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Autumn newsletter 2014

September 2014

Dear Friends

I hope this newsletter finds you well and that you have had an enjoyable summer. Time seems to move so quickly – at The Passage we are already well into planning for what is always the busiest time of the year: the autumn/winter period.

Being on the streets at any time of the year is awful, but when the weather begins to turn colder, it gets even worse. Thanks to your continued support we will be ready; not only to provide our day-to-day services that get people off the streets quickly (while never giving up on those with deeply complex issues who are entrenched street sleepers), but also in our emergency response when the weather makes life on the streets truly life threatening.

Prevention is always better than cure

While The Passage will always be there for those in crisis on the streets, we are increasingly focusing on prevention work in the belief that prevention is always better than cure. Our day services provide vital information for people at risk of becoming street homeless.

In the past year, nearly 75% of the people who visited our Resource Centre for the first time, were not seen rough-sleeping up to three months later.



I hope you managed to hear David Dimpleby's recent appeal on behalf of The Passage on Radio 4's *The week's good cause*.

If you missed it, it is still available on the Radio 4 website. David also talks on our website (<http://passage.org.uk/david-dimpleby-supports-passage/>) about why he supports our work. In his appeal, he talked about the way inner homelessness (depression, lack of support, feeling alone), can quickly lead to people ending up on the streets – and that is where our Home for Good scheme comes in.

Registered charity number 1079764

Founding patron Cardinal Basil Hume **Patron** Cardinal Vincent Nicholls

Home for Good

In addition to the work our staff carry out in our Resource Centre, to prevent people in housing crisis ending up on the streets, we have launched a new prevention scheme. Home for Good supports former rough sleepers, who are now off the streets and in accommodation, by linking them into support in their new communities to prevent them ending up back on the streets.

You may remember me mentioning Home for Good when it was in its planning stages. I am thrilled to say that we have been able to recruit two members of staff to cover the different areas of London where a number of our clients now live. Our staff members have recruited volunteers in these areas to help clients feel welcome there. This involves home visits, helping with practical tasks and budgeting, and also helping to introduce people to activities in the local community.

Home for Good also runs a **weekend club**.

Former clients feel that they have moved on from the Resource Centre (where the weekend services are for people who are still homeless and/or on the streets), but still need support. To that end, we have set up the weekend club. On Saturdays we organise outings to places of interest in London where entry is free, and on Sundays a local church allows us to run a lunch club on its premises.

We are hoping to find a base in SW1 for Saturday meetings, away from The Passage. If you know of a church hall or similar suitable building that we might be able to use, please let us know.

We are already seeing the results of our work to prevent people hitting the streets in the first place, and to prevent former rough sleepers going back there.



A sociable Sunday lunch for weekend club members.

Steps away from the streets

Many people do still find themselves on the streets, despite our prevention efforts. The Passage believes in helping clients to take practical steps away from those streets as quickly as possible. Since I last wrote to you – and thanks to your support – we have helped hundreds of people rebuild their lives. Here are three of their stories.



Marco, a 32-year-old man, was found rough sleeping in Westminster by our Outreach Team in November 2013. At their suggestion, he began to use our Resource Centre the following day.

He explained that he had been living in the US for ten years, but when he lost his job he was excluded from the US welfare system and returned to the UK. He initially stayed in a B&B, but soon ran out of money and was forced onto

the street. He was keen to work in construction, catering or in an office.

To begin with, we helped Marco apply for benefits in order to stabilise his situation. He then wrote a new CV, was able to apply for a bank account and studied for his Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) card, which he would need before he could work on a UK building site. During this time, he diligently looked for work and regularly attended

coaching sessions with our employment and training service.

Despite our best efforts, Marco wasn't getting beyond the interview stage which, we thought, was because of his lack of recent experience in the construction industry, and no experience in the UK.

We had recently started to work with Land Securities to identify homeless people who would benefit from training and work experience to help them into work on local construction sites.

After researching Land Securities and this particular opportunity, Marco was very excited to be involved. He felt it would be a worthwhile experience that might get him over the last hurdle of not having a recent, relevant record in construction, despite his skills and keenness to work.

It worked! Thanks to our support and the practical course, but mainly to Marco's dedication, he now has a job in construction and is gaining further skills through a bricklaying course.

Luke had been on and off the streets for 24 years. He had been in accommodation several times, but had never managed to break the cycle of homelessness and had always returned to the streets.

Since he met Michael, his worker at The Passage, that has changed. Michael helped him approach the local council and advocated to get him into temporary accommodation. From there, he got into detox and rehab before going back into temporary accommodation and finally getting his own flat.

Michelle is a 67-year-old habitual binge drinker, to block out the depression and anxiety caused by her bi-polar disorder. A former designer, her debilitating illness resulted in her becoming destitute.

The Passage successfully supported her in gaining a flat at the end of 2013, but she did not cope well and was in danger of losing her accommodation. Our Health Team visited her regularly, encouraged her not to abandon her home, and linked her into all the local services that might be able to help her.

One of the most obvious and simple skills that Michelle lacked was being able to cook for herself. Members of our staff rallied round her and took turns in guiding her and teaching her to cook with increasing confidence.

We have a long way to go with Michelle, but our work has prevented her from giving up her accommodation – which was a real possibility six months ago.

What's more, she hasn't returned to drinking during this time. We hope that this is the beginning of the long road to recovery for her. We will be there with her, every step of the way.

Michael supported him all the way – including getting a new sofa, bed, freezer, carpet and kitchen to help him begin to feel at home.

The Passage strives to be the source of support that people can turn to when they have no-one else. Luke says that every time he was on the street and having trouble with drinking, "Michael would always be there". Luke has now been in accommodation since September 2013. He says, "I don't feel like a down-and-out any more, if that makes sense to you".

Fundraising

“A Night Under The Stars” is our major fundraising event of the year. This year *Latin Spirit* will take place on Thursday 9 October at the Southbank’s Royal Festival Hall. Details are enclosed.

Please come to the concert to support this event if you can; it would be a great help if you were to publicise it at your place of work or through a church, school or other community organisation. We are also looking for businesses and individuals to give additional support through sponsorship and advertising.

Last year, “A Night Under the Stars” raised nearly £134,000 towards our work. This year, our costs have already been covered by sales of tickets, advertising and sponsorship, so every extra £1 will go direct to helping homeless people.

Please contact Andrew Hollingsworth, email andrew.h@passage.org.uk, telephone 020 7592 1855, if you can help. For further information, visit www.anightunderthestars.co.uk.

Other fundraising events are often held by local organisations or groups of supporters on our behalf. If you are able to help to raise funds for us, perhaps in the run-up to Christmas, please contact Andrew Hollingsworth, who will be happy to help.



Public collections at Victoria Station have been a real boost to our fundraising. Our long-term volunteer, Les Truman (above), recently retired from this role after 20 years.

The collections have directly raised more than £400,000, they have also introduced many new postal donors and volunteers through the distribution of leaflets and the sale of tickets to our events.

Things never stay the same and, as Les retires, the rules for our collections have changed – there is now a limit on the number of different



people we can have collecting over the course of a day. If anyone would like to help for three or four hours, either collecting or organising other volunteers, Andrew would be pleased to hear from you.

The other way we can boost public collection income is by collecting at other locations. If you are able to help us organise this in your home area, please get in touch and we can work together on a collection. It does not have to be at a station and might, perhaps, work well at Christmas, in conjunction with carol singing.

St Vincent's Centre building refurbishment

We will soon begin our major refurbishment of St Vincent's Centre! **I am delighted to say that every Passage project based at St Vincent's will continue throughout the building works.** More to follow soon!

Five-year strategy

Please look at our exciting new five-year strategy at <http://passage.org.uk/launch-new-five-year-strategy/> or let us know if you would like a hard copy.

Thank you

We could not do our work without your support.

Our statutory funding has declined year-by-year since 2010: in 2014/15 it is less than 75% of the funding we received in 2009/10. Unfortunately, we expect this pattern of reduction to continue.

Your generosity enables us to continue to do our work and to make a lasting difference to the lives of clients, such as Marco, Michelle and Luke – and thousands of others. Thank you for your continued support.

Yours

Mick Clarke
Chief Executive