



THE PASSAGE

Helping homeless people

Founding patron:
Cardinal Basil Hume

Patron:
Archbishop Vincent Nichols

Autumn newsletter, 2013

From Mick Clarke, Chief Executive

St Vincent's Centre
Carlisle Place
London SW1P 1NL

Dear Friends

A great deal has happened at The Passage since I wrote to you at Easter.

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For many years, we have been working towards refurbishing St Vincent's Centre, which contains our Day Centre, and Montfort House, which provides self-contained studio flats – with support on site – for 16 formerly homeless people. It is also home to a community of Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, who established St Vincent's Centre 150 years ago.

The building, which has been adapted to many different purposes over the years, now urgently needs to be altered to bring the standard of its physical structure up to match the high standards of service The Passage provides *inside* the building. **It was appropriate, therefore, that in May this year – the 150th year that St Vincent's has been used in working for poor and disadvantaged people – we received planning permission for the building's refurbishment.** While this is exciting, it is also slightly nerve-racking. To ensure that we continue to offer all the services that we currently offer at St Vincent's, we will have to operate around the building works for 18 months. I will keep you posted on this exciting development.

New services. In addition to our many established services, we are developing new initiatives.

- “Before you go” (our initiative to prevent economic migrants ending up homeless and sleeping rough on the streets), has secured additional government funding to enable us to roll it out further.
- Our project working with local faith and community-based

groups, helping those who want to help homeless people to co-ordinate their work with other charities, is proving to be very effective.

– We are also about to launch our “Home for Good” project, which will bring support to former rough sleepers who are moving into self-contained accommodation, to help them sustain their tenancies and to break their cycle of homelessness once and for all.

These initiatives and developments all come from real needs, which we see in our day-to-day work, that are not being met.

Partnership working

In all our work, partnership is crucial to achieving lasting results. This is particularly true of our direct work with our clients, people such as Carl and Brendan.

Carl is a Londoner who became homeless a few months ago as a result of his marriage breaking down. Up to this time, Carl had a stable work record as a catering manager, but the rejection he felt when his wife said that their marriage was over meant that he could not cope with going to work. He stayed with friends and family for a while, sleeping on their sofas, but when they were unable to continue to put him up he ended up sleeping on the street.

Our Outreach Team encouraged him to come into the Day Centre, where he joined the mentoring group. Our mentoring co-ordinator, who meets homeless people who might benefit from support from a volunteer, matched Carl with a volunteer mentor. They talked a lot about why he felt so insecure and why the end of his marriage had such an effect on his life.

His wife, Carl said, had been his “rock”. He had been adopted as a child and had an unsettled childhood. Then he chose to find his birth parents, but they rejected him.



That hurt, and in the process he fell out with his adoptive parents.

Carl used all the services that The Passage provides – from washing and eating to housing and job search. Over a three-month period, he got his life back on track. He is now living in a shared house and has recently started working in a job that is below his skill level but, as he says, is a start.

Carl’s mentor supports him (Carl thinks it’s great to have a dedicated volunteer that is there just for him!) and they have a common interest in music so really relate to one another.

It is very good to be able to help someone that quickly, but some people are homeless for many years.

DECENT LIFE, UNTIL I WAS ACCEPTED AT PASSAGE HOUSE.

“AS SOON AS I STEPPED INSIDE THE FRONT DOOR, I WAS HAPPY TO SEE A VERY CLEAN AND PLEASANT RECEPTION AREA AND WAS MORE THAN HAPPY WITH MY KEYWORKER AS HE HAS BEEN VERY UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTIVE WITH ALL THE ISSUES I NEEDED TO DEAL WITH.

“I TRULY LOVE THE ROOM YOU GAVE ME, TO THE POINT WHERE I WISH I COULD TAKE IT WITH ME!

“ALSO I THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH KATE, THE HOSTEL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT WORKER. I WILL TREASURE THE TEN CERTIFICATES I ACHIEVED THROUGH HER HELP AND GUIDANCE. A LITTLE STRESS HIT ME AT TIMES AS I STRUGGLED ALONG FINDING MY INNER PEACE, BUT I REALISE THE BENEFICIAL EFFECT OF THE TRAINING COURSES.

“A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO THE CHEF AND MANAGEMENT FOR ALLOWING ME TO HELP OUT IN THE KITCHEN. I ABSOLUTELY ENJOYED WORKING IN THE KITCHEN AND I LEARNED A LOT OF THINGS, WHICH WILL BE USEFUL FOR ME LIVING ON MY OWN IN FUTURE. I WOULD REALLY LIKE TO COME BACK AND HELP IN THE KITCHEN UNTIL I FIND FULL TIME PAID WORK.

“THANKS TO HELEN, MY RESETTLEMENT WORKER FOR HELPING ME TO FIND MY NEW HOME AND FOR HELPING ME WITH THE PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS OF MOVING IN. THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING THE BEST HOMELESS HOUSING TEAM THAT I HAVE ENCOUNTERED AND I WILL MISS YOU ALL IMMENSELY.”

Two Passage House residents help with cooking.

Brendan had lived in different hostels, interspersed with sleeping on the streets, for many years. He has recently moved on from Passage House and wrote the following letter when he left.

“I THANK YOU ALL FOR ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING YOU HAVE ALL DONE FOR ME DURING MY STAY AT YOUR HOSTEL.

“I HAVE STAYED IN NUMEROUS HOSTELS IN THE PAST AND HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO COPE IN SUCH ENVIRONMENTS, WHICH USUALLY LED ME TO ABANDONING THE HOSTEL, OR EVEN WORSE. BASICALLY I HAD GIVEN UP ON LIFE AND THOUGHT THERE WAS NO MORE HOPE OF BEING ABLE TO LIVE A NORMAL

Some dates for the Autumn

Friends' and supporters' evening

I always look forward to welcoming friends and supporters to our annual meeting in Westminster Cathedral Hall, followed by an opportunity for you to meet our staff and fellow supporters over a drink and a bite to eat. This year the meeting will be on Thursday 17 October at 7pm. I do hope you will be able to attend.

A Night Under the Stars

This is our major fundraising event of the year. This year it is entitled "The Mozart Experience" and will take place on Tuesday 5 November at the Southbank's Royal Festival Hall.

Full details are enclosed. We really need as much help as possible to make this event a success, so please do come to the concert and support this event if you can. If you can publicise it at your place of work, or through a church, school or other community organisation, it would be a very big help.

We are also seeking businesses and individuals that can give additional support through sponsorship and advertising. **Last year, this event raised more than £126,000 towards our work. This year, sales of tickets, advertising and sponsorship have already covered our costs, so every extra £1 for the concert will go direct to helping homeless people.**

If you need more flyers, posters, or information (or would like to put us in touch with companies who might sponsor the event), please contact Andrew Hollingsworth by email, andrew.h@passage.org.uk, or telephone, 020 7592 1855. For further information, visit www.anightunderthestars.co.uk

Dependent on you

As ever, we continue to depend on our partnership with you to enable us to work in partnership with those who desperately need our help.

Your generosity enables us to continue to do our work and to help clients like Carl, Brendan and thousands of others, to ensure we make a lasting difference.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours



Mick Clarke
Chief Executive