

For supporters of the
BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal
with St Martin-in-the-Fields

You were there

'Homelessness affects so many different people from all walks of life. It's just surprising who it befalls and how it can happen to anyone.'



You've supported Richard to find work

Richard's homelessness began when his relationship broke down and being a stay at home dad meant he had no financial security to buffer his fall. Thanks to your generosity he received support from The Connection and step by step started to rebuild his life. With his housing resolved and new skills from attending workshops, he's thriving in life and recently started working in a women's homeless hostel.

His story is a brilliant example of how it's possible for people to recover from the trauma of homelessness.

We chatted to Richard to find out how his first six months have been, and why he's decided to help people who've also experienced homelessness (cont'd page 3).

Thank you for a record-breaking year



The 90th Christmas Appeal in 2016 raised a remarkable £2.85 million. That was because you and countless others provided the crucial link in a remarkable partnership between BBC Radio 4, the St Martin's community, those who work with homeless people around the country, and homeless and vulnerable people themselves. In this newsletter you can read about how your gift has been put to work to help people all around the country.

While planning for the 2017 Christmas Appeal we have been reflecting on what is unique about the Appeal. Our work is

on the front line. We don't pretend it's the whole answer to people's problems – but we do believe it's often the crucial intervention that enables them to begin to turn their life around. We're forming a partnership of support workers and agencies around the UK who all believe that what's crucial is the relationship between the vulnerable or homeless person and a support worker who can walk alongside them till their life begins to get better. We're calling our 2017 Appeal On the Frontline because we want to highlight what's unique about our work and where we believe it makes the most difference. Thank you for being such a key part of this vital partnership. We really appreciate your support.

Yours sincerely

Revd Dr Sam Wells

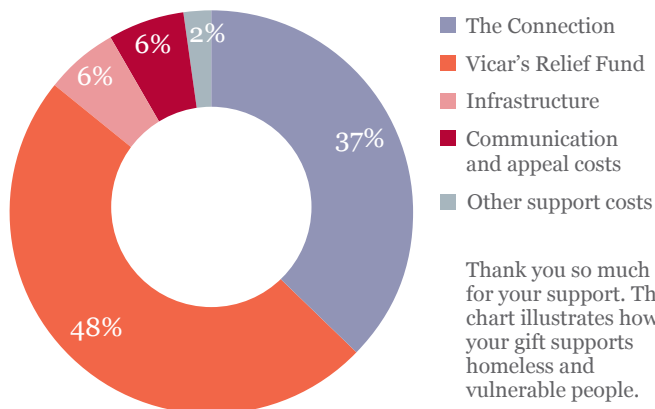
Our year in 2016. How your money is spent.

2,642 rough sleepers were contacted by The Connection's street outreach team and encouraged to access relevant support services.

773 people slept in the Emergency Night Centre.

708 people accessed our in-house training, education & employment service.

5,172 grants were awarded by the Vicar's Relief Fund.



Thank you so much for your support. The chart illustrates how your gift supports homeless and vulnerable people.

Richard (cont'd from page one)

Richard was sleeping rough for several weeks, after he and his wife separated and he had to leave the family home. He stayed in The Connection's emergency night centre until he moved into Building Prospects, one of The Connection's affordable housing projects and has begun a new role working in Riverside women's hostel – Queen Mary's.

What attracted you to the job?

I do this because I find the people so interesting. They're all fascinating individuals – they really are. A lot of mentally ill/homeless people have been abandoned by their families and friends. It reaffirmed my thing about different backgrounds and how homelessness affects so many different people from all walks of life. It's just surprising who it befalls and how it can happen to anyone. You've got people who have come from some very privileged backgrounds and it's all gone wrong.

Does it help that you've experienced homelessness yourself?

Oh yeah, I can empathise better and understand where they're coming from. These are people with problems. Someone might shout at me but in five minutes time then it will stop and they'll apologise. It doesn't bother me. This is a symptom. People have complex needs.

Tell us about an average day?

I'm learning how to run a hostel. I'll do a week on support and then a week in housing and when I'm there I'm learning about how we support the clients, organise the rooms, bits and pieces like that, get alarms fixed for fires all kinds of



Richard with his colleague Annie.

stuff. It's a continuous learning process. For the first couple of weeks I shadowed a wonderful project assistant called Annie. She showed me the ropes and we got on really well.

When you're not at work, how do you unwind?

I see my children. I like walking and cycling. Last year I walked The Connection's Pilgrimage [fundraising walk from London to Canterbury]. I walked 74 miles but put on half a stone! As you walk these church halls are laden with cakes. I enjoyed it tremendously. You get people doing it for various reasons, it's a good crew. We had nice weather and it's good to get out of London. While the distance didn't bother me my boots fell apart and had to be held together by superglue!

Photo credit: Christian Petersen

A workshop for clients in painting and decorating



Left to right: Robert (client volunteer) Mohammed, Pat (tutor), Anderson and Hazel.

Five clients at The Connection recently completed a painting and decorating workshop, which was organised with the charity and social enterprise 'Bounce Back'. The five day workshop gave people a chance to gain valuable experience and tangible painting and decorating skills. Steve, The Connection's Groups & Activities Co-ordinator, explains in more detail why these opportunities are so vital for people.

'Most people want to learn and find work but need extra support to get there. The course provided structure but was also a safe space where people could learn, have fun and develop practical skills which they can use professionally but also in their personal lives.'

'The course also offers the chance for clients who have been out of work for long periods to demonstrate other skills such as time keeping, team working and communication skills. All of which boost people's confidence!'

On completion everyone was awarded a certificate and the course has inspired two of the participants to continue their learning by enrolling on a City & Guilds level qualification. This will look great on the CV and improve people's prospects of finding work.

Thank you Southdown Housing

Staff at Southdown Housing chose to make us their 'Charity of the Year' through a host of imaginative fundraisers.

The team at the housing association, based in Lewes, East Sussex, found wonderful ways to fundraise – from sales of their 'Southdown Pets' calendar, to holding their popular raffle to win a weeks' annual leave! We are delighted to receive their generous cheque of £1,340 and we appreciate all that the team do to support people in East Sussex who are at risk of homelessness.



The team at Southdown Housing, who nominated St Martin's as their Charity of the Year.

What to do if you see someone sleeping rough

It's something we get asked a lot – what do you do if you see someone sleeping rough?

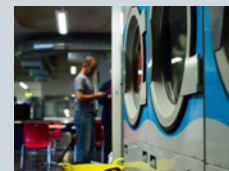
If you're worried about someone who you've seen rough sleeping, the most helpful thing you can do is contact StreetLink, a national service funded by the Government. StreetLink aims to help bring an end to street homelessness by enabling the public to act. By providing information about a person and their whereabouts, you can help connect them to local support services as swiftly as possible.

You can alert StreetLink to someone sleeping rough by filling out an online form via www.streetlink.org.uk, downloading and using the 'Streetlink' app, or by calling them via their hotline on 0300 500 0914.



Connecting rough sleepers to local services
www.streetlink.org.uk

Here's how your money could help The Connection provide life-saving services to rough sleepers every day of the week:



£5

means someone could enjoy a hot shower with toiletries and have their clothes laundered.

'It's very important to me to keep clean so I don't feel or look so much like I'm homeless.'

Daniel



£25

could provide a hot and heart-warming meal for ten rough sleepers.

'Home cooked and substantial food means I'm not running on empty. It gives me a good start to the day.'

Toby

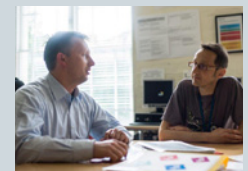


£100

could provide a rough sleeper with two nights' stay in the safety of The Connection's emergency shelter while a longer term solution is found.

'I sleep so well I couldn't fault it. It's so well organised and such a safe environment.'

Michael



£200

could support a person into work through employability workshops, so they can sustain a living for themselves and stay off the streets.

'They helped me prepare for my interviews as a Porter and I got the job. If it wasn't for their help I'd still be out of work.'

Paul

The Vicar's Relief Fund

Government statistics published in March this year show that between 2015 and 2016, rough sleeping in England has increased by 16%. The Vicar's Relief Fund (VRF) has felt the increased need too – last year, 67% more grants were awarded than the year before.

The VRF helps homeless and vulnerably housed people through small-sum, rapid response grants to prevent eviction, access accommodation or set up home. The average size of grant is £250, with grant requests usually processed within 1-3 days. Grants are given to individuals across the UK through frontline workers.

Karen Brighton

Karen had suffered a lot of trauma in her life including domestic abuse. Due to her fragility, she lived in supported housing for some time. Once Karen was able to move into permanent housing, she needed to buy cooking facilities and a fridge.

The VRF awarded a grant of £240 for a cooking hob, microwave and fridge. After receiving the grant she said: 'Having this money has been amazing! It means I can actually live in my new place, not just camp there.'

Clare Neath, South Wales

Clare had been suffering from acute mental health problems and was admitted to a psychiatric ward. Following her release from hospital, she had to spend a high level of income travelling to the hospital for her follow up recovery appointments. The result of this meant Clare struggled to pay her rent and fell into arrears. A VRF grant of £160 enabled her to pay the arrears and keep her flat. We hear she is now doing really well – and made the flat her own by painting it throughout.

Michael Rotherham

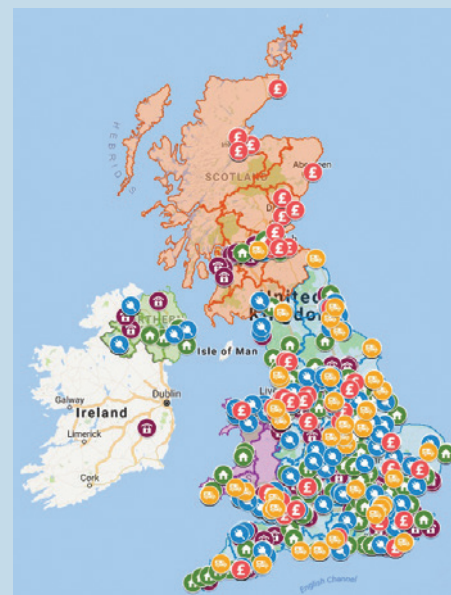
Michael left the family home after the relationship broke down with his partner. After a period in temporary accommodation, he was able to move into a home of his own, though he owned virtually no furniture at all. His support worker applied for a VRF grant of £250 and with these funds, Michael was able to buy a bed, cooker and fridge freezer. Michael said being provided the grant helped him feel more positive and focus on what he needs to do, and says he will be forever thankful for the grant that he was awarded.

We will provide grants for:






- Preventing eviction – rent arrears, service charge arrears, Debt Relief Orders and bankruptcy fees.
- Accessing accommodation – rent deposits, rent in advance, admin fees, ID, or temporary accommodation costs.
- Setting up home – household goods or moving costs.

VRF impact in numbers, 2016/17

- The VRF team awarded 5,172 grants
- The fund was oversubscribed, having received 7,033 applications
- £1,213,000 was the total awarded to support people away from homelessness.



Vicar's Relief Fund (VRF) Distribution Map

-  Grant for a deposit, rent in advance or admin fees
-  Grant for rent arrears
-  Grant for a cooker, fridge/freezer, beds/bedding or carpeting
-  Grant for a Debt Relief Order or bankruptcy
-  Grant for removal costs

The St Martin's Frontline Network

Last year we formed the St Martin's Frontline Network – to harness the ideas, energy and experience of those at the frontline working with homeless and vulnerably housed people.

We know that frontline workers are a key asset in tackling homeless and housing issues in the UK, and yet they can often lack the resources they need and their voices go unheard.

We develop partnerships with other organisations by building relationships, sharing best practice, developing solutions and communicating the experience and views of people working on the frontline.

The Frontline Network operates at a national level through the website www.frontlinenetwork.org.uk and has already seen an enthusiastic response from frontline workers across the UK, who have contributed to the Network forum and ideas board.

'We're about to open a storage unit funded and supported by the Front Line Network... to take donations of good quality furniture, store it, and give it to families in need. I'm really excited to have an idea of mine supported... and can't wait to see what other ideas are put forward.'

Tara Wilkinson, Support Worker, Plymouth access to Housing (PATH)



On the Frontline with Rowena Gregor



Rowena works as a Case Manager for ARCH Cymru, a community support organisation in Wrexham, but years ago experienced homelessness herself. We asked her to tell us about her job and why she chose to do it.

As a Case Manager you help people to find secure accommodation. How long have you been in this role?

'That's Right, though primarily ARCH is a drug and alcohol service, working alongside the criminal justice system and 65% of my workload is supporting people to find secure accommodation and maintain that tenancy. I have been in my current role for nearly two years.'

How did you become a Case Manager?

'By sheer perseverance and determination! I first came to ARCH three years ago as a part-time Recovery Support Worker, at the time I was also studying for a degree at Glyndwr University. The position for a Trainee Case manager came up and I applied. I went on to become a Case Manager a year later... It is one the proudest moments of my life.'

What is a typical day like for you?

'There is no such thing as a typical day that's one of the best parts of the job!'

'Everyone who has access to our services has a substance misuse issue but there are so many other issues – mental health, homelessness, family... Each one needs to be supported, all at the same time. We liaise with many different services such as Wales Probation, the courts, Community Substance Misuse team... We are extremely lucky in Wrexham that we have good partnership working.'

What keeps you motivated when you have a tough day?

'The service users themselves and when you see that moment that they move forward, whether it's obtaining accommodation or entering rehab, this is why I go that extra mile.'

What do you think is the hardest thing to overcome when you've experienced homelessness?

'Being able to trust other people, without thinking there was a catch or a hidden agenda. I had to learn how to be around people and how to conduct myself without fear of being inferior.'

What do you think each of us can do, if we see someone homeless?

'Don't judge what you see, remember that they are someone's mother, father, sister, brother and something really bad must have happened in their lives to get them into this situation... Just acknowledging that homeless people actually exist, a smile or a 'good morning' costs nothing.'

Manu graduates as a volunteer to support homeless people

'I want to help people. That's my priority.'

You may remember Manu from last year's summer newsletter. Thanks to your support he'd recently stopped sleeping out after 11 years and had started getting involved in lots of new activities, like volunteering through The Connection's in-house scheme, Step Up.

A year on and we're delighted to tell you that things are continuing to go from strength to strength.

While Manu still regularly volunteers with The Connection, he's pushed himself out of his comfort zone by embarking on a seven week homeless health peer advocate volunteer placement with another organisation called Groundswell. He's supporting homeless people to access health care services:

'My job is to take the clients from where they are staying to the hospital, doctors, dentists. Wherever they want to go, I'm there. I'm doing three days a week and I'm enjoying every minute of it.'

Manu explains that homeless people are more likely to have physical and mental health problems but less likely to use services:

'Most of them think they have no right to NHS treatment. But no matter who you are, whether you're an immigrant or not, you can. I was sick on the street with a kidney infection. I know what it's like.'

The placement has tested Manu but he says he's found other volunteers' resilience very motivating and it's helped him realise what's important to him in life:



'I almost packed it in, nearly quit, but some of the people inspire me to carry it on. There was one lady, she was a single mum, had a lot to do, and was still volunteering. Since I've been homeless I don't care about money, I want to help people. I've lived their life. That's my priority.'

The graduation ceremony was a chance for Manu to celebrate his achievement and share this success with several members of staff from The Connection, who helped him when he was homeless. One of them was User Involvement Manager Wyn Newman, who describes the emotion of attending the ceremony:

'I felt very privileged to be invited to this event to celebrate the achievements of all the graduates. Manu is an incredibly resilient man and despite all the difficulties he has faced he has worked hard to sort his life out. He has achieved so much and this course is a good example of this. It has been challenging for him but he has stuck with it.'

A few words from our Appeal Volunteers



'One of the pleasures of volunteering is that the generosity of the public makes you feel very humble. I started to volunteer when I realised that homelessness was on the increase and I could easily give up a few hours of my time over the stressful Christmas period to help these vulnerable citizens.'

John Foster
Christmas post volunteer



'Bless you for the wonderful way you organise, it was truly a pleasure to do my bit... It would be great to help out again.'

El Barrett
Christmas post volunteer



'I think St Martin-in-the-Fields is a great charity that tackles homelessness with humility and community spirit, so it is a perfect place to volunteer and feel part of something special. I enjoyed meeting all the various walks of life that volunteer and getting a buzz out of the phenomenal generosity of donors!'

Mavi Tzaig
Christmas post volunteer

Radio 4 Volunteers



'Every year I'm knocked sideways by donors' generosity – not only of pocket but also of spirit. People have so clearly tried to imagine what homelessness would be like.'

Harriett Gilbert
BBC Radio 4 presenter
(A Good Read)



'I am always delighted to help with the BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martin-in-the-Fields which does outstanding work helping people with their housing struggles around the country. I also enjoy engaging directly with Radio 4 listeners who give so generously.'

Paul Lewis
BBC Radio 4 presenter
(Money Box)



'I've been answering the Christmas Appeal phones for several years now and I would hate to miss it!'

'It inspires me that there are so many generous and kind people out there, and to see how much the charity achieves and the difference it makes to people all over the country.'

Kathy Clugston
BBC Radio 4 newsreader

Archbishop Justin Welby joins The Connection's Outreach team



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recently joined Ewa and Ariel from The Connection's Outreach Team on one of their Westminster night shifts. By walking the streets himself, the Archbishop was able to meet people directly affected by homelessness and understand how The Connection helps rough sleepers move away from life on the streets. Pam Orchard, Chief Executive of The Connection says:

'It was fantastic to host a visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury and we really appreciate him taking the time to learn more about the reality for rough sleepers and the growing crisis in homelessness in London and across the UK.'

Homelessness has more than doubled in the last five years and his visit will help bring awareness of the issue, while highlighting the vital role that homelessness charities and faith groups play in working with people who are isolated, marginalised and living on the edge of society.'

Outreach worker Ewa describes what happened on shift:

'We spoke to five clients; two of them were given appointments for assessment at the centre so we can find out more about their situation and how we can help. We checked in with one prior to being seen by a psychiatrist and two who were working and sleeping rough. Sadly none of them accepted a referral to our emergency Night Centre but our role is to persist with people until they are ready to accept help.'

90 Years Together, with the BBC

As the BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martin-in-the-Fields, we're able to reach out to donors through the annual BBC Radio 4 Vicar's Appeal and the radio programme 'Making a Difference'.

Yet, it is also the individual contributions from staff, year after year, that helps to make the Appeal so successful and raise significant funds to support homeless and vulnerably housed people.

We would like to thank staff across the BBC for all their enthusiasm, hard work and encouragement.



Tony Hall, Director-General of the BBC, attended the Radio 4 broadcast service of Sunday Worship at St Martin-in-the-Fields, marking 90 years of the Christmas Appeal.

Thank you for supporting us to be at the Frontline



Christine received a grant from the VRF so she could secure accommodation. Matt, her support worker, applied for a grant on her behalf.

How to contact the Appeal team

We value your interest. If you would like any further information about the Appeal or the work that you support, please contact us on the details below:

Phone

020 7766 1138

Email

info@stmartinscharity.org.uk

Web

www.smitfc.org

Thank you for supporting us to be at the frontline. The donations you make ensure we can keep our doors open at The Connection and provide that vital grant when someone needs it most, made via the Vicar's Relief Fund.

Over the 90 years the Appeal has run, generous supporters have raised over £25m to help homeless and vulnerable people. Thank you for being one of them.

Other ways to support the Christmas Appeal

The Connection at St Martin's welcomes around 200 people each day and the Vicar's Relief Fund provides grants across the UK, throughout the year.

To support St Martin's with a regular gift, please find enclosed a donation form to set up a regular donation or go directly to www.smitfc.org.uk.

If you would like to leave a gift in your Will, please contact us to request further information.

If you are already making a regular gift to St Martin's, thank you for all that you do.