

St Vincent's Centre
Carlisle Place
London SW1P 1NL

Registered Charity Number
1079764

Telephone 020 7592 1850

Fax 020 7592 1870

info@passage.org.uk

www.passage.org.uk



Autumn newsletter

Dear Friends

Founding patron

Cardinal Basil Hume

Patron

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

As I write this, torrential rain is pouring down: so much for the hot summer we were promised! Nevertheless, I hope that whatever the weather, and whether you stayed at home or ventured to warmer climes, you managed to get a break and a rest over the summer.

We often think about the winter weather as being the biggest challenge for those on the streets. While that is true and in many cases is life threatening, the challenge of rain or, indeed, extreme heat can prove to be just as difficult. That's why your support for our work is so important: it enables us to be there 365-days a year to help prevent people from ending up on the streets in the first place, or to help those who do to get off, and stay off, the streets.

The work your support enables us to carry out is immensely diverse – from preventing rough sleeping, to working with those people on the streets who can be helped quite quickly, to working with the young and the old, providing temporary accommodation and support for those moving into permanent accommodation, helping people into employment, and of course never giving up on those with particularly complex needs.

Modern slavery

One area of work that we have become increasingly involved in, through the experiences of our own clients, is modern slavery.

For many years we have been aware of the link between homelessness and modern slavery and of the way criminals prey on vulnerable people sleeping out and, indeed, of how those fleeing modern slavery can easily end up on the streets. We were, therefore, pleased to be commissioned by the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to produce a report into homelessness and modern slavery. It is available at tinyurl.com/yc8mkxhg. I hope you find it interesting. We are working hard to implement its recommendations and I will keep you updated.

Hotel School

The Passage has a strong record, not only of getting people off the streets, but also of helping them into employment.

To achieve that, we firmly believe that working in partnership achieves far more than working in isolation. To that end, we recently launched a partnership with The Goring Hotel, which has been a big supporter of The Passage for many years. Our new project, Hotel School, gives people affected by homelessness the opportunity to explore training and employment opportunities in the hospitality industry. While it is still early days, the results of our first ten-week course have been impressive: by the end of the course eight of the twelve participants already had full-time jobs. A great achievement considering the disadvantages some of them suffered during their period of homelessness.

One of the participants, **Paul**, has had his life transformed by the course. Many years ago he worked in the construction industry, but following a period of unemployment he became street homeless, and depression led to excessive drinking.

He was homeless on the streets, and known to our street outreach workers. In 2016, they referred him to one of our accommodation projects, but although he made a success of moving off the street his life lacked purpose. He was still subject to bouts of depression and would sometimes relapse into drinking. He believed he would never work again and that, at the age of 40, life for him was over.

When Paul's key worker heard about Hotel School opening at our Resource Centre, he encouraged him to apply. Initially, Paul was slightly reluctant – not always arriving



The Hotel School team hosts a roof top reception at the end of the course.

on time, for example – but once the course started to cover the practicality of cooking in a commercial kitchen, he was hooked! He discovered a huge enthusiasm for cooking. His attitude changed completely and, from then on, he always arrived on time.

When it came to the end of the course, Paul led the team cooking for the end of course reception. He has subsequently had work experience at The Goring, the Ritz, and at a social enterprise restaurant. He is about to start a 12-month apprenticeship, with six months at The Goring and six months at another restaurant. Paul now believes he has a future to look forward to.

Our grateful thanks go to The Goring, and a number of other hotels and colleges for their support. We look forward to welcoming a new group of trainees soon!



A comfortable retirement

We all hope that our retirement will be as comfortable as possible, but some of the people we help are already well past retirement age.

A few years ago I wrote about **Mary**, then in her late seventies, whose retirement had been far from comfortable. She had been homeless on the street since retiring from working in a hotel on a live-in basis. Too proud to claim benefits, she consistently refused help because she did not want charity, but we never gave up. After a very cold and snowy December she finally accepted our offer of accommodation.

Mary had spent more than four happy years with us – using the Resource Centre and attending Mass at Westminster Cathedral – until earlier this year we saw a decline in her health, particularly in her mobility, which concerned our staff. Eventually nurses (through a new project we have established with the NHS), and staff managed to persuade her to go into hospital and be treated for a leg infection.

Our staff continued to support her with daily visits, and spring-cleaned her flat, so that she knew she was in our thoughts and would be more than welcome back at the project when she was better.

Unfortunately, Mary's health deteriorated, but with our help and support she moved into a nursing home, where she is still visited by our staff and our chaplains.

Mary has had a comfortable end to her retirement after a hard-working life only because your support enabled The Passage to be the family that she never had.

Television documentary

The Passage was featured in the recent ITV documentary, *Diana Our Mother: Her Life and Legacy*. It was wonderful to welcome HRH Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, to St Vincent's Centre and for his interaction with our clients to be captured in such a poignant film. I do hope you saw it and enjoyed watching it.



Fundraising events

I also hope that those of you who were able to attend our Garden Party in College Garden, Westminster Abbey, had a wonderful evening. Thankfully we had good weather for the event, which raised much-needed funds for our work.

Our thoughts now turn to our main fundraising event, ***Night Under The Stars***, **this year hosted by Griff Rhys Jones**. Subtitled "Russian Soul", the concert takes place at the Royal Festival Hall on **Tuesday 7 November** and includes music by Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky. I enclose a flyer for the event. I do hope you will be able to attend and will encourage as many people as possible to purchase tickets for what promises to be a fantastic night.

Thank you for your support

As always I am very grateful for your support. Without your help we could not enable people like Paul and Mary to transform their lives; or provide food and drink, showers and laundry facilities and access to specialist services for up to 180 people a day as they start their journey from the streets. On behalf of them all, thank you so much.

Handwritten signature of Mick Clarke.

Mick Clarke
Chief Executive
