Connect

Residents' newsletter
August 2014

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Board member and staff corners

St Martins
PARTNERS IN MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

Welcome

I hope you are enjoying the summer.

It's been hot and it is good to see you getting out and about, organising BBQs, going to the seaside and keeping up your regular commitments.

In this summer edition of Connect, Rossario tells us about his plans to return to Sicily, Fatai reflects on a summer of sport and we have some thought-provoking and challenging comments about the mental healthcare system from two residents who wish to remain anonymous.

We also take this opportunity to look forward to some activities taking place over the next few months, introduce a new member of staff and learn a little more about our board member John Whitton. As always, please speak to staff or contact me with any feedback or suggestions. My details are below.

John Thompson, Chief Executive

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St Martins' AGM

St Martins' 2014 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held at The Crescent Suite, Ronald's Road from 6.30pm on Thursday, 25th September.

This is a venue we have used in the past, so some of you may remember it.

Please give staff any suggestions for what you'd like to do at the AGM. In the past residents have organised art exhibitions, a fashion show, music, drumming workshops and comedy. What do you want to do this year?

Staff corner

Meet St Martins' new Operations Manager Paul Holden.

"I have joined St Martins after working in the statutory sector (local government and then the NHS) for many years, and I now truly welcome the opportunity to be a part of a voluntary sector agency helping people to add value to their lives, when these have been challenged and shaped by life's difficulties and by mental distress.

My role as Operations Manager will be to work with the Directors of St Martins to provide over-arching management across all of the five projects, particularly supporting the Project Managers, helping them as they manage and support the Project and Support Workers and volunteers who in turn support the people who use the services.

I was born in Sussex but grew up in Yorkshire. I embarked upon my career in the early 1990's when, at a crossroads after completing a Bachelor's degree in Organisation Studies, I worked for a year as a volunteer with a charity that supported young people who had offended. After this positive experience, I trained to become a social worker and worked as a local authority social worker in vulnerable adults' teams. In 2008 I took up a post in the NHS as the manager of a community recovery team in Enfield. In 2011 I then switched to work in Haringey where I became the manager of a community team supporting people who live with psychosis.

There are still people I need to meet, but I feel very welcome here already, and look forward to all that we can achieve."

Homeward Bound

Rossario tells us about his move on plans

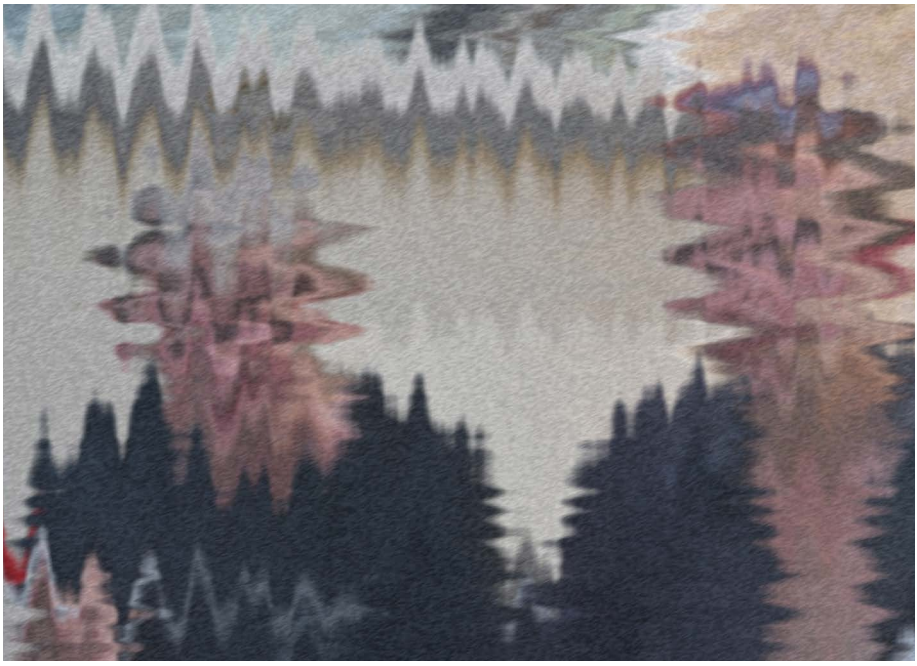
“I’m going back to Sicily. I’ve been at St Martins for seven years. It’s been so-so. No, many things have been good. People help here. Like Dagmara, my keyworker. She’s helped me with the forms. There were lots of forms for Sicily. I have an Italian passport. But still, lots of forms. It took a long time.

I will live with my brother and his family. He has a big house. It is near the sea. I don’t like the beach. But I love Sicily. I was born there. I went to school there. I have some friends there. We speak occasionally on the phone.

I have lots of bags to pack. I want to take books and my clothes, my reading glasses and my other glasses – the ones I wear normally. I don’t know when I will go. Soon, I hope. I am ready. I will say goodbye to my flatmate. I will say goodbye to Dagmara.

When I get to Sicily, I want to have a meal with my family. My favourite food is spaghetti Napolitana. That is what I will ask for.”

The problem with labels



Two of St Martins' residents asked to speak to Connect anonymously about their experiences of the mental health system. This is what they said:

"There's a problem with the system. The problem has to do with diagnosis. Not enough attention is paid to individuals' particular symptoms, backgrounds and needs.

When you get to hospital it's like, 'Oh you're schizophrenic, you go over there with the schizophrenics. You have a personality disorder, you belong at the PD unit.'

Obviously people need to be treated the best way the authorities know how. But these labels used in the mental healthcare system are not necessarily helpful. It's like the doctors, psychologists and staff are just saying, 'We've got your number, this is how you are, and therefore the way we expect you to behave,' without looking in enough detail at the specifics of each case.

This means that, as a patient or a service user, you're trapped in a strange game. You have to prove that you're getting better, but you've got to do it in a way that fits their ideas of what your problem is. Even if those ideas are based on the labels, rather than what is actually wrong with you.

Sometimes the strain of this can make people more unwell. But the main thing you need to be wary of is giving over too much responsibility. The more you get used to everything being done for you, the less well you become. That's the good thing about rejoining the community. You start to have a look around, get some confidence and think about how you can take some responsibility."

Board Member corner

John Whitton tells us about himself and why he joined St Martins' Board.

"I was born 10 minutes from St Martins' Head Office and went to school in Kings Cross. I trained as a mechanical engineer and my career took me from the shop floor to the Boardroom. By the time I retired to Yorkshire, I had worked in various business sectors including manufacturing, construction, defence and an assortment of service industries.

In 2007 I became a Business Mentor for the Prince's Trust in Yorkshire and in 2008 I became a Non Executive Director for Humber NHS Mental Health Trust, which is now an NHS Foundation Trust employing nearly 2800 staff and seeing over 10,000 patients every week. I am currently the Chair of Governance for this Trust.

In August 2011 I was very pleased to be appointed to the Board of St Martins to support the unique and caring services which the organisation offers.

As a member of St Martins' Board, I act as an unbiased sounding board for the Executives, whilst at the same time seeking assurance through constructive challenge, that Management are meeting the organisation's aspirations for both staff and residents. In the current economic and political environment, this is especially complex and difficult.

You may ask, why does a retired person want to travel from Yorkshire to London to be involved in St Martins, and the answer is very simple. Over the years I have been driven by performance and profit. When I retired I decided to use my experience to help other people to improve their lifestyle, but not for my personal gain. I am passionate about what I do as a Board Member at St Martins. I have seen the commitment of our staff, supporting residents with compassion and heart, which is sometimes very challenging.

I am proud of being a part of St Martins, even though the part I play is very small. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to be involved in such a special organisation."

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WORLD CUP WHERE'S WALLY

Can you find him?

A great city

Fatai on London and a summer of sport.

"How are you doing? I'm Nigerian. London's a great city, for Nigerians, or anyone. There's some good Nigerian restaurants. There's one on Kingsland Road I like. There's one in Edmonton, one in Tottenham, one in Wembley. They're everywhere and they are good. But you can eat stuff from anywhere in the world in London.

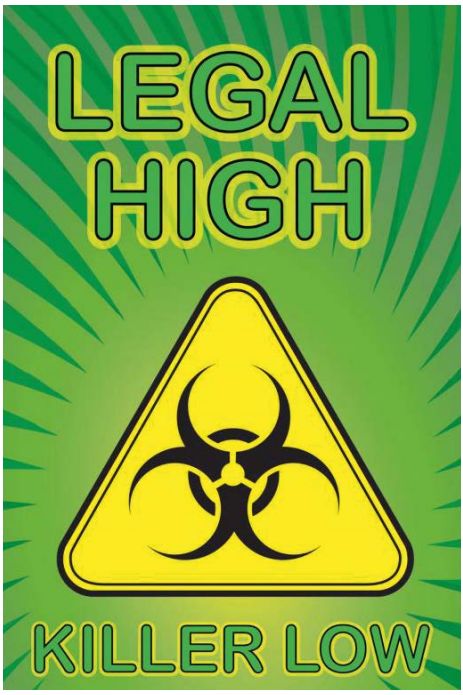
What a summer it has been. I've been watching the World Cup. I was supporting Nigeria, England and Brazil – so I was disappointed. England and Nigeria had to go home early, and Brazil... that was dramatic, the way they went out. England didn't have enough experience on the pitch. They played the young guns, but experience counts. Experience wins matches. I didn't even watch their third game. There was no point by then.

What else have I been doing lately? I do a bit of rapping. I'm not that good, not professional, but I like it. What do I rap about? I guess it's about life. About what matters to me, what matters to people."

Say no to legal highs!

The only 'high' about drugs like Black Mamba, Mint Mania, Snow and Challo is high risk.

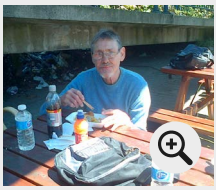
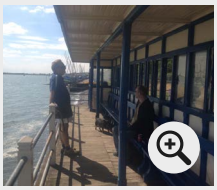
People in London have died after taking legal highs. Although the attraction is their cheapness, legality and the quick 'high' people get from taking them, the side-effects are very dangerous and include:



- Death
- Comas
- Worse mental health
- Brain damage
- Loss of consciousness and subsequent injury
- Vomiting
- Anti-social behaviour
- Increased risk of heart attack

Please be very careful and understand that you are placing your own life and the wellbeing of others around you at risk if you take legal highs.

If you want advice or you are concerned about legal highs please speak to your keyworker.

Trips and Activities

In July and August a number of residents are visiting the seaside. If you have any ideas for trips and activities in the autumn, please speak to staff.