

THE HARD FACTS 2009/2010 DECLAN FLYNN

DELME AND THE BOARD DELME THOMPSON

BENCH OUTREACH WILL BE MOVING JANNET MATHERS

THE BEAR CHURCH AND BENCH OUTREACH PAUL ADLINGTON

B'S STORY TRACY JONES

THE EVENING SERVICE VICKIE YEARDLEY



bench Newsletter

outreach

Bench Outreach is a crisis recovery project working with alcoholics, drug users and homeless people in South East London. Based in Deptford, our mission is to provide immediate and on-going support to vulnerable people. We offer an inclusive, confidential and non judgemental service founded on equality and the sanctity of human life. We are a Christian charity and believe that the story of the lost son in the Gospel of Luke is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. We offer services to those who need us regardless of their background, religion or ethnic origin.



Left to right: Brigitte Gobbe, Janet Helder, Declan Flynn

Welcome to Bench Outreach.

After over a year of hard work and, admittedly, long silence from us, we feel it is time to resurface.

Our new twice-yearly newsletter will tell you what we have been doing, how we are and how we've supported our clients.

Most importantly, we'd like to tell you how much you are a part of Bench Outreach. It really is thanks to your support that we are able to work with so many vulnerable adults.

To see what we have actually been up to please look out for Declan's report on page 3 of this newsletter. All this work has been made possible because we are now a very large family: a core team (Declan Flynn,

Janet Helder and me, Brigitte Gobbe); an enlarged board of trustees, fourteen volunteers coming on an ad-hoc basis to offer time and expertise in various ways (admin, book-keeping, accounts, graphic design, fund-raising, photography, IT support, database programming and website development) financial supporters and prayers warriors; a mentor; and a supervisor; and, last but not least, the spiritual support of Paul Adlington and Iain Jones.

From now on, we're committing to producing our newsletter twice a year to announce and celebrate successes, to give you an idea of our challenges and hopes, and what we are planning to achieve. Please feel free to share your comments, ideas and prayers at brigitte@benchoutreach.com. We also plan to update our website www.benchoutreach.com on a regular basis with news, events, stories and prayer topics. Once again, thank you so much for all your interest and support ●

Brigitte Gobbe, Chief Executive Officer of Bench Outreach



The Bear Church And Bench Outreach

THEY MAY NOT BE THE SAME IN

structure, but the Bear Church and Bench Outreach are very much the same in spirit. Since 2005 we have worked alongside each other in Deptford, south-east London, trying to create a safe space in which people from all walks of life are able to grow.

"The evening services at the Shaftesbury centre are where Bench Outreach and the Bear church meet - they are an amazing place to be."

In the inner city it is easy to exist alongside people at the extremes of poverty and plenty without any meaningful connection. Yet as Christians we believe there is value in communion across class, wealth, ability and culture. Nobody is greater or lesser than the next person; all are equal, with a vital role to play, and everybody's story is worth hearing.

The evening services at the Shaftesbury Centre are where Bench Outreach and the Bear Church meet – they are an amazing place to be. If you can cope with sitting as an equal with the highly educated and the completely uneducated; if you are happy being no more or less important than a homeless drug addict or a wealthy businessman; if you can share a meal with an ex-convict and a police officer; if you recognise that all should participate in worship and communion as believers in Jesus; and if you believe that we are all called to serve one another – then you are with us in spirit, too! ●

Paul Adlington, leader of The Bear Church

B's Story

WHEN WE FIRST MET THIRTY-FIVE- year-old, heroin addict B, he was living in a derelict warehouse in Deptford and was injecting three times a day. An abusive relationship with his father had left him with a post-traumatic stress disorder and a deep lack of self-worth that made it difficult for him to trust anybody. He had no GP, no benefits and was involved in petty crime to feed his habit.

B contacted us after learning about our service from a friend. We felt that our first priority was to get B registered with a GP and link him with the community drug service. This allowed him to start treatment on buprenorphine, a heroin replacement, and reduce the harm caused by injecting. For B to successfully engage in treatment and to reduce his need to commit crime, it was vital that he was on employment support allowance, so we

helped him contact the Department for Work and Pensions and to use our office as a "care of" address.

Slowly, over a period of weeks, we built on our relationship with B and, gaining his trust, we suggested that he could enter detox and rehab. With our support, he contacted a residential treatment centre and was placed on their waiting list. During this period, we saw him two or three times a week and used motivational interviewing techniques to maintain his momentum to change.

B eventually entered rehab and, we are pleased to say, he is now working hard on his recovery. We have taken a step back from our involvement with B for the moment, but we will be available to advise him at any time, especially during his resettlement ●

Tracy Jones

Outreach on a Sunday

I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING part of the Sunday evening services at the Shaftesbury Christian Centre for several years, and would like to share with you a little of what happens on those Sunday evenings.

They started over five years ago as small church gatherings that took extending hospitality to strangers quite literally. Now, through the vision and expertise of Brigitte and Declan and the dedication of a great team, they have become a weekly feast. We want to make them a place of connection, where the addicts, homeless and disconnected people of Deptford know that there will be warmth, welcome, good food, prayer and practical help.

When doors open at 7.15pm, our team has been working hard since 4pm to transform the food given to us by Sainsbury's and a local grocer into a feast. We never quite know what (or who) we'll get, and every Sunday is an adventure.

The meal is an opportunity for us to meet newcomers and reconnect with those we haven't seen for a while, and links very strongly with the work that Bench is involved with all week.

After people have eaten their fill, all are invited to join the slightly more traditional part of the service, where we strive to maintain it as "the safest place for the weakest person", while allowing everyone a chance to be heard – not the easiest balance to strike, but God has been good to us. Every week I am blown away by how much we are all able to learn from each other's experiences.

We conclude each service by breaking bread together and praying for one another, then finally we head off to our beds, wherever they may be, and the more fortunate among us close our doors and sleep soundly until morning ●

Vickie Yeardeley

The Hard Facts 2009/2010

IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT FOR ANY

organisation, especially one as small and as vulnerable as ours, to be able to show that it provides value for money. In our hearts we believe that just being there for one person makes a difference, but people who invest their hard-earned cash in our vision need to know that it is money well spent. So here are the facts and figures, without the sad stories, the tears, the frustrations or the laughter...

NUMBERS OF PEOPLE ASSESSED SINCE MAY '09

Group 1 <i>With access to benefits</i>	117
Group 2 <i>With no access to benefits (with a particular focus on eastern Europeans)</i>	46
Total	163

GROUP 1

Housed	41
Entered rehab	6
Referred to appropriate housing providers	22
Referred to community drug and alcohol services	25
Referred to other services (mental health services, other boroughs, etc)	15
Receiving ongoing tenancy support	8

GROUP 2

All people assessed in this category receive the option of repatriation under the London Reconnections Project. As few people take this opportunity, the rest receive advice about Home Office registration and are given information about language classes, employment agencies, drug and alcohol services and health and welfare services, as appropriate. Work continues with this group but, because people in this group tend to move on fairly quickly, and have language and cultural differences, outcomes are hard to record and evaluate ●

Declan Flynn

Bench Outreach Will Be Moving

STEPHEN, JANNET AND ANNA MATHERS

founded the Jessica Mathers Trust (JMT) in memory of Stephen and Jannet's daughter Jessica, Anna's sister, who died just over three years ago, aged thirteen, in a road accident.

The JMT recently bought the Osborne Arms in New King Street, Deptford. It will soon be renamed Jessica's Heart.

The purpose of the JMT will be to support homeless people, and those whose lives have been disrupted by premature bereavement. Jessica's Heart will become a base for Bench Outreach and a local Compassionate Friends (TCF) group. TCF is an international organisation that supports bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents.

At the moment, architect's plans are being drawn up for Jessica's Heart, and there will have to be some extensive building works before it is ready for its intended purpose. There will be a meeting/function room in the basement, primarily for TCF group

meetings, but also for the use of other organisations or groups who need such a space. The ground floor will be converted into five to six offices for the use of Bench Outreach and other related agencies.

The top two floors will become flats to be rented out. The rental income from these flats will be used to support the work of the JMT, Bench Outreach and TCF.

The JMT website, which tells you more about Jessica and her trust, is

www.thejmt.co.uk

● *Jannet Mathers*



The Osborne Arms

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Become a friend of Bench Outreach



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Delme and the Board



Delme and the Board

OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, BENCH

Outreach has seen a major change in its board of trustees. Long-term board members Nick Russell Smith and David French have been joined by Stephen Mathers, Stephen Roberts and Delme Thompson and the whole ensemble is now kept in check by our wonderful new company secretary, Jannet Mathers. We asked Delme what attracted him to serving on the board.

It's all very trite to say "the work they do here changes lives" when you talk about a charity. After all, if charities are not impacting lives then why do they exist? What I love about Bench, though, is the humble, shirtsleeves-rolled-up, get-stuck-in way they're changing lives, but it's not just the lives of clients – they're taking on the

attitudes of long-established institutions, such as the local council and funding bodies as well.

When your CEO and leadership team have a passion that drives them to Hoover floors at 7am on a Monday morning, be out in the street in the middle of the night checking on homeless clients and amicably challenge local authorities to ensure clients' rights are not only recognised, but championed, you know you've joined the right team.

In corporate life, targets and profit and loss are so often king. Here, they're important, but only as measures to ensure our work continues and we can grow to see more of the Bench Outreach vision become a reality – more people freed from addiction and substance abuse, more ex-offenders

supported to contribute to society and a more of all our God-given talents used to their full potential.

Trite? Not when you see a grown man weep with joy that he is spending time with his children again as he works to overcome his addictions, or hear the testimony of a "career criminal" taking a new path and actively helping others to rebuild their lives, to contribute to society instead of being a menace to it.

Shirtsleeves rolled up, getting stuck in, changing lives. *That's* why it's a pleasure to serve on the board ●

Delme Thompson

Become a Friend of Bench Outreach

There are several ways that you can get involved with Bench Outreach.

PRAYER

We would not be successful in our work without prayer support. If you are able to support us through becoming a Prayer Friend and would like to receive prayer updates, do email us or send in the response form at the bottom of this page.

GIVING

If you would like to support our work financially, there are a number of ways you can do this.

One-off donations: There are three ways to send us a one-off donation.

1 You can send a cheque to our office, using the form below. Don't forget to sign the Gift Aid section if you're a UK tax payer.

2 You can donate through Stewardship Services (their form is downloadable from our website: www.benchoutreach.com/donate).

3 You can donate online through the Justgiving website at www.justgiving.com/bench_outreach or via Paypal by clicking the Paypal button on our website: www.benchoutreach.com

Regular donations: Small charities like ourselves benefit greatly from people who are willing to support us financially on a regular basis either by standing order or direct debit. Planning is made easier for us if we know how much is coming in every month and a regular donation also reminds us of who you are. We can pay wages, pay utility bills and feel a bit more secure.

Our bank details are:

Crisis Recovery UK, Bench Account

Account No. 01451138

Sort Code 40 02 25

HSBC, 90 Deptford High St, London, SE8 4RQ.



CONTACT BENCH OUTREACH

Send this slip to Bench Outreach, 1 Creek Road, Deptford, London, SE8 3BT

NAME:

ADDRESS:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

Please tick any of the following

I would like to become a Prayer Friend of Bench Outreach and receive prayer updates by post

I would like to become a Prayer Friend of Bench Outreach and receive prayer updates by email

I would like to support Bench Outreach with regular donations

I enclose a donation to Bench Outreach

I am a UK tax payer - please claim Gift Aid on my donation

Signed _____

I would like to find out more about volunteering at Bench Outreach

