



# Connect

Residents' newsletter

December 2014



**FEATURING:**

**Your stories**

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**Board member  
and staff corners**

**St Martins**  
PARTNERS IN MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

# Welcome



## Winter has begun. The festive season and a new year are almost upon us.

Whatever your beliefs, it is good to celebrate a time of generosity and positive spirit. For many, Christmas is a much needed opportunity to take a break from our normal day-to-day lives. Residents and staff at St Martins will share food, memories and celebrate together, wishing one another well for the year ahead. Please see the back page for more information on plans for the festive period.

Also in this Christmas edition of Connect, Terry celebrates moving on from St Martins and settling into a new flat in time for the festive season. Yuletide is also a time when we recognise and reach out to those who are suffering. George offers his advice and experience of living with anxiety. He does this with a generous heart, in the hope that others can gain from his experience.

Christmas is also about family, friends and the people that matter to us. It is in this spirit that Lester tells us about his family and the strength of the bond between his brothers, sisters and parents. In daily life it can be difficult to remember how important small acts of kindness, love and respect are. Hopefully you will experience many of these moments and help spread them to others. It makes all the difference.

### John Thompson, Chief Executive

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# Staff corner

## Trish MacManus is many people's first point of contact with St Martins.

**"I joined St Martins in March 2006 after a 27 year period with BOC Gases, a global industrial organisation, where I was secretary to the management team at one of their production plants.**

Prior to that, I worked in a number of administrative positions including a stint at John Lewis. My role at St Martins was initially a job share. When my colleague resigned I was offered the opportunity of full time employment, which I eagerly accepted.

Since the departure of the Office Manager, I have assumed more responsibility including the preparation of board papers, taking minutes at Directors meetings, assisting with the organisation of corporate event management such as the AGM and staff conference, as well as supporting the HR Manager with recruitment and training administration.



I really enjoy my role as Receptionist for St Martins, meeting and greeting visitors and staff, both in person and on the telephone. As I am often the first point of contact, a courteous and knowledgeable attitude is essential, as it reflects a positive image of the organisation and helps me to maintain high personal standards. I always strive to be friendly and co-operative as I believe this creates a harmonious working environment.

I am proud to work for a highly respected organisation like St Martins, helping those individuals in society who are vulnerable and marginalised back on the road to recovery and independence.

This would not be possible without the professionalism and dedication of all our staff."



# Overcoming anxiety

## George confronts his fears.

**"I've been at St Martins for three months. I moved here from hospital. It was a big deal for me. I suffer from severe anxiety. I'd been in hospital for several years, so the idea of leaving had been building up and up in my head. I was really scared.**

But you know what? It's alright. I like it here. There is a good atmosphere. You can sit and talk when you want to, or go and be in your own space in your own bedroom. Informal, that's the word. It's informal here, compared to hospital.

So I was in hospital a long time, but before that, before I started developing anxiety, I used to work. I left school at 16 and joined the merchant navy. I travelled the world on a 38,000 ton, 900 foot ship. We crossed the Atlantic. We went thousands of miles up the Amazon delivering coal. I remember this one place we passed on the river. It was an ancient city, all white, with these great steps reaching down to the water.

I was supervising the unloading of coal when we docked at places along the Amazon. Out at sea I'd be up on the bridge and help out with maintenance duties. The problem was, being so far away made me homesick. I was actually quite relieved to come home.

I did temping work in various offices. I also took a business qualification. It was around then that I started having delusions. These got worse and I ended up jumping in front of a slow-moving train, because I was convinced that someone or something would save me. I woke up in hospital with a shattered pelvis.

I was in a bad way for years, but I'm starting to recover. It's all about recovery isn't it, when you've been down. Something that helps me with my anxiety is focusing on controlling my breathing. I listen to Paul McKenna's Trance CD which really helps me too. I also have a girlfriend who is very supportive. She's been through some similar experiences to me.

I'd advise anyone who has anxiety to confront it. Don't hide from it."



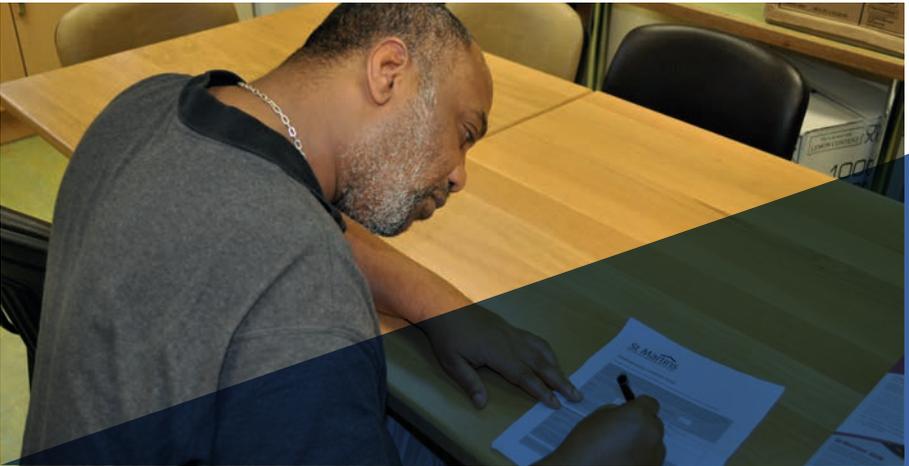
# Family matters

## Lester on family, respect and something to look forward to.

**“I come from a big Jamaican family. I’ve got four brothers and two sisters. My mother and father came to London before I did.**

I moved from Kingston in 1973 with two of my brothers. My mother worked as a dress maker and my father worked at the Royal Mint in Tower Hill, before it was moved to Wales. He accepted the redundancy he was offered and took most of the family home for a visit to Jamaica. When he returned he was lucky and got a job as a handyman for Hackney Council.

I visit my mother and father at the weekend. They’re quite elderly now. My father has survived four heart attacks. He has diabetes type 2. I have diabetes type 1 and need glucose injections three times a day. My mother has had several strokes and is now partially paralysed on the right side of her body.



She can still move, but many things are difficult for her. I help her fill out forms and make sure she can play the religious tapes and CDs she likes listening to. My brothers and sisters also do what they can to help out.

I think that respect and behaviour are important. I’ve got into a couple of altercations with people recently who were being racially abusive or behaving anti-socially. I don’t back down. I’ve had a couple of court appearances as a result of this. I’ve done time in prison and also in hospital. I am not afraid of these places, but I’d rather be able to see my family.

Something else I like doing is going to Lee House Day Centre. Last year I did a City & Guilds course in horticulture. After a bit of a delay, I got my certificate recently from Lee House, which is really nice. It says some of the things I did on the course. I’m doing an IT course now. I’ve got to the stage where I don’t have to ask the teacher for help all the time. I can sort out most of my own problems. Last week we had to write and research a history of Camden. It was so interesting learning about this duke and that mayor who changed the law back in 19-0-something.

My next project is finding a second hand sax and keyboard. I really like the music sessions we do every Friday. It gives me something to look forward to.”



## Board Member corner

### Mayan Shah explains his background and role as Treasurer of St Martins' Board of Management.

**"I am a qualified accountant. My experience includes working in the commercial (including banking), governmental (including working in international civil service) and the voluntary sectors.**

In addition, I have also run my own business. I have been working mainly in social housing since 1992, either as a consultant, interim manager or Director of Finance/Resources. My remit included IT, HR and Corporate Services. A substantial part of my experience has been in supported housing a bit like some of St Martins' properties.

I have been a Board Member at St Martins since 2004 and as I am the only finance specialist on the Board, I am also the Treasurer. As a member of the Board, I see my role as constructively challenging and supporting the Executive team, especially at the strategic level. In addition, as a Treasurer, it is my role to scrutinise the financial and management accounts. I also review organisational strategy seeking reassurance from the senior management team that St Martins is financially viable.

Following my work in supported housing I became a Board Member at St Martins because I am passionate about improving people's lives. The excellence and commitment of staff and management at St Martins has resulted in excellent outcomes for many people we support. This has kept me engaged with the organisation.

During my time in supported housing, we have seen many changes in legislation and regulation as well as funding, which have proved to be challenging to organisations such as St Martins. Through the hard work of all concerned, including staff, management and my fellow board members, St Martins has met the challenges and continues to provide an excellent service. I hope St Martins will continue to do so in the future, and this is what I will be working towards in my role as Treasurer."

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# A story of success

## Terry celebrates moving to his own flat in time for Christmas.

**"I first came to St Martins in December 2007. I came from Chase Farm where I had been for four years. Before Chase Farm I spent 17 years in Ashworth, Liverpool. Prior to that I spent seven years in Broadmoor. It has been a long journey.**

The first thing that struck me about New North Road was the friendliness of the service users. There were some guys that really helped me settle in. I remember the previous manager of New North Road, Theresa. She was a very jovial lady. Other staff who have now gone on to other things but whom I remember fondly include Simon Jones, Anoushka, Felicity and Cat Ranson. Staff helped me regain confidence in myself. I also want to thank my doctor, Dr Odetoeye.

I used to go to prayer meetings and I think these helped too. Nowadays I do Tai Chi every week. The whole thing is about circulation. My knees used to click and now, thanks to the Tai Chi, the clicking is getting less and less. I also liked the many trips I went on with the guys. The particularly memorable ones would have to be outings to Brighton and Bournemouth.

So after all this time, I'm moving to my own flat. I'll be settled in before Christmas. I chose the flat and that feels wonderful. It has a balcony. Just a small one, but it's a balcony with a view. The flat will need some decorating. I need some furniture and appliances too. I will get a grant to help me buy some of the stuff I need; a fridge, cooker, carpets, curtains.

I'm really looking forward to moving. It also makes me a little nervous. But I am sure I can handle my nerves. I'll come back to visit people. I've been invited to St Martins' Christmas party for instance. I'm looking forward to the season of good cheer in my own home!"



# Christmas trips, activities and meals

There are a number of trips, activities and meals over the festive season to look forward to. All residents are invited to join trips to:

- The award-winning Mother Goose at Hackney Empire
- Winter Wonderland at Hyde Park
- Winterville at Victoria Park
- Southbank Centre Winter Festival
- Covent Garden Christmas Fair on Saturday afternoons

Please speak to staff or St Martins' Activity Coordinator Mairi Brown about these activities. You can email Mairi on [MairiB@stmartinoftours.org.uk](mailto:MairiB@stmartinoftours.org.uk)

Wilton Villas and New North Road will hold their usual Christmas and New Year meals and parties. A snooker competition and pub quiz with some good prizes will be held at Ferrini House. Residents at Chalkhill Road will have Christmas dinner together, organise games and a trip to the cinema. At Davenant Road, residents have devised a program of Christmas activities leading up to a big meal together on 25th December.

## STEP League

Congratulations to Emmanuel, Paris, Hamsa, Richard and Adem who have formed St Martins' first 5 a side football team. The team are playing in the STEP League, organised by Camden Council.

Games in the STEP League are played on the first Sunday of every month. If you would like to take part please speak to staff and St Martins' Activity Coordinator Mairi Brown, [MairiB@stmartinoftours.org.uk](mailto:MairiB@stmartinoftours.org.uk)

