



The Connection
at St Martin-in-the-Fields

connect
Spring Newsletter 2016

Read Paul's story inside

The Connection at St Martin's helps thousands of homeless people in central London every year. We guide people through our specialist services so they can get the support they need to move away from the streets, and towards living independent and fulfilling lives.

Every Day:

3 people are supported in to accommodation

15 rough sleepers are referred to us through Street Link

50 people take part in a creative or skills based activity group

150 rough sleepers access our day centre for support and use of practical services: meals, showers & computers

How you can help

Donate today 020 7766 5555 / Set up a monthly standing order or payroll giving / Make a difference for years to come by leaving a gift in your will / Fundraise for us. Whether it be a challenge event or coffee morning it all makes a difference / Volunteer at our centre / Tell your friends & family about us

"The most wonderful thing was to have a bath and be clean and then get in to a nice warm bed with clean sheets."

Tony, on the benefits of moving into housing.

The Connection
at St Martin-in-the-Fields

The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields

12 Adelaide Street, London, WC2N 4HW

www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk

Email: appeals@cstm.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7766 5555

Registered Charity Number 1078201

Company Registration Number 3852519

 Follow The Connection on Facebook

 Follow us on Twitter: @homelesslondon

Street to Home

They say moving house is one of life's most stressful events, so what's it like for someone who's been sleeping rough and is moving into their first home after months, or possibly years sleeping on the streets?

"There's so many mixed emotions," says Angela who is Day Centre Manager of The Connection and has seen lots of people move in to housing over the last year.

"Clients are often really excited about this big change in their lives, and the fact that they'll have a base, but what comes with this is a lot of fear and worry that they won't be able to do it, that they'll let themselves and others around them down."

For most of us, moving in to a new home is a frustrating experience but if you've experienced homelessness the transition is much greater.

"People often think the solution to homelessness is having a home, and yes this is part of the jigsaw puzzle, but what's really important is that people continue to address what caused their homelessness in the first place, and have lots of support around them if things get too much."

"Lots of our clients have mental health issues, or a drink or drug problem so if you add this to the responsibility of paying bills and looking after a home it can be a trigger for people feeling completely overwhelmed, and even leaving their home. Sadly most of our clients don't have friends or families to share the burden with when things get tough."

While Angela says she's seen the heartbreak of people abandon their homes, fortunately only a small proportion, approximately one in eight, don't see it through their first attempt. With support, the vast majority stay in their housing and continue to progress and do "really well" in their lives. The Connection has a range of ways it tries to help people prepare for this life changing move. One of these is a programme of activities with different groups so people get involved, learn new skills and meet people.

"The most important thing is that we don't too quickly say goodbye to people and leave them on their own. We carry on being there and invite people who would benefit, or are perhaps struggling with being housed to join our activity groups. We have art, mindfulness and IT classes to help people get online, useful for paying bills and day-to-day stuff. They also fill a hole for people who are lonely and can help with making new friends."

On the Street With Mel

Mel is one of our Street Outreach Co-ordinators and is responsible for helping reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough in Westminster. She tells us a little more about what her job involves.

What's an average day like?

"Every day is different. I can't say that I'm ever bored. I do shifts that are either early or late and involve going out and engaging with rough sleepers. Our team covers the whole of Westminster and sometimes we'll be walking for four or five hours. It's really good exercise, but it gives you sore feet."

How do you help homeless people?

"I assess them, offer support or services, and then there are groups they can attend. The Connection runs Workspace which helps people with their CVs and job applications, as well as providing travel fares and smart clothing. There are also art workshops, AA meetings and a rough sleepers group for people who don't want to talk housing but need to."

Does your job require a heart of steel?

"It takes time to build a bit of resilience without losing empathy, but with experience it gets easier."



You Can Help

We're collecting funds to help people like Paul settle into their new home. Your donation could help provide home essentials so people stay in their housing, and are less likely to relapse to the streets.

We are not asking for donations of things in this instance because everyone has a different wish list of items they need.

Every donation makes a difference. Thank you for your support.

Join our e-newsletter to hear about upcoming art exhibitions by sending your details to appeals@cstm.org.uk. The stunning exhibits are often on display in the Crypt at St Martin's and some work is for sale which is a great way to directly support the artists!



Paul Moves Into Housing

Things are looking up for Paul and he's just moved into shared housing! He says great things about it include "you can sleep with both your eyes closed!" something he could never do when sleeping rough because he was so afraid.

Paul didn't think he'd ever be faced with homelessness and says you can only really understand once it happens to you. He was self-employed and when the work dried up he could no longer pay his rent and had no savings or family to fall back on. Now he's got a place again he's been able to concentrate on work and is about to start a training programme with construction company Land Securities!

While life seems to be improving drastically, Paul says one of the struggles of new housing is that it takes a long time to get a place sorted. Neil, his worker, gave him some kitchen utensils, pillows, duvet and other home ware to get him started which he says "helped a lot because it was bare when I moved in and it takes a long time to get things homely."

Dorothee Steps Up into the Night Centre

Our in-house client volunteering scheme, Step Up, has introduced new placements in the Night Centre so people can gain new experience and skills. Dorothee is the first Step Up to volunteer there and shares what it's like.

How do you help the night centre?

"I start at 9pm and I help set up. I volunteer in the kitchen, I serve food and wash the dishes. Then I clear the tables and make space for the beds. Sometimes when there is a new guest they call me and I show them around."

How is it different from the day centre?

"It's very different. I have to be careful what I say because the guests are very tired, frustrated and sometimes not very friendly. They just want to go to bed because they've been walking all day."

How do you deal with the different atmosphere?

"I always see them and smile and when they see me smiling they say they're happy! I smile to make people feel welcome and I was on the streets so I understand how difficult it is."

What's your favourite bit?

"What I like most is serving food because this is the most one-to-one time I get to talk with the guests. I'm more relaxed and I can chat. I try to give them hope."

Above Right: Angela, Day Centre Manager, helps former rough sleepers adjust to housing

Right: Dorothee is all smiles as she volunteers in the Night Centre

