as a potential leader in this field is a marvellous boost, and hopefully we will be well positioned to help homeless people take advantage of the job vacancies which will occur when the economy recovers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Glover', written over a horizontal line.

Colin Glover
Chief Executive



Mark Kendall Employment Support Worker Workspace Team

I joined the Workspace Team at The Connection at St Martin's, in September 2008. Before this, I worked for a national careers advice service for adults. As an Employment Support Worker, I am essentially a Careers Adviser with an employer facing element. This means working with our corporate partners to offer supported work trial, and employment opportunities to our clients, and to arrange CV Writing or Interview Skills workshops led by volunteers from these companies. I always enjoy helping people with their CV's, especially as the difference it makes for someone who has never before had a CV, is so huge.

An average day might involve helping people to find and apply for jobs or to source suitable

training, either from our own provision (ESOL, IT, Employability, Financial Literacy) or something else further afield. We are often able to fund short vocational training opportunities, when essential for a client's chosen career, such as food hygiene or construction skills' health and safety certificates.

As well as careers advice, we also provide practical help with the other matters. For example, we can set someone up with an email account and a voicemail box, so that they are contactable by employers and others. Very important when you don't have an address!

It's great when you help someone into work but the support doesn't stop there. To sustain employment, a client may need help with the transition from benefits, money/debt management or, very commonly, help with obtaining a national insurance number or opening a bank account into which to have their salary paid.

You cannot be everything to everyone so awareness of what other services are available is the key. This knowledge takes a while to build up and I am always conscious of how much I still have to learn! However, working in a social care setting, I believe our work goes way beyond that of most careers advisers, and to me this is what makes it most interesting and rewarding.

Because our service is holistic and our clients can use it for as long as they need, we are able to see them make real progress at work, and the only feeling better than someone finding a job is when you hear someone say, "Hello.... I am in the middle of getting promoted in my job. Thanks to you and the team for all your support".

about us

The Connection at St. Martin's is the busiest centre for homeless people in the UK. What makes us unique is the range of services we provide under one roof to help turn people's lives around. For many, contact with us is a catalyst for change. With our support they begin to make decisions which move their lives from chaos and uncertainty to something more stable and sustainable. Our services include:

- Street outreach
- A Day Centre & Night Centre
- Housing advice and referrals
- Support for mental health and substance misuse issues
- Education, training and employment service

If you would like to make a donation, please visit our website at **www.connection-at-st-martins.org.uk** or call us during office hours on 020 7766 5555. Alternatively, you can send a cheque to the Appeals Office at the address below, making it payable to The Connection at St Martin's.

The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields

12 Adelaide Street, London, WC2N 4HW

telephone
020 7766 5555

fax
020 7930 9194

email
appeals@cstm.org.uk

website
www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk

how you can help

Regular donations

Regular donations mean that we can continue to provide life-changing services to homeless people.

- £10 will pay for hot meals and showers for 10 people
- £15 will pay for 3 rough sleepers to receive housing advice and be referred to accommodation
- £25 will pay for 10 job-seeking homeless people to receive careers advice and job search support
- £50 will help to pay for a homeless person to take our 6 week training course which greatly improves their chances of getting off the streets and securing employment.

If you would like to make a regular donation towards our work, you can print off a standing order from our website **www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk** or call 020 7766 5555 and we will send the form out to you.

Leave a gift in your Will

Including a gift to The Connection at St Martin's in your Will is one of the ways that you can make a huge difference to the lives of homeless people for many years to come. Your valuable contribution will ensure that future generations of homeless people can continue receiving the help and support they need to help turn their lives around. If you would like to talk your decision through with one of our fundraising team first, or for further information about our work, please do not hesitate to contact our Appeals Team on 020 7766 5555 or email appeals@cstm.org.uk

We have a proven track record in making a real difference to the lives of homeless people but need your help in doing this. It costs £4.2 million a year to run The Connection at St Martin's – 95p in every pound donated is spent directly on our services for homeless people. We couldn't do this without your support – thank you.

Workspace – employment, training and education

Never knowingly unprepared...



Workspace employment, training and education session

Workspace is our award-winning Employment and Training programme and offers a wide range of services to help homeless people find employment or learn new skills.

Almost all of our service users are unemployed and economically inactive. Many have no qualifications, limited work experience and lack the confidence and skills to lead an independent life. Some have poor basic skills or need English language support.

We offer accredited training courses in ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) and in Computer skills (CLAIT 1&2). We also run courses in Employability and Financial Literacy which are on track to being accredited. All courses are delivered by our qualified trainers,

and result in valuable qualifications. We also refer clients to a very wide range of external training courses and colleges.

We have established strong relationships with local companies and currently have over 50 individuals from a range of companies who regularly run workshops attended by our clients.

The focus of these workshops are on building interviewing skills, CV-writing, confidence-building, and our clients find contact with professionals motivating and insightful. They also provide 2-week work trials so that clients can gain valuable work experience and references, try different jobs and learn key employability skills. These opportunities are particularly valuable in the current labour market.



Dickson's story

One recent success story was our work with Dickson, a refugee from Rwanda. A softly-spoken and amiable young man, Dickson was clearly a readily employable candidate, simply in need of the right opportunity. Having trained as a welder, Dickson was finding this niche market difficult to break into. He wanted to give his CV a customer service slant, so that he could apply for accessible jobs in retail.

An opportunity arose when John Lewis, one of our corporate partners, offered us a supported work trial at their flagship store in Oxford Street. We mentioned this two week placement to Dickson, who jumped at the chance of gaining relevant work experience in retail to add to his CV.

John Lewis placed Dickson in their Menswear Dept and put together a carefully structured itinerary to make his experience as beneficial as possible. Dickson completed the placement and during his time there, he received three 'customer appreciations' (positive comments slips), and feedback from his colleagues was that he was 'exceptional'. So impressed were they with Dickson, that after only 2 weeks, John Lewis offered him a full-time temporary contract on the shop floor.

At time of writing, Dickson is still working at John Lewis and has recently been made a partner! Dickson's recent experience should certainly help him develop a successful career in retail, but in any event, Workspace will continue to offer support to him if needed. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

How you can help us

We rely heavily on donations to keep our employment, training and education service running, and need your help now, more than ever.

To make a donation please visit our website – www.connection-at-smartins.org.uk where you can make a secure payment online.

Alternatively, you can donate over the phone by calling 0207 766 5555 during office hours or send a cheque made payable to **The Connection at St Martin's** to Appeals Office, 12 Adelaide Street, London WC2N 4HW.

95p in every £ donated is spent directly on our services for homeless people

For more information, news and events visit our website www.connection-at-smartins.org.uk

Meet Jamie



Jamie is 23 and was extremely vulnerable when he first came to us. He found it difficult to communicate and was encouraged to attend our Art and Creative Writing groups

These activities slowly helped to build his confidence, and a picture and poem of his were featured as part of this year's BBC R4 St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal. The Appeal has broken all records by raising over £850,000. Poet Laureate Andrew Motion left a message of support for the Appeal and congratulated Jamie saying:

"...congratulations to all concerned, and especially to Jamie. The poem is very touching, and reminds us how poetry itself belongs in life..."

The Wanderer (excerpt)

I'm the t-shirt that refuses to tear or fray
I'm the Spring waiting patiently for
Summer to arrive
I'm the green tomato waiting for the
nourishment to turn me red and ripe
I'm the fox foraging in the wilderness...

Commemoration Service

November's Annual Commemoration service at St Martin-in-the-Fields was as moving as always with over 200 names being read out. Reflections, readings and music were used to remember the lives of homeless and formerly homeless people who died in 2009.

Christmas Update

Christmas was busy for our Day Centre team. The Centre was open from Christmas Day to the Bank Holiday Monday serving up delicious food, warmth & gifts to just under 500 people over the 4 days. Staff and volunteers worked hard to make it a special Christmas for those who would otherwise be on the streets.

A big thank you to everyone who bought our Christmas cards, and who gave generously not only this Christmas, but throughout the year.

Open Mic

We held our first ever Open Mic evening with Streetwise Opera on January 27th. The event was open to both members of the public, and clients who are regular attendees of our singing workshop. It was a fun night and a huge success.

Real Rough Guide Walking group

We are currently piloting 'The Real Rough Guide to London' – this new project will train our clients to deliver guided walks of central London, raising awareness of homeless past and present, with a view to opening it up to members of the public.

events

Virgin London Marathon

This year's Virgin London Marathon takes place on Sunday 25th April 2010. We wish all of our runners the very best of luck. If you are interested in taking up the challenge in 2011 for London's homeless and would like to help us to raise funds towards our work, please email events@cstm.org.uk or contact our Events Team on 020 7766 5555

Annual Pilgrimage

The Annual Pilgrimage to Canterbury will take place from 28th – 31st May 2010. The Pilgrimage is a truly memorable experience. It takes 4 days to complete and you can walk all the way or join us at various points along the way. If you would like to join us and raise funds for The Connection at St Martin's email pilgsec@cstm.org.uk or call 020 7766 5522

Art Exhibition

Our next art show will take place from 21st to 27th June 2010, in The Crypt Gallery at St Martin-in-the-Fields. The art group at The Connection not only helps people express themselves artistically, but is a space where people can find their voice and build their confidence. You will have an opportunity to buy most of the work on display. If you would like to attend the Private View on Monday 21st June, please email events@cstm.org.uk or call 020 7766 5555

Asics British 10k London Run

The annual Asics British 10K London Run will be taking place this year on Sunday July 11th 2010. We have guaranteed places available for runners who would like to help raise funds to help keep our services running. For an application pack and to find out more, please email events@cstm.org.uk or contact our Events Team on 020 7766 5555