Connect

Residents' newsletter

April 2019

FEATURING:

Co-Production at St Martins

David Brown

St Martins Football Team

Reaching out to service users in Hospital

St Martins

PARTNERS IN MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

Welcome

Welcome to your spring issue of Connect.

If you have recently become a resident of St Martins, a warm welcome. Connect is published three times per year and is a platform for your stories, artwork and poetry. We cover events, activities happening across the organisation, and we aim to provide relevant information, for example contacts for benefit queries.

Summer time is great at St Martins. There will be plenty of barbeques, trips to theme parks and the seaside. For anyone who has green fingers, there will be plenty of gardening work available at most services. In July St Martins will host its annual Summer Fair. This is an outdoor park event. There will be sporting competitions, music, food etc. Plenty to look forward to.

In this issue, I catch up with David Brown. There is also an extensive update on the Co-production work. We cover the recent Volunteering event with Dawn and her helpers. Harpreet, David and Mark also tell us about their recent trip to Wolfson House (East London NHS Trust).

Happy Reading!
Harpreet

ST MARTINS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS, SUPPORTED BY RESIDENTS...

Well done to Dawn, Michael, Adonis and Kweku. The four of them represented St Martins at a recent volunteering fair held by Camden and Islington.

St Martins welcomes volunteers to work in our services. An extra pair of hands helps staff organise activities, appointments and get more done in general. New people with different stories and skills can be enjoyable for service users to spend some time with and talk to as well.

14 people expressed an interest in volunteering for St Martins at the Fair. Four of these people have visited our services so far.

Co-Production at St Martins

Co-production was first introduced at the beginning of 2017, by Vimala Uttarkar, who is the head of Operations and HR.

If you are reading this and thinking, 'what is Co-production?'

Co-production is when two sides work together, in an equal and reciprocal partnership, towards a shared goal. St Martins would like its staff to work with service users as a team. Co-production sees people as not just people but assets. This is done by drawing out what skills and knowledge people have. We have all been on a journey. It does not matter where you might be in your Recovery, everyone has something to contribute.

St Martins has monthly Co-production meetings at Head Office. Take this as your first step in working with St Martins. You will be paid for your time. Once you become a regular member of the Co-production meeting, other opportunities (some of them paid) will open up.

At the meeting you will work with other service users from different projects.

So, what have the members achieved so far? Here are a few examples:

- ✔ **In-House job opportunities:** Each project has identified small paid jobs in your house. For example, cleaning, looking after the garden.
- ✔ **Growing fresh produce:** There are various gardening opportunities around all projects.
- ✔ **Inspirational Talks:** Service users have been given the opportunity to share their Recovery story, to help and inspire others as a beacon of hope.
- ✔ **Connect:** A service user has been given the opportunity to be co-editor of St Martins Newsletter.
- ✔ **Recovery Training:** A service users is working with management to deliver training to staff.

Mini- Co-Production at your Project

After the success of Co-production work, Vimala felt we needed a smaller Co-production group specifically for each project. This work is led by Harpreet and began last year. For example, Chalkhill Road staff & residents will meet once a month. This is where you have the opportunity to discuss what changes & ideas you would like to see at your project.

This work has been carried out in stages. Last year we opened the floor to staff & residents to say what they would like to see. In the end this was drafted into a report sent to Vimala.

This year we are trying to action items in the report.

SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, GET INVOLVED WITH ST MARTINS CO-PRODUCTION PROJECTS. WHO KNOWS WHERE IT MAY LEAD.

David Brown:
Former US Marine, now fighting a different kind of battle...

It was a real pleasure to talk with David. Thank you for sharing your story. I don't think I have ever interviewed someone who has been part of the USA Navy. David, 'we salute you!'

Hi, I am David. I was born in London but I went to the USA as a baby and grew up there. I grew up in Queens & Long Island-New York. I was quite young when I joined the Navy. I did 10 ½ years full active service. I served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. I helped control the border between the latter two. I am not sure the Navy was my dream. I was also studying- 'In House Litigation.' This involves working on legal loop holes and corporate documents. I worked for two companies that merged called- JP Morgan & Chase Manhattan.

I am one of 9 siblings (5 girls, 4 boys). My father passed away, so I came to the UK in the year 2000, to be with my mum. I started my own security company. I did the security for Glastonbury. I also worked on doors.

I became mentally ill whilst serving a prison sentence. I was claustrophobic (did not like small spaces). My mood was low and I was hearing voices. Eventually, I was sent to hospital. When I got better, I was sent back to prison to finish my sentence.

I was referred to St Martins. I was told I would be here for 3-5 months, 7 years later and I am still here!

My catchment area is Luton. The people at Luton have done nothing for me. They are supposed to visit me, but they don't. When they did finally come, they gave me 15 minutes. My situation is very frustrating. It feels like I have been dumped and forgotten about. I am now seeking legal help.

My time with St Martins has been quite positive. I did a Maths course, I am working towards getting my driving license and I have had a very good experience working with Hillside Club House. HCH is fantastic. You meet people from all walks of life, not just mental health.

I have my good friend Ali Mohamed. We are like brothers. We go for breakfast every morning. Being a Muslim, that faith keeps me strong.

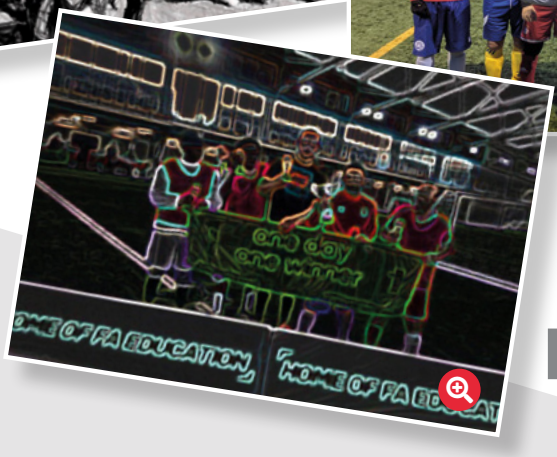
Don't get me wrong St Martins is good. However, I need my own space, I am ready (I was ready years ago). I find myself battling with the system.

St Martins Football Team:
Growing stronger!

What started off as a kick in the park, has now become a fully formed St Martins football team. We now play in the very competitive, Wembley Power League. We also play in the 'North London- Special League'. A special thank you to staff, who have applied for funding and supported our team.

THEN...

NOW...



FOREVER!

If you love football, then you are in the right place!

We also have staff v resident matches. It is like a derby, with plenty of bragging rights on the line.

The team is managed by former resident David Michael. If you want to join the team, please speak to David.

Being part of the team is about more than just playing. There is also the social aspect, meeting up with team members, meeting new people from other teams, talking, doing something fun and/or challenging together.

We welcome new players, whatever level you are at. Get involved and take advantage of playing football.

In the past, staff have provided the team with tickets to matches at Wembley.

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Reaching out to Service Users in Hospital

By Harpreet, David & Mark

After the success of our first visit, myself, David and Mark had the opportunity to go back to the East London NHS Foundation Trust. This time we were invited to give a similar inspirational talk to service users at Wolfson House. Wolfson House has low secure wards. Here, service users are preparing for discharge. Never could our visit be more relevant to them.

The benefit of this would be to provide insight and awareness to those in hospital, of life in the community.

Service users in hospital maybe anxious of the challenges ahead, feeling institutionalised. There are some who are excited about moving back into the community and just want to listen to what waits in store for them. What is a hostel? What do St Martins provide? What benefits do I get? How do I do a course or get a job? These are all questions that David, Mark and I tried to answer.

We opened the presentation by talking about risk. Life is about taking chances, no matter where you might be. Getting out of bed and going to a job interview is a risk. Once you have suffered from a mental illness the world can seem a scary place. It takes time to build up confidence and trying things.

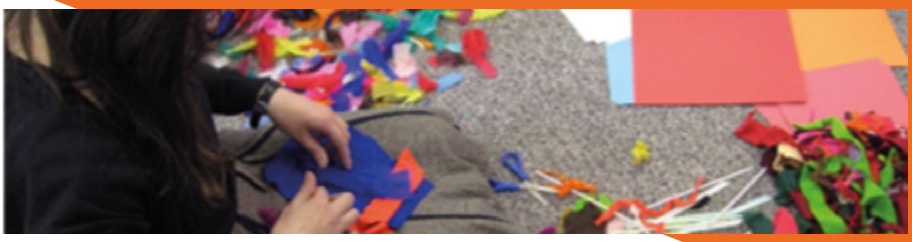
The group was fairly large and there were loads of questions and discussions. David's and my story at the end was well received. I think it gave them a lot of hope. The system does work and if you keep fighting you can achieve your dreams. Mark's talk was also well received. Again it inspired hope. I felt very honoured to work with David and Mark. It was a privilege to represent St Martins.

What's next? I would like my peers at St Martins to have a similar opportunity.

Now to describe Wolfson House... They bought a block of flats and turned it into pre-discharge wards; 5 wards, 1 per floor, 2 long term discharge. We started with 3 residents then a further 5 came making 8. It was good. We all introduced ourselves. Then we started the icebreaker and the talk. The video we chose went down well. Sophie was very helpful keeping one or two residents on track, especially when one guy described his doctor like something from Silence of the Lambs!! At the end I approached residents one-to-one to answer questions they had about employment. I suggested education as a way into employment as colleges have links to companies. All in all it was a good day. I feel the residents liked what we had to say.

By David

Things to do in the Community...



Although St Martins provide a lot of activities, there are other organisations out there. Places such as MIND (mental health charity) provide activities like art, IT training, music, counselling and advocacy. It is worth becoming a member. You will meet new people as well as try new things.

"I joined Brent Mind when I was at Chalkhill. They offered me football, psychology groups and employment support. I also received free tickets to watch England v Ireland (football match) at Wembley"

Harpreet

There are many branches of MIND throughout London. Contact them for a referral.

mind
for better mental health

hillside clubhouse

Hillside Clubhouse is another outstanding organisation. It is free to join if you are living in the borough of Islington. A lot of money has been invested and it is recommended by NHS England.

There are paid jobs available. You will get skills that will lead to more paid opportunities in the Community.

Catering project

We have a highly recommended catering team for your function, meeting or party and can take care of all your catering requirements. Our customers comment regularly on our quality, professionalism and value for money and Islington Environmental Health Officers have given us an 'excellent' inspection report with a four star 'Scores on the Doors' rating.

THE UPPER ROOM
~ Improving Lives ~

Want to get your Driving License?

Once you are passed fit and have your provisional license, there is a Voluntary work scheme you could go on, run by a company called: 'UR4 Driving'. You would need to have completed 80 hours of voluntary work, there after your theory and practical is paid for.

UR4Driving helps ex-offenders improve their employment chances. Participants are required to pursue opportunities for personal development and for improving their employability, including through voluntary work experience and access to informal peer mentoring. During this time participants are also required to attend the centre and use the facilities provided to practice for their theory tests.