

Inspiring photos from  
our photography group

# connect

Spring Newsletter 2011

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

Cover image by Simon Denis

# colin's update



It seems like only yesterday since I was updating you on what's been happening here. I mentioned in the winter newsletter that we're going through a period of uncertainty earmarked

by government cuts which will impact on the voluntary sector, more about this later.

As I think back over the last few months the weather stands out because of the impact it has on our clients and the way we operate. It was one of one of the coldest winters on record with sustained heavy snow and frost in the run up to Christmas which put increased demand on our services. During this cold snap we were accommodating up to 100 people in our emergency night shelter, which normally sleeps 40.

However, the cold didn't dampen people's spirits and Christmas day was a resounding success. In fact, we were so busy that we put on two lunch sittings so that everyone could enjoy a roast but couldn't have done it without the help of our volunteers, staff and corporate partners – so thank you.

In the day centre our activity groups have become more creative and homeless people have been producing some inspired digital work including photographs and short films. In this newsletter there's a feature on the photography workshop and the unique photos provide a very personal insight into the individual's experiences of being homeless in London. The work is outstanding and the

groups have received awards from TalkTalk and the Media Trust. Read more inside.

As I was saying earlier like most voluntary organisations The Connection will be affected by the cuts in government funding. We will receive less statutory support this year, which will be around 45% of our total income rather than 50% as before, and are looking to make savings wherever we can across the organisation, while still preserving all of our core services.

However, it will be a challenging time as we will have fewer resources, but are likely to see an increase in the number of homeless people at our door, which means our services are more essential now than ever before.

There will also be more competition for securing alternative sources of funding as more charities apply for the same grants so we will need to be more creative and innovative in the ways we fundraise to compensate for this potential shortfall.

However, despite these difficult times we are very grateful to the continued help from you our supporters, who we need now more than ever. Every donation we receive, no matter how big or small will make a difference to us.

We remain positive about our future and know that despite changes our strong services will see us through and we will continue to reduce rough sleeping in Westminster.

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

Colin Glover  
Chief Executive

# Getting Some Headspace Pays Dividends

Every Friday afternoon Project Worker, Billy and Omar, co-facilitator, run a substance misuse awareness group called Headspace. It's a unique group in Westminster and the sessions cover a broad range of topics including advice on substance misuse, how to prevent harm and information on how to improve health.

The sessions are incredibly popular and Billy and Omar use very creative ways to get people involved and to 'think outside the box' and leave homelessness behind. For example, in one workshop they asked people to imagine they were a City Banker that had a drug problem.

The group then had the choice to draw, act, sing, dance or talk about how they felt. Exercises like this help people distance themselves from homelessness and think about addiction in a new light, realising that the symptoms of drug use are the same irrespective of who you are.

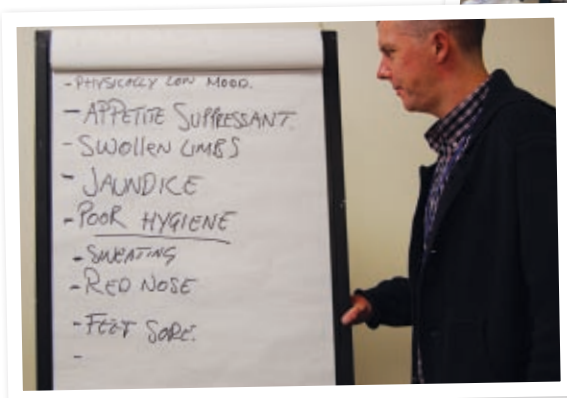
The informal setting of the group gives people the chance to share their experiences and receive support from other people in a similar situation, and get the help they need.

What's more, Headspace is achieving some excellent outcomes! Some highlights of the group this year include:

- The group has successfully attracted 90 people when the target was 50.
- 100% of participants had more knowledge and awareness of substance misuse issues and general health issues after attending Headspace.
- 85% of clients reported that they had adopted safer practices in their use of drugs/alcohol, and 100% said they would certainly use the information they had learned in the future.



Billy taking the Headspace group



## 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 & 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 [www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk](http://www.connection-at-stmartins.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](mailto:appeals@cstm.org.uk)

### website

[www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk](http://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** could pay for an in-depth assessment to investigate a rough sleeper's situation and how we can help
- **£15** could help 3 rough sleepers to receive housing advice and be referred to accommodation
- **£25** could give a homeless person help and advice on substance misuse and refer them to appropriate services
- **£50** could enrol a homeless person into 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 form from our website or call us on 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](mailto: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 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.**

## The gift of photography

# A Revealing Look at Life On The Streets Of London

Last summer we established a photography workshop to give homeless people the chance to document their lives on the streets of London with disposable cameras.

Over the course of several weeks the group has been sharing their photos which have provided a fascinating insight into their personal experiences of homelessness.

It's a very creative workshop and the group has been experimenting with different digital technology to develop audio slideshows using their photos and words. Homeless people can feel that they don't have a voice so developing short films has given people a chance to express themselves and challenge stereotypes of homelessness. Have a look at them on our Youtube channel.

Each photographer's style is unique and interesting themes have emerged from their photographs. Week by week they've been

building a portfolio and uploading their photos on Flickr, take a look at them here: [www.flickr.com/photos/homelessphotography](http://www.flickr.com/photos/homelessphotography)

The group is ambitious and has huge potential and recently won TalkTalk's Digital Heroes Award. The accolade recognises communities which are using digital technology to empower marginalised groups. This endorsement from TalkTalk has really helped motivate members of the group and the sky's the limit!

Members of the group also scooped the Media Trust's Inspiring Voices award which commends groups using digital media to empower people.

The group has lots of potential and wants to build on what it's learnt so far. It's exploring the possibility of developing a website which will create a community for homeless people where they can contribute and engage. It's early stages but we'll keep you updated!



Photos by members of the group

### An Altruistic Act

We are so grateful to The Keay family for their generous donation of £55,000 towards our work.

It's a heartwarming story. Mr and Mrs Keay were dedicated volunteers here and when they passed away last year their children Martin, Alison and Hilary decided to donate the inheritance money to us. The money will provide vital support to our core services and as a thank you to the Keay's generosity an engraved plaque has been displayed in the Activities Room for everyone to see.

If you would like to find out more about the ways you can make a donation towards our work or leave a legacy please contact us on 020 7766 5555.

### Unwanted Mobile Phones & Ink Cartridges

We can recycle used ink cartridges and old mobile phones to raise funds for The Connection. Each item is worth between £1 and £150 to us! If you have any items to donate then please post them to us labelled 'Recycling', or call 020 7766 5555 for further information, a Freepost bag, or a collection box for your workplace.

### Get Your Copy of Our Annual Review

This year's Annual Review provides information about our services, achievements and a gallery of creative work by homeless people. You can download it from the *About Us* section of our website or alternatively if you would like us to send you a copy please email [appeals@cstm.org.uk](mailto:appeals@cstm.org.uk)

## The Stress Busters!

The Connection at St Martin's will be piloting a new workshop which aims to help homeless people understand stress, its causes and learn effective strategies for coping with it.

Stress manifests itself in many ways and if left unaddressed can get worse and impact on a person's well being. The workshops will be very interactive and encourage people to talk about stress and how they deal with it. Each week the group will be taught a series of techniques, all designed to combat stress. This will include meditation, breathing, music and relaxation.

The participants will be encouraged to take steps, no matter how large or small, to reduce their stress. People will work at their own pace, for some this may be accepting that they are under stress and thinking about how it affects them, to making the decision to see a counsellor.

On why the workshop was developed, Wyn Newman who runs the group says: "Client feedback showed that people would find a workshop dedicated to stress really helpful and because stress affects so many people we think the workshop will be really popular."



## A Day in the Life of Su – Mental Health Worker

**I've worked in Health and Social Care for 20 years and before starting here I worked in a variety of mental health jobs including a mental health nurse (In-patient and community), residential work with older people and outreach work in the charity sector.**



I started here as a Mental Health Worker in March 2010 and from the moment I came into contact with the charity I had a good feeling about it. Everyone was very welcoming and I felt happy in the team from day one. A typical day for me includes assessing new clients to see whether they show any sign of a mental health problem. I then work one-on-one with them to ensure they have access to the right services and I provide ongoing support designed to help them build coping mechanisms so that they can better manage their symptoms. I always approach each client with an open mind and by focusing on their strengths I find we can work together to make positive changes.

What I like about the role is having the opportunity to build a rapport with a diverse range of people. The work is also very varied and some days I can be doing case work and other days I'll be on outreach, where I go out on to the streets and make contact with rough sleepers

and encourage them to access the centre for an assessment.

I particularly enjoy the outreach side of my job and I am often impressed by their resourcefulness. It is also quite useful when I am jointly with a service user and one of my outreach colleagues.

The position has its challenges and it took me a while to adjust to the pace of being on duty in the day centre. It can also be tough working with people who have difficult behaviour and, of course, it can also be upsetting hearing people's life stories. But I'm very professional and I am lucky that I have such a supportive team here and great network outside of work.

What makes the job even more rewarding is seeing people move on with their lives knowing that you played a part in their recovery.

## events

### Art Show

We will be holding our summer art show at The Crypt from the 28th June – 3rd July. The exhibition will display an inspiring and diverse range of artwork including paintings, photography and sculpture by homeless artists. To have a look at some of the wonderful artwork created by the group visit our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/homelessart](http://www.facebook.com/homelessart).

More information will be sent out shortly but in the meantime put the dates in your diary!

### Exciting Challenge Events

Want to take on a new challenge while helping us raise money? We're in the process of organising a series of London themed challenge events and there'll be something for everyone.

We'll have more details shortly but here's a sneak peak at what we're planning: Canoe challenge, Climbing challenge, Football tournament and Abseil. Interested in hearing more or want to take part? Email [events@cstm.org.uk](mailto:events@cstm.org.uk)

### Join Our Pilgrimage

Our Pilgrimage from London to Canterbury is perfect for people who want to help raise money for us while being able to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of 4 days walking.

The Pilgrimage takes place over the Spring Bank holiday weekend, Friday 27 May – Monday, 30 May. There's lots of ways you can get involved from walking to volunteering. For more information email [pilgsec@cstm.org.uk](mailto:pilgsec@cstm.org.uk)

### Spring into action: Runners Need(ed)!

It's a great time of year to get fit, and we have just the thing to inspire you: run for us at the Asic's British 10K on Sunday, 10th July and not only will you be raising funds for us, but because we've teamed up with Runners Need, fitness experts, you'll also receive support, training tips, advice and discounts on their running gear. To find out more or to book your place email [events@cstm.org.uk](mailto:events@cstm.org.uk)