

Every year we help thousands of people move away from, and stay off, the streets of London - but we can't do this without your help. With steadily increasing numbers needing our services, we need your support more than ever.

How your donations help:

£5 buys a shower, hot meal and clothes cleaned

£25 buys an in-depth assessment to understand what's happened & how we can help

£40 buys a safe night's sleep in our Emergency Accommodation

£45 pays for art therapy for 20 people

£75 supports someone's physical and mental health with specialist sessions

£200 supports someone into employment, so they can leave the streets behind for good

How you can help:

Donate online / Set up a direct debit or payroll giving / Take part in one of our challenge events / Fundraise for us / Leave a legacy in your will / Follow us on Facebook, or on Twitter @homelesslondon

Thank you.

No matter where you live in the country, you can't have failed to notice the increase in rough sleepers in recent years.

At The Connection, we're at the sharp end of this crisis; it's estimated that 1 in 15 of all rough sleepers in England are found in Westminster, and the total number of people on the streets is up 20% on 2018.

We're determined to help more people than ever find a way back off the streets. In this newsletter, you'll find out more about our new day-time Street Engagement Team and how we're expanding our Recovery Programme.

The Recovery Programme

The path back from rough sleeping is never straightforward. Often, simply giving someone a bed or place to stay is not enough; we also need to address people's emotional needs and help them cope with the psychological effects of homelessness.

One of the ways we do this is through our Recovery Programme - a range of activity groups which encourage clients to discover new interests, learn new skills and increase their confidence and self-esteem.

The programme is going from strength to strength; the number of people attending groups is increasing and the timetable is growing all the time. Since January, we've introduced a creative writing group, a book club and a women's support group led by psychologist Dr Cecilia Wolfenstein, who has over ten years' experience working in mental health and psychological wellbeing.

This year our musically minded clients have also been involved in a music programme led by St Martin's Orchestra which resulted in a fantastic performance at the Tate Modern last week!

Steve Huddleston, who manages the Recovery Programme, says "Clients tell us all the time that the groups are a really important part of their journey, so I'm delighted we've been able to expand our timetable this year. This wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our supporters, so thank you!"

Just Around The Corner

Client, Creative Writing Group

It must be night around the corner as street lights start to shine.

No matter that people rush to catch a train or bus - back to home or friends - Why should I care?

For none see ME as they pass like the sea.

For me, my bed is far away in some unknown space.

Cold comfort does the doorway offer, as I place my head upon my bag and curse the light that shines down upon me.

Well, morning is just around the corner.

Taking on a challenge for us will raise valuable funds for our vital services - we really couldn't do it without you!
For a full list of events visit:
www.connection-at-smartins.org.uk/events

Swim Serpentine - 21st September

Join thousands of others at the one-day iconic Swim Serpentine festival in Hyde Park - your chance to swim in the 2012 Olympic Games open water swimming competition venue.

Now in its fourth year, Swim Serpentine is already a must-do event in the open water swimming calendar. All your needs will be catered for with heated changing rooms, dunk zone, pontoon start and finish, full water safety crew, hot tubs and exhibition area.

Happy first birthday to the Street Engagement Team!

In April 2018 we launched our Street Engagement Team (SET), which provides day-time outreach to those on the streets. It's the first team of its kind in the area and tackles a previously unmet need. Dave Yianni, who manages the team, explains "A day count last year suggested there are at least 350 people out daily on the streets in Westminster.

Many travel in during the day and might not stay overnight, meaning they're likely to be missed by the night counts which are used for official figures. More importantly, this means they might also be missing out on support offered by traditional night-time outreach teams.

We're working with some of the most vulnerable rough sleepers; a large number of people with no contact with support services - including basic practical services or primary healthcare. It's really important we're there to help and make sure they don't slip through the cracks."

As well as carrying out daily street shifts to meet and engage with clients, the team also provides intensive casework to support these clients with a longer term plan to help them off the streets.

Dave explains "We take the time to carefully build trusting relationships with clients on the street, where we find them. We focus on their priorities, not our own, and work at their pace. We're creative and flexible in the way we work with clients as we recognise that every situation is unique – and often very complex. I think this approach is a big reason we've been so successful so far."

The team has achieved some fantastic results in its first year, including helping over 130 into accommodation (including our Emergency Accommodation) and around 30 to access treatment services for addictions – a crucial part of helping people off the streets.

Meet the team

Chloe tells us what it's like being a member of the Street Engagement Team:

What do you like about your job?

It's incredibly varied. A combination of street shifts and case-working people with very complex needs means no day is ever the same. I'm very proud that I'm able to make a difference for vulnerable people who have experienced real difficulties in life - most of my clients aren't engaging with other services, so I'm basically it for them! That's a big responsibility and I take it seriously.

What are the main challenges?

Many people say 'go away' when I first approach them, and I have to respect that. A lot of clients are entrenched and have been on the streets for years. Building rapport and trust takes time, especially

when previous experiences with support services may not have worked out for whatever reason.

However, I don't give up! More often than not, patience and persistence pay off. I continue to approach people politely and hopefully over time they realise that I'm there for them, that I'm reliable and that I genuinely want to help.

What's been the highlight or your proudest moment so far?

Working with a woman who had been sleeping rough for months, with a serious drug addiction and an abusive partner which made it very difficult for her to engage with us at first. Through months of persistent (almost daily) contact, we were finally able to get her into accommodation. She still needs a lot of support from us, but she's in a much safer place now, and I'm proud that I could help make that happen.

Rebecca's story

We met Rebecca* begging last summer and were immediately concerned because she looked very unwell. Initially, Rebecca was very hostile towards us and made it clear she didn't want our help.

We persisted and built up a relationship by visiting Rebecca regularly just to chat. Eventually she confided that she had a very painful and infected leg. We helped her to get to hospital where she had several operations to save her leg (and potentially her life).

We kept in contact with Rebecca throughout her stay in hospital and worked to arrange accommodation for her to be discharged to. Unfortunately, Rebecca was discharged early and returned to the streets. She remained begging for several months, but was much friendlier towards us.

We didn't give up, continuing to visit as much as possible. We also continued work behind the scenes to find her somewhere to live.

We're very pleased that Rebecca has since been placed in temporary accommodation. We're now working hard to secure a permanent housing solution for Rebecca and supporting her to access the healthcare she needs.

Rebecca's story shows the enormous amount of work that goes into helping people recover from homelessness – and that it's not always a straightforward journey. We are very proud that our team's perseverance, compassion and patience has prevented the possible death of a young woman on the streets.

**not the client's real name*

Chloe and the team giving out sunscreen and water during the heatwave last year.



Enjoying the music programme!