



Strategy 2023–2028

We believe that no one should have to sleep rough, and that everyone should get the support they need to find a place to call home.



Finding a home is a physical and mental journey. So that's how we approach homelessness – by providing the physical means to make a change, and the motivation and support to maintain it.

However someone pictures 'home', even if it doesn't involve housing, this is how we help them on their way.

The journey starts with reaching out – a chat, the offer of a coffee and perhaps a hot meal. The chance to use a washing machine or to charge a phone. Simple things that aren't easy when you're living on the streets.

Then it's about listening to people, building up trust and understanding, so we can work out together what they need next.

When you feel let down by the system, and by humankind, it's not always easy to find or accept help. We get to know everyone as an individual, so we can tailor our support to their unique needs and hopes for a better future.

When they're ready to make a change, we connect people to specialist services – from mental health support to accommodation. Going with them on their journey, we help them build the skills to keep going with their goals.

This can take years, but they now know change is possible. And if they need support in the future, they know exactly where to find us.

We also help people to rediscover their unique skills, passions, hopes and dreams – the things that make us all feel human, and help us find our path through life. So that ultimately people can find their own way off the streets, towards a place to call home.



It's about listening to people, building up trust and understanding"

THE CONTEXT

The last few years have been extremely unpredictable and the pandemic – in particular the closure of traditional night shelters and the *Everyone In* response – has had a significant impact on the homelessness sector.

During this time, we have made some major changes to our work. Our focus is now on people facing the most complex barriers to finding a stable home.

We have also taken time to consider our approach, leading to a new Theory of Change based on working “with, not for”.

We land in 2023 with very high levels of rough sleeping. Westminster continues to see a higher number of people sleeping rough than any other London borough. In addition, the proportion of people living on or returning to the streets is several times is greater than anywhere else in London.

This strategy sets out how The Connection at St Martin’s will use our new Theory of Change and a drive to access much more affordable accommodation to significantly reduce the number of people living on the streets or moving on and off the streets repeatedly.

We will share our learning and evidence to add to the growing support for trauma-informed approaches so that people experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage get the support they need.

100

average number of people in our centre each day

700

approximate number of people living on the streets of Westminster

800

approximate number of people repeatedly moving on and off the streets of Westminster

MEETING THE CHALLENGE AHEAD - WORKING “WITH, NOT FOR”

Our Theory of Change is based on the following three principles:

1

Building relationships of trust and connection with people who have lost faith in services, working with people experiencing homelessness to create the change they want;

2

Recruiting, supporting and developing staff and volunteers who have the attitude, skills and expertise to build relationships of trust and connection with people experiencing homelessness;

3

Using evidence from people experiencing homelessness as well as research and our own data to work together to influence the systems which are designed to help people to move away from the streets successfully.



You can find out more about
our Theory of Change and to
watch our animation here:

[connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/
with-not-for](https://connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/with-not-for)



STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2023 - 2028

1

Deliver ground breaking and high quality trauma informed services which support people sleeping rough to move away from the streets for good.

2

Increase accommodation options for people who are living on the streets or returning when previous services have not met their needs.

3

Build partnerships and influence systems and policies to move people away from the streets for good more quickly and effectively.

4

Increase fundraised income from £2.7m a year to £4.1m a year to support existing essential activity and organisational growth.

5

Promote an organisational culture which puts trusting relationships at the centre of everything we do.

6

Ensure there is an excellent supporting infrastructure and financial approach to enable the charity to flourish.

WITH, NOT FOR - JADE'S STORY

After spending most of her life living in foster care, Jade had a baby and was living with her partner's family. After the relationship broke down, Jade was confronted with the choice to give up her child to foster care or leave their home. She chose the latter.

Jade came to London to live with her mother, but it didn't work out. At just 19, she started sleeping rough. Her mental health deteriorated and she started using drugs to cope.

“At the time I was going through all the bad stuff, so my head was a bit all over the place. I started drinking and taking drugs... You're not aware of time really, days and more days and nights turn into all the same.”

Jade soon got in touch with The Connection, and met her key worker Hannah. They built a very strong relationship, and Hannah helped Jade get support for her substance use and encouraged her to take care of her mental health.

“I used to turn up in all types of trouble, dramas and states. I'd come running through the door like “Where's Hannah? I need Hannah!” They'd hear me coming down the road before I even got to the building.”

Hannah also helped Jade get a flat, and start to rebuild her relationship with her family. Their relationship has been a real turning point in Jade's life.

“I just think she's brilliant. But she knows that - she knows I love her. Through these last 3 or 4 years, she's been like the biggest support person. She was like my mum all through The Connection... my Connection support mum.”

Hannah says “I’m definitely Jade’s biggest fan - she’s a wonderful person. She’s great to work with, she’s kind and she’s caring and she puts other people before herself.

When we closed Jade’s case, we both looked at the progress she’d made, and it was absolutely amazing. She had changed every aspect of her life for the better. And she’d achieved what she wanted to at that time.”

Jade is now settled and working hard to be the best mother she can be to her daughter and her younger son. She is also busy turning her flat into a home.

“I have to say Jade is the most resourceful person I think I’ve ever met. Even today she said to me “yeah, I put the curtain rail up. I didn’t have a drill so I borrowed one from the library” – I didn’t even know you could do that!”



Jade with her key worker Hannah.
Photo: Gary Manhine.

HELP US MAKE LONDON A CITY WHERE NO ONE SLEEPS ROUGH ON OUR STREETS

Please donate today
connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/donate

