

**Steve**, 37, has been homeless on and off since he ran away from home at 13. He had a heroin habit for around six years during this time but has now been clean for two years.

Steve has been claiming incapacity benefit since the late 1990s. He says *“Drug addiction is an illness. No-one wakes up and wants to be a junkie but anyone that’s had the sort of life I’ve had would struggle. Over the last two years I’ve put loads of effort in to getting life back on track, I want to give something back.”*

Steve is a community learning champion and is enjoying being in formal education for the first time since he was 13. He’s now also on a three day a week intern-type programme, establishing 10xBetter within our London projects, and inspiring more of our residents to get involved.

He says that this is all possible because of the specialist support he has received.

## Conclusions

Though change can be facilitated, sustainable change comes from within.

Our job, in partnership with clients and local commissioners, is to foster an environment which enables people to make these changes, through their own efforts, in their own lives, and in their own way.

The recovery approach at St Mungo’s is about using the best skills and resources we can provide to work **with** our clients, respecting their experience, valuing their qualities, and believing in their potential and their aspirations, in order to find practical, lasting and real ways for them to achieve their potential.

The ethical principles, or values, of recovery are – choice, self-determination, social integration, and empowerment.

For more information on St Mungo’s client involvement, please contact:

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St Mungo’s opens doors for homeless people. Mainly based in London and the South, we provide over 100 accommodation and support projects day in, day out.

We run **emergency services** – including street outreach and emergency shelters. We support homeless people in their **recovery** – opening the door to health care, and supporting homeless people into lasting new homes and training and work. And we **prevent** homelessness – through our high support housing and support teams for people at real risk.

By opening our doors, and our support services, we enable thousands of homeless and vulnerable people to change their lives for good every year.

**To receive future Recovery Results and Recovery Innovations briefings, or other St Mungo’s information, visit [www.mungos.org](http://www.mungos.org) and sign up to our newsletter**

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**St Mungo’s**   
 Opening doors for homeless people

## INVOLVING CLIENTS, INNOVATING SERVICES

July 2011

**Our aspiration is that St Mungo’s is run as a partnership between clients and staff. We’re aiming to involve clients more and more in our work as we embark on a new Recovery and Personalisation plan for St Mungo’s, putting client choice centre stage.**

This briefing aims to summarise some of our achievements, activities and plans around client involvement, for example:

- All our clients are automatically members of our client representative body Outside In, and a representative from Outside In sits on St Mungo’s Board
- Clients now regularly sit on recruitment and interview panels, inform business plans, negotiate policies and deliver training to staff
- Our new Apprenticeship scheme has already enabled 44 people to work and train with us on year-long contracts. From the 2009-10 group, 13 of the 17 apprentices went on to gain further work with us
- As part of our 2011 Action Week, focusing on homeless people in society, St Mungo’s is pledging to develop our approach to personalised services; expand volunteering opportunities within St Mungo’s; give our clients a louder political voice; expand our support networks in local communities through peer led support; and explore how we can give people the option to move location.



*Outside In member Richard at our Action Week Parliamentary reception*

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## What we do and our champions

### Outside In and 10xBetter

Outside In has established a network of 10xBetter peer support groups across St Mungo's. The secret behind the 10xBetter concept is its simplicity; one hour a week, for ten weeks, a group of hostel residents will meet and set individual weekly goals.

The insight and trust that develops from shared experiences creates a very supportive forum and barriers that can exist in staff-client relationships are removed.

It also generates a culture of peer support outside of the meetings as people are more aware of what each other are trying to achieve. Peer pressure is traditionally perceived as being negative, but 10xBetter reverses this – people want to attend the sessions reporting success. At the first sessions clients generally make what would be viewed as small commitments, but the significance is that this builds a sense of self-belief and motivation that leads to bigger achievements.

A member of Outside In set up a 10xBetter group that ran at Great Guildford Street (October–December 2010).

- Over the ten weeks 14 different clients attended, with an average of six at each session. Between them, they achieved 55 recorded outcomes. Small steps led to bigger achievements and two of the group went on to sign up for college courses as a result of their increased motivation
- These achievements spread inspiration amongst our client group – *“if you can do it, so can I!”* Outside In is developing a second more structured stage to 10xBetter that incorporates Groundswell's Escape Plan (a research project exploring how to move on from homelessness)
- 10xBetter has been especially effective with clients in early stages of their recovery who might not have the confidence to engage with keyworking. However, we have seen that peer support can be a stepping stone to accessing more formal support from staff. “Speak to my keyworker” is a frequent goal at the end of a session. Peer support complements staff support to offer a better overall service.

Clients can attend a six day Peer Facilitator course to provide the skills and confidence to run 10xBetter groups. Trained Peer Facilitators also run consultation meetings addressing a wide variety of issues.

### Learning Champions

Homelessness could be viewed as the ultimate exclusion from society, but part of our clients' recovery journey is changing this and getting involved with groups or activities within their community.

Outside In's Learning Champions project helped build partnerships with a variety of organisations – including **Cardboard Citizens**, **The Workers' Educational Association** and **Onex**. These provided a variety of opportunities from film courses to drama to creating mosaics. They also run **Learning Clubs**.

Our clients have also been influential in the ground breaking **Choir with No Name** and our music studio at **Endell Street** in Camden.

Meanwhile, our award-nominated **Putting Down Roots** volunteer gardening project has not just transformed the lives of those who volunteer but also numerous barren spaces across London that can now be enjoyed by local communities.

Outside In also delivers Groundswell's move on **Escape Plan** training.

## Why client involvement is crucial

### Case study

Serena, 28, became an apprentice project worker with St Mungo's in July 2010. *“It's the first time I've done a job like this and I really love it,”* she said. *“It's a fantastic opportunity for me to find a long term career in this kind of work but what I'm enjoying most is giving back to people, helping them with steps on their journey.”*

The job means so much to Serena as she has experienced homelessness herself. She left home at 17, and lived in hostels and shared houses for five years until moving to her own flat at 22.



*“But there was a whole lot of things going on in my life at that time and I lost the flat. I sofa surfed for about six months but then went back into a hostel, one for women in west London.”*

While there, she started using St Mungo's Wellbeing Centre in Kensington and Chelsea. *“I'd been to college but I'd never really completed anything, never followed through but I started doing a few courses and learning more.”*

*“A friend told me to apply for the Apprenticeship scheme. I was so pleased when I got it. It's my first job in over two years.”*

Serena's apprenticeship is part-funded by Kensington and Chelsea Council. She spends half her week at the Wellbeing Centre and the other half at St Mungo's 54-bed hostel in Cromwell Road.

*“The apprenticeship has been the right way too. I didn't want too many stresses with going back to work, I wanted to take things one step at a time and go at the right pace for me. I've not felt pressurised at all but really supported.”*

### Peer research

The trust, insight and honesty of peer relationships also adds depth to research. We have a well established peer research programme. Generally, we have used peer research as a way of exploring subject matters that are difficult to talk about – such as bullying, women's experience of our services and personal mental health issues. The *“A Better Deal for Women” (2008)* peer research project led to the development of our Women's Strategy and acquiring funding for a three year post.

Clients who give time to help their peers are also benefiting themselves. Seeing people grow in confidence from your work, will in turn help your confidence and recovery. Many clients that have completed our Peer Facilitator course or started getting involved as peer researchers have built impressive CVs, got references and gained employment.

For many, wanting to 'give something back' becomes the reason for joining our Apprenticeship scheme. Established as a result of an Outside In proposal, the Apprenticeship scheme recruits people with experience of using homeless services and offers a year's employment, extensive training and support. Our 2011-12 apprentices start in October.