

News Update



Stuart's story

When Stuart, aged 20, first came to us, we didn't see him smile – he was tired and scared. He had left his family home on the outskirts of south-east London, and because he had no money he had walked for four hours until he reached Trafalgar Square. An older rough sleeper who had seen him arrive the night before told him to come and see us, saying "they'll sort you out mate!"

After a shower and a hot breakfast Stuart told one of our housing workers that he would not be going home as it was a place of anger and violence: anger from his mother and violence from his step-father.

The youth workers noticed that Stuart seemed to avoid reading and would ask lots of questions even when the answer was written in front of him.

The youth workers also noticed that Stuart was shy and kept himself to himself. At first he did not even want to go into the night shelter. He was afraid of who else might be there, but after some persuading and another couple of nights rough sleeping he agreed to try the shelter.

Youth workers also encouraged Stuart to join in with activities such as art, watching films, making carnival costumes, and visits to museums and theatres. Slowly

Stuart grew in self confidence and became more outgoing, not just with staff but with other young people.

Stuart finally decided to trust us and told staff more about himself. He admitted that he had a learning disability, and had special help at school.

Stuart is now in a long-term hostel which provides activities and life skills training. He is more outgoing and has developed some great friendships. He is applying for counselling to help him look at the issues from his past, and is looking forward to living independently in shared accommodation.

BBC Radio 4 Vicar's Christmas Appeal

The Appeal raises funds for The Connection at St Martin's and the Vicar's Relief Fund, a charity which provides grants to people facing hardship all over the UK. The Appeal will be accompanied by the 'Received with thanks' programme, featuring interviews with people helped over the year. They will be broadcast at the following times:

Radio 4 Christmas Appeal by the Rev. Nicholas Holtam
Sunday 4th Dec - 7.55am,
repeated at 9.27pm and Thursday
8th Dec at 3.27pm

'Received with Thanks' to hear how last year's money was spent:
Sunday 4th Dec - 9.45am,
repeated at 5.40pm and Thursday
8th Dec at 3.45pm



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Carol Service

On Wednesday 14 December expect to hear the music of Christmas if you are passing through central London. From 3pm members of the public will be treated to the delights of carol singers filling the main concourse at Charing Cross station with the sound of Christmas carols. Volunteers are needed to help collect donations on the day.

If you would like to help or need further information, please contact Roger Shaljean, Special Projects Manager at The Connection at St Martin's on: **020 7766 5544.**

Christmas Cards

The Connection at St Martin's has a wide range of Christmas cards for sale. These can be purchased from a number of Card Aid and Cards for Good Causes shops around central London, including St Martin's-in-the-Fields.

For more information please contact the fundraising office on: **020 7766 5555.**

A new Connection

Colin Glover, The Connection at St Martin's chief executive, explains how redeveloping St Martin's will give the Connection an exciting new future.

As nights are getting longer and colder and Christmas creeps closer, people's attention naturally begins to focus on the number of homeless people in central London who will be spending the festive season out on the street.

Yet at The Connection at St Martin's we work with homeless people and those in insecure accommodation throughout the year. We are open every day of the week to help people find routes away from homelessness towards a secure and independent lifestyle.

Our day centres are places of safety and warmth. They offer friendship and support. Our team of dedicated workers provide outreach services; training and employment programmes; specialist help with alcohol and substance misuse problems; mental health support; and a practical and primary health service.

When we launched The Connection at St Martin's in April 2003 we took the conscious decision to target our resources where they were needed most. This led to changes in our opening hours so that our timetable became more consistent, more accessible and more in line with other services. We now have the opportunity to develop our services further.

Major redevelopment of the entire site of St Martin-in-the-Fields is about to begin. The whole process will take around two years. But it

will be worth it. We will finally have a purpose-built and fully integrated centre. In the meantime, we will not forget our clients or scale down our services. We will move all our services into a single building, followed by a further move into temporary accommodation in St Martin's Place while the redevelopment is completed.

No doubt it will be a busy and challenging time for us. But we look forward to the challenge and to the prospect of an exciting new centre.

Finally, I'd like to send our best wishes to all our friends and supporters. We will continue to help over 7,000 homeless people each year. We couldn't do it without you.

Thank you for your continued support.



New crewing company to launch in the West End

Connection Crew is a new business venture with a difference...

The idea behind Connection Crew is simple. It aims to provide staff to crew events in and around the London area. Of course, there are other companies offering a similar

service, but Connection Crew is very different. It will be staffed by young homeless and unemployed people.

Connection Crew is the brainchild of Jamie Clark, Operations Director of the newly formed company. "We are positive that events need the services we offer – primarily smaller jobs with short shifts in central London," said Clark. "With the training they are receiving our guys have developed a pride in their work. That boosts their confidence and helps them to get back on their feet."

The venture benefits from the support and help of Gallowglass,

a prominent and successful company in the UK crewing market. Paul Grecian, chairman of Gallowglass, said, "We will give Connection Crew every support possible including providing initial training for their crew."

The current crew has undergone a rigorous vetting procedure to ensure that they have the stability and reliability needed to make Connection Crew a success. The resilience and dedication the crew have had to show to overcome difficult personal issues will help them cope with the demands of the job, and help ensure that the venture is a success.

For more information about Connection Crew, please contact Jamie Clark, Operations Director. 020 7766 5553.



Reaching out to young people

Kaz Mayes, deputy manager, explains how the Youthwork and Practical Services (YWPS) team transform the lives of vulnerable young people.

Young people come to us during a difficult and even traumatic time in their lives. Some are fleeing violence from partners, parents, or other family members; some have been asked to move out of their homes and have been wandering the streets aimlessly; others have been sleeping on sofas or floors at friends' homes for months, moving around every few days until there's nowhere else to stay.

One of the most important roles of the YWPS team is to welcome new young people to the building. Many have never been to an advice or day centre before.

When they arrive many young people feel nervous and uneasy. Our youth workers therefore offer them a warm and friendly welcome to make them feel safe and secure. Our team then makes it clear what The Connection at St Martin's can offer and check that we are the

right agency to help them (of course, if we are not we'll find the right place for them to go).

We then provide practical help such as showers, laundry, lockers, clothing and food. These services help them to feel more stable and self-sufficient.

We are then in a position to develop our relationships with these young clients. We always encourage them to make changes for themselves, but we provide the support and the opportunities for them to gain in self-confidence.

We will listen to them, give them advice and act as role models: we treat them with respect and expect them to be respectful of each other. Through one-to-one interviews, group sessions and various activities and outings we give them the confidence to tackle their problems and plan their future.

Finally, we encourage young people to 'move on'. Our Workspace programme helps them with work, education and training issues. We also try to find solutions to their housing problems, such as spaces in long-term hostels and shared accommodation.

We do not want young people to become dependent upon us. Once they are healthy, independent, self-confident adults we want them to look back and feel that the time they spent with us was a time of stability, change and growth.



Every day is different

John Calnan is a senior project worker at our Day Centre. Below he describes what it's like working in one of London's busiest and most challenging environments.



It's 8.30 on a Monday morning and the Day Centre Project Team have arrived, wondering what the new week will bring to them.

As we're an open access day centre in the centre of London, the events and faces of the new week can never be predicted, so we always have a little trepidation when we open those doors.

The busy rush of clients starts at 9.00am. There are some old faces who have been around for a week or so; many others we've never seen before. Most clients are keen to get in to a warm environment to have a cup of tea, grab a towel for a shower, and then the real action begins.



Apart from trying to create as friendly an atmosphere as possible, the team in the Day Centre play an important role to link together the work of various internal and external teams. Stan needs to see his Multiple Needs Team housing worker; Eric needs to make an appointment to see what we used to call Outreach workers; Mary needs her benefits sorted; Sid just needs some toothpaste; Andy wants to contact his parole officer. Ron needs a jumper – it's getting cold out there. The requests are myriad.

It's satisfying when a few calls to a neighbourhood office can get a client back into their property. Of course for many clients circumstances are more complex than this.

For some, street life can be a scary and overwhelming experience. After working for a while in the Day Centre, I suppose you pick up a bit of a sixth sense, spotting those who are vulnerable, maybe just a little too proud, or too nervous, to ask for help. Many of these clients have 'fallen through the system' to

some extent. Social Services or a community mental health team may be anxiously trying to trace them, but sadly, often not. We in the Day Centre, along with the other teams, are often to be found establishing, or re-establishing, contact with these important services.

Some clients have drug or alcohol misuse issues. We can help with that. We work closely with workers who have expertise in this field, however severe the level of misuse. Some require detox; others rehab. Many need both.

One of the most pleasing aspects of our service is when an old client comes back down just to say hello. Sometimes it's hard to believe that it's the same person, such a positive transformation has happened. Often, I think that here we really do save and change lives.

After a Day Centre we debrief. Sometimes it's been exhausting, but it is always worth it. Could we have done more? I suppose there's always more that can be done, but we've done what we can. And then there is always tomorrow.

