

Connect

Residents' newsletter

August 2017



FEATURING:

Summer fair

Service user stories

Co-production

Dawn & horticulture

St Martins
PARTNERS IN MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

Welcome



Welcome to the summer edition of Connect

I hope you notice the changes in this latest edition. We have a new editor- Harpreet Dosanjh. Harpreet is a former service user of St Martins and we are delighted that he has agreed to be our new editor.

Appointing Harpreet as the new editor of Connect is part of a major initiative at St Martins in which we are trying to involve you our service users in co-producing employment and training opportunities. Please do get involved in this initiative by attending the Co-production Group which meets monthly. As we go to press we have just held our annual Summer Fair. It was good to see many of you there on such a warm, sunny day. Thank you to Michael, Samantha and Dawn for their contributions to this edition.

John Thompson, Chief Executive

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Words to inspire

“When you follow your bliss, doors will open where you would not have thought there would be doors; and where there wouldn't be a door for anyone else.”

“The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours - it is an amazing journey - and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins.”



Your new editor

Hi everyone. For those who don't know me, my name is Harpreet Dosanjh.

I was a resident at St Martins' Chalkhill Road project for three years. I have now moved on to more independent living.

I have been given an opportunity to be editor of your Connect newsletter. I am very excited to work with you to develop Connect. I currently work with the West London Mental Health Trust as a Consultant. I am an expert through my lived experience of the Trust's services. I am a qualified trainer. I sit on interview panels and I am co-editor of Inside Out magazine, which we produce for patients accessing the Trust's services. I also do a lot of service user involvement work.

I am pleased to see St Martins are offering involvement & co-production opportunities to their service users, and I hope you will get involved! Connect is a special newsletter that I always look forward to seeing. I have been featured in it myself before, which was quite thrilling at the time!

I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible at St Martins' various projects. I hope you all enjoyed St Martins' recent Summer Fair. I know John Thompson was a bit nervous about being beaten again in the staff v residents football match! But it seemed everyone had a good time.

St Martins will always be a special place for me. I gained a lot of independence there.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Please approach me if you would like to be in Connect or if you have an idea.

Thank you.

Harpreet

Welcome to the newly opened Vivian Comma Close

VCC is a new St Martins supported living project based in the borough of Islington. It opened on the 25th April this year.

VCC has 8 self-contained flats across two buildings. The service accepts men and women with learning disabilities and mental health needs. There were three people living at VCC at the end of June. It is very close to Arsenal Football Club and has a local college. VCC was named after a Calypso musician from Trinidad & Tobago!

Connect went for a guided tour and also spoke to Samantha, who was celebrating her birthday.

“I used to live in shared accommodation previously,” she said. I was suffering from back pain, so I ended up in hospital. The doctors told me I had a slipped disk, which meant I had to have an emergency operation. Now, I have my own flat here at VCC. I cannot do stairs.”

I was told before meeting Samantha that she has an ambition to be a fashion designer and owns her own sewing machine.

“My love for fashion began at school. I used to draw a lot of my designs on paper. I liked to be creative. Now it has become a hobby. I want to do a college course. However I need to sort out the financial situation first. My dream is to one day become a fashion artist, have my own business and sell my own clothes designs. I have a sewing machine and materials and I do some work when I feel in the mood.”

Despite her physical health problems, Samantha remains ambitious and has a positive outlook for her future. She is a real fighter and with the support of staff, Connect hopes she will make her dreams a reality.





Enter MC Michael

We have heard so much about Michael, his music and dance floor bedroom that Connect had to meet the man himself.

Michael said he has been living at Chalkhill for 2 years. "I am very happy here. It's very clean, I have a kitchen on my floor and the staff are very supportive.

My love for music began at the age of 17. I grew up in a boarding school, a huge building in the countryside. My ultimate dream is to become a MC- DJ. I can also rap very well, in-fact I can rap non-stop all day!

At the moment I have mixers but no decks to mix. I am looking to see if anybody can give me funding to get my music career going. I am also in the process of applying for a university course to study music.

My favourite type of music is r'n'b. At the moment I collect CDs and sell them. I also make mix tapes. I love to go down to Trafalgar Square to see music gigs. My bedroom is not an ordinary room, it is my club!

After seeing his bedroom, it's hard not to agree! Connect asked Michael to do a demo rap. He rapped about me and Ade (St Martins staff), no problem. It sounded great! We asked about his family and Michael said he has a brother and an uncle. He also plays for St Martins' football team. Michael is a very talented musician and we wish him well. Take note, if you are ever looking for a DJ at your party!

St Martins' Recovery Practitioner

This member of staff needs no introduction for many of you. It is hard to miss her as she regularly does activities across some of St Martins' projects.



Connect newsletter has spoken to Dawn in a previous edition. So, almost a year into her role, we went to find out how she is doing. Dawn joined St Martins last August, she was a temp at the time, now she has been made permanent, since May 2017. Congratulations Dawn!

"Residents and staff have made me feel very welcome and I enjoy working with them. It feels like a little community," she said.

Dawn facilitates various activities on a 1-2-1 and group basis. Dawn does not come with an agenda. She listens to the residents, and then acts upon what they want to do.

"I don't want them to feel they have to see me, I let them know that I am here. I work in a very person centred way"

In this beautiful weather, Dawn has been facilitating gardening groups.

"I had no previous gardening knowledge, the residents have been teaching me! I have even started doing gardening at home!"

David, a service user from Chalkhill said, "I get anxious starting things but then I get into it and enjoy it."

St Martins have made resources available to turn the gardening work into an employment pathway. The project is called: S.E.E.D. (Social Enterprise & Employment Drive).

The project has 3 phases:

1. Tidying gardens and growing vegetables for the Summer Fair.
2. Developing more garden space. Wilton Villas and New North Road are having their gardens structurally changed to make space for growing.
3. Growing food to cook for healthy eating and looking into having a market stall.

Thanks for all your hard work Dawn.

St Martins

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Summer Fair 2017

We recently had our annual Summer Fair. It was very well attended and organised. We also had excellent weather!

It was nice to see staff from Head Office getting out and enjoying themselves. It was also about getting to know other staff and service users from the different projects.

We had some stalls selling fresh produce from our gardening activities and home made drinks. There were also various games like hoop the hoop and juggling. It was nice to sit on the grass, chill and enjoy the weather. Paul who works at New North Road is also a DJ and he gave us a great set in the adjacent hall. Lots of people were dancing and smiling. Thanks Paul!

The food was excellent with such variety. Congratulations to the chef! There was a raffle with excellent prizes, including a keyboard.

The last event of the day was the staff versus service user football match. It was an excellent game, everyone enjoyed it. The final score was 6-3 to the service users! Well done to John Thompson who made two great saves in goal and also Luke who displayed great energy. Well done Jess who scored the great goal that never was. By the way, the service user team did not do too badly either! We are now talking about staff and service users playing together more than once a year.

The summer fair was a great way to mark the year and we all look forward to the next one. Congratulations and thanks to the small team of staff who organised the fair and to all those who attended.



Co-Production at St Martins



Since the beginning of the year, St Martins, led by their Operations & HR Director Vimala, have been having monthly co-production meetings.

The term co-production has been used in the NHS for some years. What it means is that service users are no longer seen as just patients. They are people with assets and experience. In many NHS Trusts, service users are now working in a 50-50 partnership with front line staff to improve all aspects of the service. This partnership gives service users a meaningful path in their journey because they now feel empowered and valued.

This approach will give service users employment opportunities. If you have any specific skills, interests or knowledge then St Martins can support you to work with staff and design your own group or activity which you can deliver to your peers and be paid, because you are providing a service by supporting your peers.

For example, you may have a passion for art. Why not set up an art group? General job opportunities are also discussed at co-production meetings. Recently a service user from another project got a cleaning job St Martins' new project, Vivian Comma Close. Dawn, St Martins' Recovery Practitioner, is setting up a link with Tesco supermarket. Lots of good things are happening.

The co-production meeting is split into two parts. Along with looking at employment possibilities, service users are also given the opportunity to review St Martins' policies.