Getting a LIFE

Helping homeless people get back on their feet

An outside perspective, written by Dipannita Betal

ORC International

St Mungo’s

Leading London’s services for people who are homeless and vulnerable
St Mungo’s directly helps more homeless people back into education, work and lasting new homes than any other charity.

Last year we helped over 450 formerly homeless men and women back into new, and lasting homes away from St Mungo’s. We helped 300 formerly homeless people into jobs and another 648 into qualifications and training. Many more made smaller, but individually significant, steps along the way to a more independent and rewarding life.

We have ambitious plans to do even more to help London’s homeless people in ‘Getting a LIFE’.

Our ‘Getting a LIFE’ programme of work addresses a whole range of skills, from basic skills to educational qualifications, that homeless people can gain - from Literacy, Independent living and Friendship to Employment skills.

Our aim is that by 2007 every man and woman at St Mungo’s will have been given the opportunity to develop skills in all these basic LIFE areas, enabling them to flourish and live as independently as possible. To do this we need to double our investment.
“It’s changed my life… I feel that there are more possibilities open to me now!”
David Samuels

“It’s like a stepping stone to getting on with your life.”
Geoffrey Reynolds

“It feels like I am doing a decent day’s work again.”
Duncan Cairns

“I am feeling a lot happier…I am starting to enjoy learning.”
John Rose

“St Mungo’s gave me more than a place to live. They helped me to get skills, confidence and a job.”
Kitty O’Leary

“I’ve just moved into a flat of my own, everything’s looking rosier now!”
Charlie Kincane
At St Mungo’s we take pride in the warm welcome we provide to a broad cross section of men and women who are homeless.

We work with everyone. Young adults whose disrupted and often abusive childhoods are mirrored in their adult lives, often affected by drug use. Frail elderly people with a long history of mental illness and often a long history of sleeping rough.

Every year we now welcome over 1000 people into our accommodation. More than 90% require support with a need in addition to their lack of housing. And 47% require support with four or more additional problems. Our residents can have chaotic lives and be very challenging to work with.

Preparing to say good-bye is just as important.

Each day we see residents learning, and gaining confidence, as they participate in activities and move into our large network of semi-independent flats and houses. St Mungo’s provide more beds in semi-independent houses than in the more well known hostels. And last year we helped over 450 people move into new homes away from St Mungo’s.

During their stay at St Mungo’s, residents can take advantage of over 20 different programmes that specifically help with gaining LIFE skills. They can also try living in a range of progressively more independent settings, as well as continuously benefiting from the support, encouragement and advice of their key staff worker.

Does it make a difference? Undoubtedly. Can we help people from the lowest imaginable starting points? We already are.

Can we do more? Yes.

Hence our ambitious new programme - Getting a LIFE. We aim, with your help, to double the opportunities for our clients LIFE skills.

For the sake of the 100s of homeless men and women we help every year to get back on their feet, I hope we can count on your support.

Charles Fraser
Chief Executive
To help us we invited researchers ORC International to take an ‘outsider’s look’ - they visited a handful of our 60 accommodation sites, and came across just some of the 20 that we run specifically to improve homeless people’s basic, educational and job skills. ORC International interviewed residents, front line workers, managers and directors. The report that follows provides a flavour of the success and range of our current work, some lessons we can apply and our goals for the future.

648 homeless people took part in formal training.

Over 400 people gained independent living skills training.

2000 Work & Learning service opportunities get taken up each year.

458 people moved into new homes away from St Mungo’s last year.

130 people were helped with literacy skills.

300 people found new jobs.

20 different specific LIFE skills programmes.

‘Learning by doing’ in 50 semi-independent houses for 800 residents.

L - Literacy and Numeracy  
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I - Independent Living  
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F - Friendship and Fun  
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E - Employment and Education  
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HIGHLIGHTS OF ST MUNGO’S WORK

Until recently St Mungo’s did not offer dedicated support around literacy and numeracy issues. But support has been taking place…

- Each resident’s keyworker is on hand to help with form filling & letters.
- Activities such as creative writing sessions or putting together Source magazine at Bridge Resource Centre (opened in 1996) help build confidence and skills.
- Computer sessions - aided by volunteers in our Activity Development Team - give more opportunities to learn by doing.
- Support with shopping & budgeting, particularly in our semi-independent housing, helps with numeracy confidence.

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

- The new Adult Literacy Team (2002) responds to the need for more intensive support for people, especially in the hostel environment, with low literacy skills. It expands to 3 staff in 2003.
- Roving IT workers (from 2003) mean more residents are tempted to overcome their fear of computers to benefit from one-to-one hostel based IT sessions, and so ‘learn by doing’.
St Mungo’s has long challenged the view that all homeless people need is a roof over their heads. Instead they recognise the need to address the long-term problems that may have contributed to that person becoming homeless in the first place.

The most basic skills are the ability to read, write and be numerate. However, homeless people without these skills are at a considerable disadvantage when coping with everyday life, which adds to the barriers they face in trying to achieve a more stable and fulfilling life. Fundamental tasks such as maintaining a home, claiming benefits, reading numbers and seeking training or work can be impossible to do without help. This compounds the feelings of alienation homeless people may already have as a result of mental health problems, or drug and alcohol use.

ST MUNGO’S FACTS & FIGURES

- DFES research in 2003 indicated that 5% of adults in England had literacy skills below that expected of an 11 year old.
- At the very least 12% of St Mungo’s 1300 residents have literacy problems and 7% have numeracy problems - as currently identified by keyworkers who St Mungo’s aim to train in identifying and addressing literacy issues.
- 130 clients have benefited from the Adult Literacy Team sessions last year, with 38 regular attendees at present.
- 21 Further Education and community education referrals have been made into literacy courses.

“I know that I’m a bit slow with my reading and I wanted to better myself with reading, writing and spelling. Realising that I had these difficulties made me ask my keyworker for help on a literacy course and they referred me here.

Since coming to the course I feel like a different person because I’m now doing something for myself. I used to be embarrassed by this at first but I’ve started to overcome it and am feeling a lot happier. I’m even acting differently because of it - I can see that my confidence has increased because of my skills improving.

I didn’t used to read and write before because I never really enjoyed school but I’m now starting to enjoy learning again.”
St Mungo’s Literacy service, set up in February 2002 with substantial support from the JJ Charitable Trust, provides intensive support to residents with poor literacy skills so that they can improve their skills and facilitate progress in other areas of their lives. Some clients use English as their second language and also have literacy issues. The service is largely delivered within the hostel environment with clients who have low levels of confidence around accessing community courses. It is also increasingly using ‘quieter’ spaces such as St Mungo’s Bridge Resource Centre.

The success of this initiative has been seen in a relatively short period. Client and staff confidence in the service has grown, as have the numbers attending each session day by day. The Adult Literacy Team has expanded from a single tutor to a team of three tutors, and over 130 clients were seen last year. Further referrals have been made to Further Education and community education, with 21 specifically to literacy courses.

The tutor carries out an initial client assessment to determine the levels of skills in literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), using standard forms recommended by the Basic Skills Agency. The progress of the client is then regularly reviewed. Clients are encouraged to join in community-based training as they become sufficiently confident.

One of the greatest challenges is overcoming the stigma attached to having literacy needs. While clients are usually happy to take the course, they may not wish other people to know. This means they will not participate in group sessions, although they may participate in an IT group or in a creative writing group where literacy needs are addressed indirectly. However, St Mungo’s is finding people with ESOL needs are much more open to working in groups.

Some keys to success

- **Client Motivation** - The team recognises that it is important to understand what motivates the client and then to encourage and support them. It can be as simple as giving feedback during the sessions or recognising how their skills have developed.

- **Goals & Outcomes** - By setting targets or goals at the beginning of the sessions the progressive development of clients can be seen and notable outcomes, such as increased levels of motivation and self-confidence, are highlighted. Through offering a certificate, such as ‘Learner of the Year’, the course has provided clients with a personal goal to attain and a number of clients have been encouraged to move on from this course to further training courses outside of the hostels.

“I’ve seen a number of people benefit tremendously from this course in terms of their confidence being built up and setting themselves goals that they felt they had the ability to achieve.”

Mary Deigan, Adult Literacy Team
Some lessons from the Adult Literacy Team for future developments

- **Joint Working** - The only remit of this course is that it’s open to clients who want to learn. Staff advise that formal referrals made to the tutor should ensure that basic information is provided about the client and that a record of the positive outcomes from sessions is made within the client’s joint action plan.

- **Learning Space** - St Mungo’s needs to examine the learning environment, to ensure that there are a wide range of learning materials for clients to access, facilities for clients to actively learn from and an increased availability of private teaching spaces. The more comfortable and calm surroundings of Bridge Resource Centre, for example, encourages clients to take learning more seriously.

- **Increase Provision** - With the increased knowledge about the literacy service, keyworkers and residents have started to recognise the need to improve on these skills. As a result the demand for one-to-one sessions has increased.

“It would be great to offer residents more opportunities to access the literacy service but we’re limited by resources and funding.”

*Mary Deigan, Adult Literacy Team*

St Mungo’s is currently helping 130 clients in literacy and numeracy and aim to double this.
HIGHLIGHTS OF ST MUNGO’S WORK

• St Mungo’s began undertaking dedicated resettlement work over 21 years ago - helping clients prepare for, and then move into, new homes.

• Community support teams were introduced in 1990, to keep in touch with former St Mungo’s clients in their new home for at least six months, and for as long as needed thereafter.

• St Mungo’s began to undertake tenancy support work for former rough sleepers from other agencies in 1999.

• St Mungo’s has gradually expanded its pool of semi-independent housing - so now it has 49 projects across 8 London boroughs providing a range of support from 24 hour cover to once a week call-ins.

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

• The Great Escape - a hostel-based pre-tenancy training programme begins in 2001.

• Barnsbury Road introduces the Independent Living Programme in 2000. This award winning scheme is currently being expanded to other high support projects.

• Wix’s Lane opens at the end of 2002 - a ‘starter’ project for clients on the cusp of being ready to move to other semi-independent housing.

• Harrow Road (the specialist hostel for elderly former rough sleepers in Westminster) gains a resettlement unit in 2003.
Many homeless people have a difficult mixture of high expectations, low confidence, and previous failures to overcome when it comes to actually living in that dream flat.

An estimated figure of around 50% of resettled rough sleepers fail in their tenancies within a year of moving to long-term accommodation. However, staff at St Mungo’s appear proud that their measured successes in resettling rough sleepers and other homeless people are much better than this - 70% of their resettled clients are still in their tenancies 2 years on - and for good reasons.

St Mungo’s has learnt over the years. It was the first agency to introduce dedicated resettlement teams. For example, it advises taking a softly, softly approach to gaining independent living skills, and also actively addressing the need to learn. By providing small stepping stones towards greater independence St Mungo’s staff aim to avoid the big leaps that can lead to downfall.

ST MUNGO’S FACTS & FIGURES

- St Mungo’s tracked a group of long-term, elderly, former rough sleepers who had moved on from St Mungo’s*. Due to careful preparation and an ongoing programme of community-based support, 70% of this most challenging group were successfully living in their new homes 2 years on.

- 52 residents have benefited from the Independent Living Programme at Barnsbury Road. 10 of them have moved on to mainstream courses from this programme.

- 162 clients made planned moves from St Mungo’s semi-independent housing having developed skills to live unsupported.

- A year after opening Wix’s Lane, many residents are moving towards a more independent way of life and, so far, two have been successfully resettled into their own flats.

- Tenancy Sustainment Team and Community Support Workers tenancy support had a 99% success rate over the first 6 months.

- Nearly 200 clients have attended Great Escape sessions, 60% are former rough sleepers. Clients graded their improvements in knowledge and skills at the beginning and end of each session with levels rising from 2.7 to 4.2 (out of 5).

* ‘Resettling Older Homeless People’ report written by Maureen Crane and Anthony Warnes 2003

“...I’ve gone to every session because I see it as a way to getting into my own property and it will help me to live independently. It should also help me to cope with things because I’ve now got a checklist of items to look out for.

I enjoy attending the sessions because it gives me that push in the right direction. When you move into your flat it tells you everything you need to know - so that you know what to do when that issue comes up. When I was renting this flat in Ealing it all went wrong because I didn’t know about some of these things.”
Learning by doing at Wix’s Lane.

This innovative scheme acts as a ‘starter home’ for 18 recent rough sleepers with high support needs who are judged to be ‘only 70% ready’ to be moved from hostels into independent living and would usually not be given the chance to live in their own flats. However, with the myriad services from structured pre-tenancy groups to skills-focused sessions, through Roving IT workers to more fun activities, St Mungo’s is finding residents can develop their life skills. The approach centres on ‘learning by doing’ in a supportive atmosphere where the scheme acts as a stepping-stone for residents to move on to the next level.

“This is a fantastic place to be. It’s just like your own home which is a self-contained flat of my own…. I know that I’ll get moved on from here.”

Alex Dougan, resident at Wix’s Lane

Learning formally - through the Independent Living Programme.

Barnsbury Road, a high support mental health project, teamed up with Westminster Kingsway College to deliver an ILP programme. This award winning partnership teaches basic life skills over an academic year. The thinking behind this course is to re-affirm a ‘sense of responsibility and rights’ and citizenship for people who have come from very chaotic backgrounds and who have high support needs. Other high support projects at St Mungo’s are now delivering the ILP and the partnership is now extending out to include the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery.

“It got my brain ticking again. Before I would just sleep in bed and eat but now I’m doing something with my time and it’s made me realise that I need to discipline myself.”

David Fawehinmi, resident at Barnsbury Road

Learning in a less structured environment.

The Great Escape is a client centred and flexible training package, mainly delivered in the hostel environment to clients looking to move on. The inclusive and discussion based approach creates an informal learning environment whilst promoting social skills. It is drop-in and modular with 13 training sessions covering a range of personal and practical skills from budgeting, coping with isolation, paying bills, applying for Housing Benefit, to viewing accommodation and more. The modules act as a ‘reality check’ for those residents who have gone round the ‘revolving door’ of failed tenancies in the past.

“It’s made me more aware of what you have to do when you move into a flat and be able to keep it…..it’s like a stepping stone to getting on with your life.”

Geoffrey Reynolds, Harrow Road hostel resident, on The Great Escape
Some lessons from these 3 services

**Encouraging attendance** - In some projects, such as Barnsbury Road, basic living skills sessions are a pre-condition to the tenancy, which encourages a high level of attendance of clients. Hostels working with more chaotic clients do not have such pre-conditions and can struggle to motivate residents to attend. This raises the need for further debate at St Mungo’s of whether a ‘push in the right direction’ is needed for more (or even all?) clients and at more projects to ensure attendance at independent living sessions.

**Using dedicated staff** - With the intensive nature of this work, projects such as the Great Escape and ILP have greatly benefited from having specially trained and dedicated staff who purely focus on these aspects of skills development. These skilled staff ensure that the courses are made as relevant and informative as possible and delivered in a flexible manner to ensure that residents are fully engaged in the activity. Other LIFE projects could benefit from this dedicated approach.

**Pioneering services** - The early results of Wix’s Lane seem to show that, despite some teething problems, the project is helping residents to live more independently at a much earlier stage than was previously thought sustainable.

Aims to:

- Double the reach of the Great Escape to all hostel and semi-independent housing projects - and use it to prepare other vulnerable groups such as ex-offenders.
- Increase the number of ‘starter’ projects we have - including a resettlement annex at Great Guildford Street hostel, like Wix’s Lane.
- Double our pool of life skills workers and also join up the teams that deliver work & learning, and independent living skills - to make a larger pool of dedicated LIFE skills workers.
- To pilot debt counselling training for staff working with clients with debt issues.
- Increase the options to self-cater in our hostels.
- Expand our provision of semi-independent ‘workers housing’, targeting formerly homeless clients who are now in work but still need some support to maintain both their job and their tenancy.
- Ensure every client has an independent living assessment as part of their ‘everyday’ keyworking.

St Mungo’s aim to double investment in programmes promoting independent living and help even more clients into planned, lasting moves.
HIGHLIGHTS OF ST MUNGO’S WORK

• By the year 2000 St Mungo’s had 11 work and learning programmes on offer, creating invaluable opportunities for over 1,500 homeless people. Now, nearly 2,000 work and learning programme opportunities get taken up. Many programmes clearly benefit from the social aspects of learning together - creative writing groups and joint job skills sessions for example.

• The ‘Make it Work’ team was created in 1998 (with thanks to the Monument Trust and the Community Fund) to provide a regular and dedicated activities programme for all hostels delivered in conjunction with volunteers.

• Moving on can be a lonely time. The community support teams - working with homeless people who have recently moved on from St Mungo’s - encourage and support clients to join in with community activities.

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

• St Mungo’s appoints a Volunteers Coordinator in 2000 to recruit, train and retain a growing band of volunteers.

• The Activity Development Team expands (from the Make it Work service) to cover all hostels, and semi-independent housing. By 2004 it is delivered with a team of 10 staff and 100 regular volunteers.

• Putting Down Roots, a gardening scheme to involve residents in improving the local community, begins in 2000 at Great Guildford Street hostel in South London and soon expands to other South London hostels and parks.

• In 2003 St Mungo’s residents get better connected - via UK Online computers and web access at 11 sites.

• Since 2003, IT sessions can be supported by new Roving IT workers. The team is proving a good source of referrals to Bridge Resource Centre.
Homeless people are often very isolated, having broken relationships with family and friends, and low levels of self-confidence. The steps many of us would take to have fun and make new friends (joining evening classes, socialising after work) are, as yet, a step too far for many St Mungo’s residents.

But by providing ‘low-entry’ opportunities for some fun and friendship across its projects, St Mungo’s aims to help people gain self-esteem and confidence, to learn to structure their time positively, to build on skills, and improve on group working. Having a ‘meaningful occupation’ is important to us all. For homeless people it can provide a positive alternative to drinking on the streets or sitting alone in a new flat.

St Mungo’s aims to enable homeless people to rediscover the hope and confidence that it takes to change their situation and ultimately to sustain a life away from the streets.

**ST MUNGO’S FACTS & FIGURES**

- Currently the Roving IT workers provide sessions at 14 different projects over a two week period.
- 475 clients attended at least one Activity Development Team session last year. There were a total of over 1,500 attendees at motivational sessions; over 1,300 at pre-vocational sessions and nearly 400 attendees at IT sessions. On average, each client attended 7 sessions.
- 20% of clients aged between 30 and 59 experienced a relationship breakdown within the last 5 years that was a causal factor in their homelessness.
- 60 new gardeners join Putting Down Roots in the year to June 2003 - and together make a total of 507 attendances at gardening sessions.

“Gardening is my favourite activity here because it makes me feel like I’m doing a decent day’s work again. It’s like proper hard graft which reminds me of the time when I worked in building and catering. It makes me feel better about myself, that I’m doing some work even though I’m not paid for it, and this gives me some self-respect which boosts my self-esteem.

The tutors running the activity bring out the best in me because they have an understanding about where I’m coming from and they actually trust me by giving me responsibility. It also shows people at the hostel that I can do hard work.”

Putting Down Roots isn’t just about gardening - it’s also about becoming part of a community again.
**Activities:** St Mungo’s developed the Activity Development Team (formerly known as Make It Work) in 1998 to provide an informal and interesting way for residents to begin to engage with learning activities. The team has devised a framework for structuring activities so that there is a variety and balance on offer in each project. These encompass four categories of life skills:

- **Social:** discussions, trips out of the hostels, visits to cinema, events and exhibitions
- **Creative:** writing groups, drama, producing a newsletter, art and music
- **Sport:** football, keep fit, walking, yoga and cycling
- **Skills:** photography, cooking, IT and budgeting

“**The only way of getting clients out of their shell is by spending the time with them. By getting involved in activities you can see how their confidence has been built up - now you can see them speaking out within groups of people and feeling comfortable with it. Also getting them out of their homes raises their awareness about the community they live in.**”

*Alex Charley, Activity Development Team worker*

Clients take part in activities that spark their interest and take their minds off their immediate problems for a few hours. Through gaining confidence homeless people can begin to think about the future and the steps they might take to improve their lives in the long term.

Over 100 volunteers now help the ADT deliver sessions across all of St Mungo’s projects.

“**It has helped me to put things into order because drugs used to make me put a lot of things on hold but this has given me back my spirit.”**

*Angel, on attending the ‘Arts and Crafts’ session at Cedars Road hostel*

**Putting Down Roots** is a gardening scheme for homeless people in South London that has rapidly proved popular with residents, staff and local people alike. There are opportunities to garden within the ‘safety’ of the hostel environment, and also opportunities to get involved in community projects, such as the creation of the St John’s Church garden, along the banks of the Thames with Tate Modern, and in park maintenance. Amongst the many benefits for clients is the immediacy as they see the results of their involvement in the improved appearance of the garden.

**Some keys to success**

- **Mutual respect** - Persuading people with extreme problems to participate in activities is no easy undertaking - sustaining their interest and commitment requires an equal effort. The staff need to be flexible and imaginative and also need to support those who make the effort to get involved. It is clear from the testimonies of residents that the enthusiasm and understanding of staff encourages them to continue to participate and instills a sense of responsibility of ‘not letting them down’ by not missing the following session.

- **Socialising aspect** - This is often the main enticement for residents to participate but at the same time a drawback. A comfortable environment is essential for clients who are taking their first steps towards re-engaging socially, encouraging them to respond and engage constructively. Setting the ground rules about participants’ behaviour at the start of sessions ensures that people can express their views but, at the same time, hear the voices of others.

- **Positive outcomes** - Activities like these can instill a sense of structure to the lives of people who may only remember a chaotic lifestyle. It can act to remind them of a positive moment in their lives, whether this is time at school or a past career. It provides an opportunity to reduce the feeling of isolation and raise levels of confidence and self-worth as well as re-acquainting them with the community that they are now living in.
Some Messages for Development

- **Sustaining Demand** - The success of the Activity Development Team and Putting Down Roots is reflected in the ever increasing demand from residents and project workers for new activities. Whilst both are keen to help they are finding that they are already stretched to provide the existing range of activities. As the ADT are also reliant on the commitment of a team of skilled volunteers, who give up their time and skills for free, it has sometimes been a challenge to meet the expectations of the service.

- **Volunteers** - St Mungo’s is increasingly looking for volunteers who live locally to the projects as this makes it easier for them to continue the commitment on a long-term basis. The reliance on volunteers can result in a number of issues; the time and day the activities are held in the hostel; last minute cancellations of sessions; keeping continuity of volunteers within schemes and keeping staff motivated. St Mungo’s is gaining experience in the role, motivation and development of a large body of volunteers, and needs to debate the issues further.

The Getting a LIFE programme

Aims to:

- **Expand the Activities Development work:**
  - including developing a new gardening scheme for North London.
- **Increase the amount of good communal space for on-site activities work.**
- **Pilot a Relatively Speaking service:**
  - counselling to enable homeless people to explore why their relationships have failed in the past, and support for those wanting to re-create family links.
  - increase the provision of ‘emotional intelligence’ training for clients - working on boundaries, relationships and anger management.
- **Provide internet access to all our hostels, larger projects and drop-in centres.**
- **Develop our volunteer programme.**
- **Expand our user involvement programme,** for example, aiming to have service users to deliver staff and client training.

St Mungo’s aim to “double the fun”!

Echo, a St Mungo’s volunteer, joined clients taking part in the Lord Mayor’s Show
HIGHLIGHTS OF ST MUNGO’S WORK

St Mungo’s was quick to recognise the role that dedicated education and employment services for homeless people can have, and has established itself as the leading charity providing such help directly to homeless people. Some highlights include:

- Their work begins with a painting and decorating training scheme (in 1986). Then STEPS workshop (in 1988) and NLDC workshop (in 2001), open - providing transitional employment opportunities.
- Bridge Resource Centre opens in 1996.
- Job Club (now Programme Centre) opens in 1990.
- Employment Link team begins in 2001 - linking work experience placements and full time jobs with employers, and supporting clients in making this transition.

21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

- St Mungo’s become Off the Streets and into Work’s lead agency for South London in 2002.
- Learning Coaches begin to provide dedicated support and help with client motivation at South London projects from 2003.
- The Employment Link Team is pipped at the post to the Andy Ludlow awards in 2002.
- In 2003 St Mungo’s becomes an approved provider for work and learning programmes to the prison service, especially short-term prisoners most at risk of homelessness.
- In 2002, Bridge Resource Centre refreshes its operational model and upgrades its facilities to include a video editing suite, improved computers and software. The client magazine, Source, goes Mungo-wide in 2003.
Getting involved in education and employment is one of the final (and arguably one of the biggest) steps a socially excluded homeless person can take towards belonging to the wider society.

St Mungo’s experience is that the LIFE skills steps taken along the way - from basic skills such as literacy, gaining confidence in independent living skills, to the role of friendship and fun in leading to life with meaning - are all valuable in themselves. They are also vital to a homeless person’s success in enjoying being in education, and ultimately employment.

Some clients start from a very low skills base. Others have been successfully employed, gained qualifications in the past, and have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and qualifications to offer. Even so, they may still have to transition back to education and work very difficult. Homeless people can fear losing benefits needed to pay their rent, there may be no suitable jobs or they may face prejudice from employers. Plus the changing job market means employers demand a broader range of skills than ever before and with advances in technology homeless people can find it even more challenging to find and maintain a job.

But again, St Mungo’s experience is that with the right combination of encouragement and support, many homeless people can gain significantly from ‘going back to school’ and many do indeed end up at work, over 300 last year alone.

**ST MUNGO’S FACTS & FIGURES**

- St Mungo’s directly offers more help to people seeking jobs and training than any other homelessness organisation in the country. It offers a wide range of options, from an informal activities scheme to a mobile careers service. Many of their schemes are open to non-residents.
  - 1,964 took advantage of training and education opportunities.
  - 436 benefited from advice on CVs and interview techniques.
  - 37 people went on work placements.
  - 300 people found employment.
- Last year 351 clients registered at Bridge Resource Centre.
- 30 employers are linked into the Employment Link Team.
- Last year over 200 clients used the Programme Centre.
- 40% of our Tenancy Sustainment Team clients (formerly homeless people now in their own accommodation) are in structured employment and education.

“I used to be a manual bookkeeper but that’s obsolete now, so I’m having to learn a computerised system. It’s a vocational course that equips you to work. It’s a friendly atmosphere with no animosity. I was a complete technophobe, but now I’ve completed 6 months of the course. The faster I complete the course, the faster I can start working so that’s been my main motivation to attend and complete the sessions. Some people have no mission and don’t want to do things - at the end of the day it’s about motivating people.

After this course I may move on to do a web design course. I don’t mind learning forever.”

Karl Reid, client at the SAGE accounting course at Bridge Resource Centre
Bridge is the only resource of its type in the country for homeless people. It is a careers and ‘open learning’ centre, and runs drop-in sessions giving advice and help on job hunting and training. The atmosphere is friendly, supportive and client-centred, and the courses often have a clear IT focus.

“I enjoy coming to the Centre because there are a lot of things to do: talking with people, reading the papers or accessing emails.”

Maratha Azaretto, client at Bridge Resource Centre

Staff flexibility and imagination are important:

“It’s important to find the creativity in people by making the courses interesting but also relevant. For example, we had one client who used to attend the creative writing course and through reading his material and speaking with him I realised he had an analytical approach to things, so suggested that he used this talent by making films, which he is now doing and possibly developing further as his career. On the other hand, we deal with clients who simply need to be shown how to write letters for their Housing Benefit claim or being taught to read numbers in order to tell the time or interpret bus timetables.”

Simon, Bridge Resource Centre Staff member

Clients can use computers, phones and the Internet for free. IT assessments are carried out, and computer courses for beginners and intermediate students in word processing, spreadsheets and graphics software are held and NVQ qualifications can be gained. Many clients use Bridge as a stepping stone to more traditional learning and job seekers’ environments.

“Seeing the personal growth of a rough sleeper keeping to a specific appointment time or attending on a regular basis is an achievement in itself.”

Simon, Bridge Resource Centre Staff member

Some lessons from Bridge

- **Realism** - Keyworkers and course tutors engage early with clients to develop trust and make an assessment of their aspirations. Recognising past skills and nurturing them can offer direction to an agreed goal, however, it’s essential to balance this by agreeing realistic targets to avoid disappointment.

- **Monitoring Progress** - An action plan is set for each client and reviewed every month or 6 weeks by the tutor. It allows the course tutor to assess whether short-term targets are being achieved and also provides clients with open feedback to allow them to have a say in their long-term goals. St Mungo’s aims to take this ‘action planning’ approach across all its LIFE skills work.

- **Publicising the service** - This service has integrated its publicity from the visual use of the website to a poster campaign within projects, articles in the Source magazine, and by holding open days at the Centre to enthuse clients about the opportunities available to them. Take up of the courses at the Centre is now at capacity whilst internal and external knowledge amongst residents and providers of supported services is still increasing.
LIFE skills systems

- St Mungo’s has been developing, and is now piloting, 3 integrated systems that should support, and measure the impact of, its LIFE skills work.

- Its Joint Assessment and Action Planning between client, key staff worker and other specialist services is being rolled out across the organisation and is being extended to explicitly cover all LIFE skills work.

- St Mungo’s is also leading the sector in the development of ‘soft and hard’ Outcome Measurements - in which the client and key staff member agree goals, and together measure progress against a range of indicators - from self esteem to employability.

- A fully integrated Computer Information system will support the work.

The Getting a LIFE programme

Aims to:

- Secure Bridge Resource Centre’s funding, and open a second Resource Centre.

- Double the numbers into work, by:
  - Doubling the Employment Link and Learning Coaches teams and opening their work to other agencies.
  - Opening a new Programme Centre for homeless job seekers in South London.
  - Seeking out 5 key business partners for work placements.
  - Trebling the opportunities for transitional and permanent employment at St Mungo’s.
  - Improving the capacity at our workshops - and start operations as a social enterprise.

- Expand our Work and Learning Services to prisoners vulnerable to homelessness.

- Expand the dedicated support we give to formerly homeless people now living in their own accommodation by engaging 3 more specialist support workers.

Last year, St Mungo’s helped 300 people into work and 648 into training. The aim is to double both these figures.
We would like to thank ORC International for conducting the research into the current needs of London’s homeless and the range of services provided by St Mungo’s.

The research helps inform our practice by revealing where we are doing well and what areas of our life skills work we should look to develop further.

We believe everyone has the ability to learn. We know that the different methods, environments and activities reach people with varying and challenging needs.

We know that with your help we can continue to provide the support that helps vulnerable people to live independently. Together we can help more homeless and vulnerable men and women in their journey towards ‘Getting a LIFE’.

We are also very grateful to the 18,000 individuals whose personal support of our work is invaluable.

St Mungo’s greatly appreciates the funding we receive from a number of sources that enable our LIFE work. Some for this year include:

**Trusts & Foundations**
- Awards for All London
- Cripplegate Foundation
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Grocers’ Charity
- Haremead Trust
- Albert Hunt Trust
- Jj Charitable Trust
- Kathleen Hannay Memorial Charity
- George John Livanos Charitable Trust
- The Living Spaces Programme
- London Housing Foundation
- Mercers’ Company Charitable Trust
- Monument Trust
- P F Charitable Trust
- Henry Smith’s Charity
- Society for the Assistance of Ladies in Reduced Circumstances
- Street Smart
- Urban Partnerships
- Westminster Foundation
- Westminster PCT Community Health Development Fund
- Zochonis Charitable Trust

**Companies**
- The Residential Development Agents Society
- Cazenove Charitable Trust
- Cater Care
- Cadbury Schweppes
- BP plc
- Splendour.com Limited
- Woodmansterne Publications Ltd

**Statutory partners**
- The Housing Corporation
- DTLR / Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Association of London Government
- Home Office
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- City of Westminster
- London Borough of Camden
- London Borough of Lambeth
- London Borough of Brent
- London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
- London Borough of Islington
- London Borough of Haringey
- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Southwark
- London Borough of Lewisham
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department for Education and Skills
- Off the Streets and into Work
- European Social Fund
- Government Office for London
- Homelessness Directorate
- Job Centre Plus
- Learning and Skills Council

**Individuals**
- The estate of the late Mr. Herbert Westwell Ashworth

We are also very grateful to the 18,000 individuals whose personal support of our work is invaluable.
ORC International is a market research consultancy specialising in the field of public sector research, with more than 15 years’ experience working with both central government, local government and housing organisations.

ORC International is part of Opinion Research Corporation, which was founded in 1938 and is a global commercial marketing and social research and model-based teleservices company. With offices in the United States, Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa, the company provides integrated marketing services to both businesses and governments in more than 100 countries.
Thank you for helping homeless people who are ‘Getting a LIFE’.

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Thank you to all the St Mungo’s residents and staff whose photographs and histories appear in this publication.