

Connect

Residents' newsletter

August 2015



FEATURING:

Your achievements

Funding for football team

Film Project

Human rights champions

Board member and staff corners

What you think of

St Martins

St Martins
PARTNERS IN MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

Hello



Welcome to this summer edition of Connect.

Thank you to Stephan and Hamsa for sharing some details about your recovery. Your accounts are honest and much appreciated. Thanks also to Richard for contributing one of your poems.

We have updates on a successful bid to Wembley Stadium Trust, our human rights programme, the filmmaking in our South London project and we hear from Don about what it's like to be on our board of management. Reading this edition it is clear that many of you are busy and engaged in doing interesting things.

I hope you have a good summer and autumn. As always my door is open to you. So if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please get in touch.

John Thompson, Chief Executive

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Championing your human rights



St Martins have become an official project partner of the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR). For staff at St Martins, looking after the human rights of all residents is central to their daily work. The partnership with the BIHR means that St Martins' staff will receive training on how to champion your human rights.

Stephanie Davies, a Human Rights Officer from the BIHR said, "We wanted to work with a service and a staff team who had the potential to develop a human rights approach supporting people to be in control of their own lives in challenging situations, and we're really pleased to be working with St Martins."

St Martins has joined a small group of organisations across the UK who are committed to delivering compassionate care by working to better understand and uphold the rights of residents and service users.

Connect interviews Stephanie Davies

Staff Corner

Meet Jennie Walsh.

“I’m Jennie Walsh and I’m a Forensic Psychologist. I work at St Martins on a sessional basis and my role is to support staff in their work with residents.

I have worked in a number of secure and community settings in Healthcare and the Criminal Justice Service. A lot of my experience has involved working with people who have complex mental health problems who are excluded in some way, maybe by virtue of their mental health diagnosis, their offending, or perhaps where they live or their age.

My way of working is built on developing strong compassionate relationships where the focus is intently on understanding the other person’s experiences. Without this it is difficult to help someone, and fully understand their problems and their goals.

My aim at St Martins is to add to the service by offering a psychologically-based way of thinking about complexity and challenges which I hope will help staff to support residents’ recovery.”

“

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My experience



Stefan shares something of his recent times.

“I’ve taken a big step forward to gaining my own independence. I’m in a flat with two housemates. We get on well. But I want to stretch my wings. Having my own place, would allow me to do that.

Why do I want to live on my own? I’d like it. I really would. I want to be able to invite family over. My cousin and my aunt have been so good to me. They’ve really supported me. Given me money when I had nothing. They invite me over every weekend. I want to get a place and invite them over. I want to thank my cousin and my aunt. They mean so much to me.

I’m saving a bit of money. If I get somewhere to live, there will be bills, bills and more bills. I’m also saving money to go on a short holiday. Last year I went on my first holiday for twenty years. It was brilliant!

You know, I feel really good today. I’ve made so much progress. And everyone says how well I’m doing. You get a lot of freedom at St Martins. The staff are really nice. They’re helpful and treat you like a human being. Not everyone does. I’ve lived in places where you are not treated with respect.

The only thing bothering me at the moment is my back. It hurts. I can’t walk much. Walking for ten minutes makes my back hurt. But I’ve got a freedom pass, so that’s good. I still get about. I’m going shopping in a few minutes. I learned how to make pasta dishes and jacket potatoes. Cooking for myself makes me more independent.

I heard that someone who used to live in this flat has now got his own place. Apparently it’s nice, well kitted out with furniture and stuff. So I know it can be done. I don’t want to be an outsider any more. I’m ready to join the community.”

Learning to make movies



Find out how films are made and get a qualification into the bargain.

Residents at Ferrini House have been working with filmmaker Line Blom this summer. Line is training residents how to operate film cameras, plan and storyboard shots and develop interview techniques for documentary film making. All residents who complete 30 hours of training will be awarded an Open College Network Level 1 qualification, which acts as a gateway to employment or further training in the creative industries. Thank you to Four Corners for providing the equipment for the training and the Big Lottery for funding the programme.

Poetry Corner

I'm Asp
I sit in my chair
I don't wear flares
Sometimes it's a struggle
But I ain't no trouble
And I don't climb stairs
I just sit here waiting for God
to answer my prayers

By Rich

Board Member Corner

Connect catches up with Don Jackson, our residents' representative on the board.

What's most important to you at the moment?

The most important thing to me right now is the health of my mother. Helping her out and making her life easier is something I think about and try to do all the time.

Can you tell us about what you do as a board member?

I go to board meetings and listen to the suggestions being put forward by St Martins' management team about how the organisation can function in the most profitable way. By profitable, I mean how it can give the best support for people with mental health problems or people who've been in prison. Once I've listened I give my opinion.

They call them board meetings, but are you ever bored?

Ha ha. Funny question. I'm not bored at meetings. They are quite interesting as it happens.

Have you met interesting people through being a board member?

Of course. But the most interesting thing is helping people to stabilise their lives.

What else is good about being a board member?

It's opened doors to voluntary work. I help people with drug problems who come to a community centre on Mondays and Fridays. We run sessions people can come to, for up to 4 hours, or as long as they need. It also helps keep me focussed on my responsibilities and goals in life.

What would you like to be doing in five years' time?

I would like to be running my own project that helps people with drug problems. I want to keep working in established drug rehab services, to learn the ropes, then I'd like to start my own project to help people with addictions.



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My next step

Hamsa tells us what helps.



“I want to get my next step sorted”

“In difficult times people often turn to prayer. I did. It was one of the few things that helped when I felt that I had nothing to look forward to. Belief helped me, but I would never force a religious view on anyone. A person’s religious belief is between you and your creator.

I was raised in a Muslim family with a strong faith. But living in London has meant that I’ve mixed with Sikhs, Christians, Jews, Hindus; people of so many different backgrounds. It is difficult for my community to accept mental illness. I find it very hard to talk to anyone from the community I grew up in about my problems. This makes it difficult for me to go back.

So I have to go forward. Meeting new people who don’t know your history can be a good thing. St Martins is a good place to settle down. It doesn’t feel like hospital. The staff are good. I’m getting into cooking and healthy eating. I’m doing my GCSE Maths. Did you know I got the highest mark in my year for Business Studies, a few years back? Sometimes I think about starting a business, but I’m not ready for that yet, and getting a good grade in an exam is different to doing the real thing. For now, I want to get my next step sorted, finding somewhere to settle.”

Goal!

St Martins’ residents’ football team has been awarded funding by the Wembley Stadium Trust to pay for coaching, kit, pitch hire and the development of an increasingly talented team.

Congratulations and good luck for next season!

What you think of St Martins

Results of the 2015 Residents' Survey.

Every February and March, St Martins carries out an independent survey of your views in order to better understand your experience of the service you receive.

95%

Have confidence in the service you receive.

94%

Feel safe.

92%

Said that the service is good, a rise from 85% in 2014.

86%

See a keyworker at least once a week and 75% do not want to increase this frequency.

84%

Said staff are polite, down from 93% in 2014.

72%

Have been at St Martins under 2 years.

Your aspirations and goals are important. St Martins will try to help you achieve them.

Residents' primary goals are for more independent living, followed by better accommodation and a desire to improve physical health. The number of you who want to reduce offending behaviours, alcohol and drug use has increased since 2014. Other things you mentioned were aspirations to improve your mental wellbeing and gain employment.

"Since arriving at St Martins everyone has been very polite and welcoming."

Anonymous comment, 2015.

"I'm quite amazed how staff do their job, they seem to be dedicated in what they do. It will help me to keep on top of things and manage life when I move on i.e. tidying my bed in the morning, keeping everything immaculate, washing clothes, cleaning mess straight up and I like doing this because it gets me into a routine. Like the staff say to me, 'keep being positive.' So when it's time to move on I can get into the habit of being independent."

Anonymous comment, 2015.