

# PROVINCE OF ROSALIE RENDU



## NEWSLETTER



Incorporated  
works



The Daughters of Charity  
of St Vincent de Paul Services

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# GREETINGS

## Sister Ellen Flynn

Greetings to you all, and wishing all of our readers a very happy new year as we share this first newsletter of 2024.

In this edition, we hear a number of key updates from the projects across our Province. St Catherine's share the news of the opening of their wonderful new St Louise Dementia Unit, a holistically-designed environment developed to ensure that the nurturing care of the service can be further enhanced for those residing there.

Vincentian Care Plus share their news of being announced as a finalist in the Home Care Awards 2024 for the work they undertake at a hostel for men experiencing homelessness in London, a reflection of the continued Vincentian ethos of seeking out the most marginalised in our society and serving people with dignity, love and kindness.

St Joseph's have entered their centenary year, with a number of events in place to mark the extraordinary service provided to the community over the past 100 years, a remarkable achievement and a sign of the continued dedication of all who have been involved with the organisation.

We hear from many of our services of the various Christmas celebrations which took place in projects across our Province, and of the genuine joy being shared between those we serve and those who serve. We are so fortunate to have within our projects such dedicated teams of people committed to their work, and who demonstrate the impact of our Charism through their service on a daily basis.



Throughout the reports of each of these services appears a common theme, that of the extraordinary sense of community which is at the heart of all that we do. A glance at any of the photographs within this newsletter, alongside the various accounts we hear of service, support or celebration, reveals the true sense of togetherness which is intrinsic to our spirit of encounter. The richness of the lives of all those involved in each project – the people we support, our staff and our volunteers – combine to produce a genuine sense of community which is apparent from the moment you set foot in any of these services, and which bonds these diverse organisations with a common thread.

We know that many people across the world will not have had the opportunity to share in a joyful Christmas, as we face the new year with the challenges of escalating wars, increasing impoverishment and a sense of divisiveness that permeates our societies. Let us give thanks for the work of those who seek to bring peace, love and justice to the world, and to each of you who dedicates yourselves to the service of our brothers and sisters on the margins of society. May God bless you all and give you strength as we face this new year together.





**the marillac**  
neurological  
care centre



## THE MARILLAC NEUROLOGICAL CARE CENTRE

In October, with Christmas fast approaching, residents at the Marillac got involved in the design of our annual staff Christmas card. Residents chose Nutcrackers as the theme this year, and everyone got stuck into painting to produce a colourful design. The design was then duly printed and given to staff at Christmas. Once this project was finished the residents enjoyed weekly art sessions colouring a variety of festive pictures, which were then displayed throughout the care centre.

In November, the Marillac held a live classical music experience with a musical duo who played the oboe and violin. It was a beautiful session that allowed everyone to relax and some to hum along to tunes they recognised.

Sister Rosalie Crawly, who provides Pastoral Support at the Marillac, organised a memorial

service for both staff and residents in remembrance of those residents who passed this year, as well as all those they have loved and lost. Sister Rosalie continues her visits to the units supporting families and making home visits to those bereaved. Some of the families also continue visiting the Marillac after their loved ones have passed. This can be just calling in for a cup of tea, a chat, or attending one of the Marillac's monthly events. This clearly shows just how much the families appreciate the love and care the staff gave to their loved ones whilst they were here.

December was a busy month starting with a Christmas Fayre at the centre, which provided a wonderful launch into the festive season for staff, residents and their families. The fayre was followed by the Marillac's annual Christmas Carol Concert in partnership with the Hutton and Shenfield Choral Society, one of the leading choirs in South Essex. In late December, the Hutton and Shenfield Choral Society held a 'Music for Christmas' concert at the local Brentwood

## THE MARILLAC CONTINUED...

Centre. Each year they elect a local charity to support, and this year the Marillac was delighted to be chosen. The group held a collection at the end of the concert where a very generous £1,530 was raised for the residents' benefit. A team of staff from the Marillac went along to the concert to help shake the collection buckets!

Staff also organised plenty of entertainment for residents throughout the month with a variety of singers, one of which made the

residents' Christmas party the best one yet! The live music and festive vibes were complimented with a delicious buffet supplied by the centre's catering team.

Every year the Marillac is fortunate to have regular visits from the Salvation Army and the North Ockendon handbell ringers, a group that who play a seasonal selection of handbell music. Both have been coming to perform for residents for over 20 years and always remark how much they enjoy returning.







*The team toasts to completing Seton's four-year  
Asset Redevelopment Program*

## SETON VILLA

We look back on 2023 with great thankfulness to God for his blessings upon Seton Villa. We have completed our ambitious four-year Asset Redevelopment Program that delivered seven new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Specialist Disability Accommodation houses built to the Improved Livability Design Standards that are now very comfortable, fit-for-purpose homes for our residents. It has been an amazing journey with a very special builder, Ronnie Beaini, and his team at Academy Constructions. We may still contemplate the construction of a new villa complex in 2024!



It has also been a joy to welcome 14 residents and families from the Ryde Area Supported Accommodation for Intellectually Disabled (RASAID) community into the Seton family. They are a fun-loving group who enjoy dressing up on special occasions (as shown above).

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## SETON VILLA CONTINUED ...

We went all out to create a very special Christmas luncheon for our expanded Seton family at the end of November, where around 140 residents, families and staff gathered at The Epping Club, complete with a uniformed 'signing choir' who delighted the audience with their visual presentation of O Holy Night, managing to keep it a complete secret from families for many weeks! And then everyone had the most fun on the disco floor and enjoyed getting their photos taken with Santa.



As we move into 2024, the outcomes from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability will be translated into new compliance requirements for providers. The NDIS Review recommendations will also impact our service delivery model moving forward.

Nonetheless, we will embrace these challenges with prayerful enthusiasm to better serve our residents in the coming year.

**Peter Gardiner**

*Chief Executive Officer*





## THE LOUISE PROJECT

October through to December is one of the busiest times of the year at The Louise Project. During this period, the charity supported 104 families at its community drop-in - some of which have a family of 10 - and 372 families were supported with integration into the community through obtaining help with advocacy, benefits, welfare and more.

### Dental Hygiene Education

Staff at The Louise Project often see children with poor oral health, many having never visited a dentist in their life. The Louise Project collaborated with NHS dental services to provide two drop-in advice sessions in October and November. Representatives from the NHS set up a stand at The Space, the charity's centre in Govanhill, with the aim of educating families on the importance of good

dental hygiene and encouraging them to register to a dentist. They also gave demonstrations on the effects sugar can have on teeth. 20 families attended the drop-in sessions, and eight people successfully registered to a dentist, including children. All families were sent home with toothbrushes, toothpaste and a poster with reminders of when to brush their teeth.





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## THE LOUISE PROJECT CONTINUED ...

### **Citizens' Rights EU Settlement Support**

Another collaboration that took place in November was one with Citizens' Rights Project, an organisation that provides information, advice and support for EU citizens in Scotland. The Louise Project has been helping families with their EU Settled Status applications for a few years, but now many do not have a chance at being accepted because they are too late in submitting their applications. To help families understand the process and reasonings, two immigration advisors from Citizens' Rights Project in Edinburgh came to The Space to run a one-hour information session. The advisors explained the changes to the EU Settlement Scheme and how complex it now is to submit a late application following the new rules. They also informed families of the risks involved if they can't achieve Settled Status - such as not having access to education, healthcare, employment or rental homes - and why families should not encourage their loved ones overseas to travel the UK to live without an appropriate visa. 10 families attended the session, which was translated so

everyone could understand the information being given. A private room was also provided so families could have 1-1 sessions with an advisor to answer their questions and assess if they have a chance at gaining Settled Status. Families went away with leaflets so they could be reminded about what they had learnt and share the advice with friends and family.

### **"Tis the season for giving**

December was a very busy month for staff at The Louise Project. Around 50 families received donated gifts from the charity this year, with a focus on those who live in homeless accommodation and parents who do not have access to welfare benefits. This is less than the 150 families who received gifts last year as many are now recipients of benefits, thanks to the support of The Louise Project who helped them integrate into society. Therefore, more parents were able to purchase their own gifts for their children this year, which gave the parents great joy and independence. The Louise Project also provided food vouchers to the most vulnerable children and families in the community.



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## THE LOUISE PROJECT CONTINUED ...

### Hopeful Futures Programme

The charity's first 12-week Hopeful Futures Programme took place from October to December 2023. 14 young mothers and ladies aged 18-30 took part in the customised programme, which was put together by Mellow Parenting company and focuses on relationships and boundaries. This type of programme is normally aimed at young people aged 12-15, which highlights the lack of education these young women have had access to and the importance of the work taking place at The Louise Project to develop their life skills.

Towards the beginning of the programme, eight women went on a trip to Glasgow city centre with Ellie Surmajova, Project Manager at The Louise Project. The women had never travelled to the city centre before, despite it only being a short bus ride away from Govanhill. The ladies felt rather nervous on this first trip, staying very close to Ellie. However,

by the end of the successful Hopeful Futures Programme, the women had built their confidence in new and public spaces. In one of the last sessions, Ellie took the women to the cinema and a restaurant, which was kindly funded by Trust House, so they could experience being in a social environment and dining out. The women's confidence had improved so much that they were able to walk to and from the restaurant freely without feeling nervous and order for themselves. One lady said: "I feel like a normal person sitting here."

The young women have discovered their own personal values, emotions and boundaries - all vital skills that they can carry throughout their lives - as well as a better understanding of their past traumas and how to cope with them. The women all expressed that they feel they are on a better path after completing the programme, and that their mental health has improved.





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STOP & BLEATHER AT  
**THE LISTENING  
HEART**



## THE LISTENING HEART

### **Christmas at The Listening Heart**

*By Sister Maria Robb*

Christmas was a busy time at the Listening Heart. We started in earnest on Wednesday 13th December with a mini Retreat for Volunteers, led by Father Liam McMahon, the Parish Priest at St Michael's, the parish opposite the Listening Heart. Father Liam based the reflections on the beautiful carol, 'O Holy Night'. We listened to the carol and reflected on the words, pulling out words and phrases that spoke to us. The phrase that spoke loudest to me was, "Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'till He appeared and the soul felt its worth." The coming of Jesus, the Messiah, gives meaning to who we are, to what we do, to that inner place, the soul. He also told us about the TikTok story going viral. It was about the little boy who told his

grandmother that he had a REALLY important part in the Nativity Play at school. She asked him if he was Joseph... NO. One of the shepherds of Kings?... NO! He was someone REALLY important. She wondered was he maybe the baby Jesus then?? NO! Then who was he?... He was the person who opened the door to let Jesus be born! You can't get more important than that.

On the 22nd December we had a Christmas Fun Day for everyone in the Listening Heart. It started with a few Carols, blessing our little crib that had been in the window since the beginning of Advent, and that had attracted lots of attention from passers-by. After this the food came out. Volunteers had signed up to bring all sorts of gorgeous bits and pieces, which we managed to devour.

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## THE LISTENING HEART CONTINUED ...

In the middle of this, Santa himself arrived with volunteer Lynn, who dressed as his reindeer. This was a role she always had when working at a hospital, so she came with a costume for Santa and her own little reindeer outfit. Everyone got a present!

Some of our guests had nowhere to go for Christmas Dinner, so we connected with the Salvation Army further down the road who put on a beautiful three-course Christmas Dinner, open to anyone who wanted to join them. We collected those who needed transport and, by all accounts, it was a great day. It's great to have contacts - all is possible when we do it together!

Prior to Christmas, The Listening Heart was delighted to receive a visit from renowned Scottish Singer Susan Boyle. Susan is a dear friend of some of The Daughters of Charity, and everyone at the project enjoyed meeting and chatting to her in what was a very special occasion.

Happy New Year and every blessing for 2024, from all at the Listening Heart.







## OUT THERE

### Christmas time with Out There

The festive period can bring up a range of challenges and emotions for families of prisoners. From the constant reminder that someone is missing to the added financial pressures of Christmas in what's usually a one-income household, the impact of having a loved one in prison is often exacerbated during this time.

Out There delivered around 40 Christmas hampers, well-being boxes and toys to the families they support to help lift their festive spirits. The team also delivered food hampers to the families who needed it most. The charity thanks Porch Boxes and Mission Christmas for their generous donations and support in making this happen.

A local Minnie Vinnie's group in Manchester took part in a learning session on the impact that parental imprisonment has on children. The group then repurposed greetings cards to create beautiful Christmas cards for some of the children supported by Out There, which were sent out with the Christmas hampers. The recipients were delighted to receive the cards, knowing others were thinking about them.

In partnership with HM Prison Forest Bank and the St Vincent de Paul Society, Out There gifted Christmas advent calendars to around 40 inmates as well as their families on the outside, with the idea that they would open the same calendar together each day. The initiative aims to strengthen bonds between families and help them to feel less alone during the festive period.

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## OUT THERE CONTINUED ...

Families were also treated to a trip to the pantomime at Salford Art Theatre, thanks to Fieldings Porter Solicitors in Manchester who funded the trip. The children were particularly amused by watching the adults get blasted with water guns during the show! Additionally, Out There held a crafts session before Christmas where families enjoyed making bath bombs and snacking on festive treats. Again, the aim of these activities was to boost festive spirits, provide a safe space for families to come and relax, and offer a chance for them to meet and socialise with others who understand what they are going through.



The CEO of Out There, Mark Turnbull, was recently invited onto National Prison Radio where he discussed the work of the charity and some of the challenges that families of prisoners face. When asked how long Out There supports families after a person has been released from prison, Mark explained it is very much down to the individual, adding: "We've got a family who's loved one has been released for nearly a year, but they still benefit from being part of this community and the peer support within family groups."

### **Staff updates**

Out There has welcomed some new members to the team. Fiona Tierney joined as a Family Support Worker in January 2024, and Iona Cowan will shortly be joining as the team's new Well-being Coach. Staff were sad to wave goodbye to former Family Support Worker Jean Bernard after spending seven years working at the charity. We join together in congratulating Jean on her retirement and wishing her all the very best in this exciting new chapter.

### **The Wellbeing Service**

The charity is now looking forward to the official launch of The Wellbeing Service, a successful partnership of local third sector organisations working across Greater Manchester to deliver support for people on probation. The mission of the service is to make sure that people have all the tools, information and support they need to succeed while on probation, and service users can benefit from in-depth local knowledge at convenient locations.





## HUTT ST CENTRE

### **Sharing Hope and Joy: Hutt St Centre's Christmas Spirit**

Christmas can be an especially challenging time for people experiencing homelessness. Many have not only lost their homes but also the comfort of familiar faces and the warmth of a festive celebration.

Over Christmas, Hutt St Centre provides immediate help for people experiencing homelessness at a critical time. Every year, we open our doors on Christmas Day to ensure anyone in need has a place to go.

Thanks to the incredible support from South Australia's generous community and our dedicated volunteers, we were able to host over 165 individuals experiencing homelessness,

offering them a Christmas filled with joy, camaraderie, and heartfelt care.

On Christmas Day, we came together to share a special breakfast of ham and cheese croissants followed by a traditional, hearty lunch with ham, turkey, prawns and all the festive trimmings – a comforting reminder of togetherness.

Being surrounded by familiar faces is especially important on Christmas Day so the Centre was staffed by our regular team and a group of long-serving volunteers.

The Centre was decked with cheerful decorations, music filled the air, and each table set with festive crackers, stockings, and thoughtful gifts for everyone.

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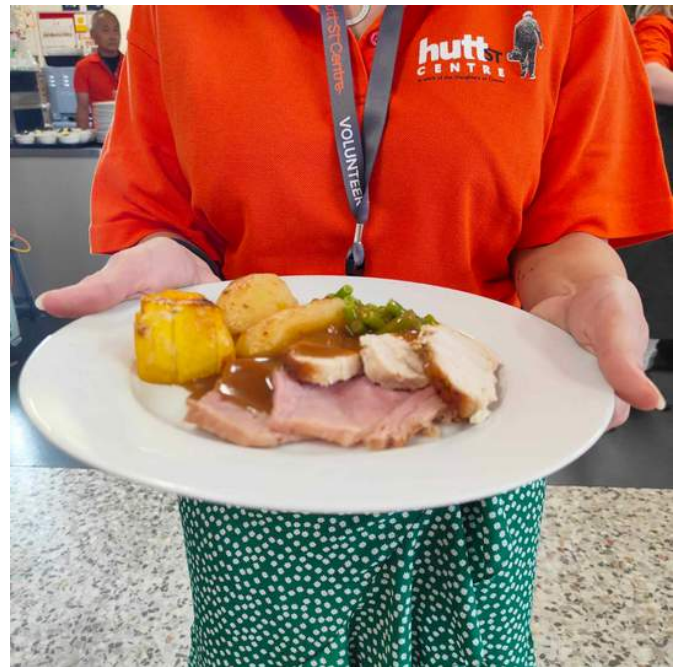
## HUTT ST CENTRE CONTINUED ...

For many, the unexpected joy of receiving a present is a poignant reminder that they're not forgotten during this time. We also had a selection of wrapped gifts for people to give to their children or grandchildren, so no one missed out.

Often the people we help aren't expecting to receive anything for Christmas so the best part is seeing the delight on people's faces

when they unwrap a gift that's just for them. Moments like this are a timely reminder that Christmas is all about bringing much-needed joy to others.

The service we provide on Christmas Day represents everything that makes Hutt St Centre's community so special - it's about people coming together to look after each other and share the sense of belonging we all deserve.





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## HUTT ST CENTRE CONTINUED ...

### **Marianne's story**

Marianne's\* story is a testament to the life-changing impact of support. After losing her job and home at 60, she found herself navigating the harsh reality of homelessness. Hutt St Centre became her sanctuary.

*"I am so grateful for your care and compassion. I can't imagine where I would be without the essential services, and the non-judgmental, supportive environment Hutt St Centre provides."*

Her Christmas at the Centre the year before was marked by a lack of presents for her grandkids, until the kindness of our community allowed her to choose gifts for each child - a moment she treasures.

*"I was feeling down. I didn't have any pressies for my grandkids... and then a Hutt St worker told me to choose some presents from a big stack that people had donated. So I got to give each of the kids something to unwrap!"*

Thanks to the kindness of our community, Marianne found the help she needed to get back on her feet again. She is now employed, reunited with her family, and spent her first Christmas in her new home, choosing a special gift - a princess cubby house - for her granddaughter.

*"I set it up so it will be a surprise when she comes to visit. I can't wait!"*

Marianne's story has a happy ending only because she received critical support during her journey out of homelessness: nutritious meals when she was hungry, hot showers to maintain her dignity and support from a skilled caseworker who helped her complete official documentation and find suitable accommodation.

*"My life is now finally a feel-good story because now I've got a home. If it wasn't for Hutt St, I'd still be on the streets for sure. Places like Hutt St Centre are so badly needed by so many people out there. I was one of them."*

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support and generosity of our incredible community. It's this support that sustains us beyond the festive season, providing vital meals, showers, health services, and the opportunity for those experiencing homelessness to find their way back.

As we step into the New Year, we extend our warmest wishes to everyone from Hutt St Centre. Thank you for being a part of our journey, bringing hope and joy to those who need it most.

*\*While names have been changed for privacy, this story is very real and reflects how important generosity is for helping people start their journey towards homefulness.*



## ST JOSEPH'S

The smiling faces at St Joseph's were beaming brighter than ever over the past few months as staff put on a number of exciting events for everyone to enjoy. St Joseph's new Activities Co-ordinator, Mandy, has continued to spread joy with her Tuesday Club, where the people of St Joseph's are encouraged to come and meet people from the wider community, create new friendships and participate in a range of games and activities. Recent Tuesday Club events have included an '80s Club Tropicana', a movies and musicals themed 'Glitz and Glamour' evening, and a festive night involving Christmas karaoke, cracker jokes and bingo.

On the 28th of November, St Joseph's held its annual Light up a Life service. The event takes place online and is a chance for people to come together to remember friends and family members who are no longer with us and celebrate their lives with meaningful reflections,

prayers and songs. The hour-long service concludes with each St Joseph's house lighting up their Christmas trees in honour of loved ones and marking the start of the festive season.

Throughout the Christmas period, the people at St Joseph's enjoyed a festive window decorating competition, a carol concert where they were told the nativity story through song, Santa visits in their homes, and the charity's great annual Christmas party. The party was a huge success; everyone dressed up in their best Christmas outfits as they were entertained with a fabulous Disco.

Stuart, who is supported by St Joseph's, had a Christmas wish to be Santa at a community event this year. He was delighted when the charity organised for his wish to come true at a local Christmas community fayre. Stuart did such a great job that he once again dressed up as Mr Claus at St Joseph's Christmas party. He certainly spread Christmas spirit all night long!



## ST JOSEPH'S CONTINUED ...

A big thank you to all the dedicated care workers who went to a tremendous effort to make Christmas Day magical for the people at St Joseph's and ensured no one was alone. From cooking delicious Christmas dinners to decorating the houses, their work enables people to stay at home happily and safely at Christmas time each year.



2024 is a momentous year for St Joseph's as the charity reaches 100 years of service. The anniversary is on the 24th of January, the day before Burns Night, which was marked with a Scottish-themed ceremony, cake and ribbon. A candle was also lit to commemorate the remarkable milestone. The official centenary party is set to take place later this year in May, and fundraising has been well underway for many months. From cake bake sales and daring sky jumps to a successful horse racing night - which raised around £1700 - St Joseph's is on track to raising £15,000 before the party.

St Joseph's was also delighted to be awarded £9,600 from the Voluntary Sector Development Fund to support staff to achieve their Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ), which is a requirement for registration.

[www.stjosephsservices.co.uk](http://www.stjosephsservices.co.uk)



Leanne, who is supported by St Joseph's, is happy to be volunteering in the office once a week after showing interest in taking on a job. It has been a great opportunity for her to learn new skills and she is excellent at answering phone calls and showing visitors around the charity. St Joseph's is looking to expand its volunteering offering to more residents over the next year.





*Lounge and Dining Area at St Louise Dementia Unit*

## ST CATHERINE'S AGED CARE SERVICES

St Catherine's opened at Marsfield in March 1957 and was incorporated on 22nd May 1998. For the past few decades, St Catherine's continues the healing ministry of Christ providing total care through respect and commitment to each resident and their families, and is committed to improve residents' living environment to be more comfortable, secure and homely. Hence the idea of renovating.

St Catherine's new St Louise Dementia Unit was first mentioned in year 2021. The initial design and plans, which were endorsed by Dementia Australia and commenced in April 2021, contained a variety of layouts and spaces, including an ensuite for every room and a dementia-friendly garden. However, the

ongoing presence of COVID-19 and seasonal outbreaks meant that construction was delayed until April 2023. But once we got the project started, it really was full steam ahead. We have been very fortunate to work with some brilliant third parties (mentioned below) in bringing this project to life and we are pleased to say that the construction was completed within the proposed timeframe and budget.

- The Daughters of Charity and the Board of St Catherine's
- David and Phil from Linen Project Management
- Futon Trotter design company
- Skope Construction, in particular John and Guy



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## ST CATHERINE'S AGED CARE SERVICES CONTINUED ...

Our wonderful staff and our very patient residents and their friends and families have also played huge important part throughout the journey to completing this project.

An official opening ceremony was held on the 5th December with large crowds of people to

witness and celebrate the opening of these wonderful new facilities. We welcomed our residents back to the fully renovated St Louise on the 11th January. The facility was well received and loved by us all.

**Yan Li**

*Chief Executive Officer*



*Premium Room at St Louise Dementia Unit*



*Patio and Outdoor Space at St Louise Dementia Unit*



*"Watching our children's faces light up as they proudly presented their artwork was a heart-warming experience."*



*Mothers at SVFP prove that they can be 'super parents' and 'super fit' at the same time.*

## ST VINCENT'S FAMILY PROJECT

Fundraising, fitness and festivities are three words that spring to mind when reflecting on the final few months of 2023 at St Vincent's Family Project (SVFP). After an activity-filled October half term, which included a creative play session led by an artist at Tate Britain Art Gallery and a spooktacular Halloween party with face painting, food and story time, SVFP's regular weekly sessions were back in full-swing. The charity's creche, drop-in sessions and parenting courses are continually growing as more families seek the support and sense of community at SVFP.

In November, SVFP excitedly launched its weekly 'Crèche at Tate Britain', which takes place every Monday for two hours and allows young children to play, learn and socialise with other children in a new creative location.

Meanwhile, seven mothers have benefited from personalised fitness plans with SVFP's trainer, Donna. Many of the women already take part in Donna's free group fitness classes at the charity, helping them to build a healthy mind and body and channel their stresses into positive action. But now they can take what they have learnt in class and reap the benefits of exercise everyday with personal training plans that require only simple items around the home, such as tins of beans.

At the end of November, SVFP held a bake-off fundraiser, organised by one of the charity's trustees. The event brought in a range of people, from young local families to corporate workers who have since shown a keen interest in helping out at the project. The bake-off raised an impressive £6,000, which went towards supporting families over Christmas. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the delicious Lemon Drizzle cake won the competition. But well done to everyone who made the fundraiser such a success!



## SVFP CONTINUED ...

As the weeks rolled by, festive cheer began echoing through the walls of SVFP. Families supported by the charity were treated to a trip to Hyde Park's Winter Wonderland where they enjoyed the rides and watched the circus. The day raised Christmas spirits in everyone and created positive memories.

On the 19th of December, staff and volunteers put on a magical Christmas party for families. The project was transformed into a festive wonderland where 78 children had the opportunity to meet Santa in his grotto and receive a gift, all thanks to generous toy donations. The joy continued throughout the afternoon with festive games, crafts and jolly activities. It was an unforgettable experience for both children and parents and left every family feeling supported and with a sense of belonging over Christmas.



Looking forward into the new year, SVFP is excited to host a weekly 'Mum's Brunch', with a key purpose to build community and add some joy to the lives of parents who have been struggling.

SVFP has also been working with the University of Birmingham on a research project that explores the long-term effects of trauma on children. Trauma often comes up in parenting courses at SVFP, and parents from the charity's Mellow Parenting course have been sharing their experiences with the university, which will contribute to a study set to be released during the summer.

And finally, SVFP was delighted to have been awarded a very generous three-year grant from John Lyon's Charity. CEO of SVFP, Andrew Varley, thanked John Lyon's and said the funds will be used for long-term proactive support of the charity and its families.





## ST MARY'S HOUSE OF WELCOME

### **Christmas celebrations**

Christmas Day at St Mary's House of Welcome (SMHOW) was filled with warmth and generosity as our incredible team of dedicated staff and volunteers came together to create a memorable experience for our community on this special day in the calendar.

Thanks to the support of our generous donors and visiting chefs, we were able to put on a delightful three-course meal for our homeless community and provide everyone with their own gift. Additionally, we distributed essential

essential hampers, providing vital aid to vulnerable people during the holiday season. It was heartwarming to be able to open on Christmas Day and provide a safe and joyous space for so many people who had no stable place to call home.

### **Inspirational Community Members**

Laurence is a truly inspiring and compassionate person and valued friend of SMHOW! His dedication to helping those in need has truly left us speechless and motivated to tell his story.



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## SMHOW CONTINUED ...

Laurence spent countless hours crafting Santa hats with his family and friends and selling them to create "Keep'n' it Cool" hampers for our service users. These thoughtfully curated hampers were stocked with essential items for the hot Aussie summer - thongs (flip-flops), hats, sunscreen, water and more. Items many take for granted, but for those sleeping

on the streets, they are crucial in the heat. Thanks to Laurence's selflessness, many will have a more comfortable summer ahead. It is so important to celebrate these incredible acts of kindness and remember that everyone, even on an individual level can make a huge positive difference in the community.



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### In the news!

During the Christmas season, we had the privilege of hosting The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and The Age at our centre, offering them a firsthand look at the harsh realities faced by the homelessness sector. The media teams engaged with our staff and interviewed some of our service users, seeking insights into our operations and the support we provide to those seeking refuge during challenging times.

The articles and videos produced not only highlighted the struggles within the

homelessness sector but also provided a platform for our Christmas campaign to garner significant exposure.

With the compelling content created by these media outlets, we hope to have reached a wider audience, introducing SMHOW to others who may feel compelled to join our mission and engage in future initiatives. Our service users shared their experiences of homelessness, the support provided and spoke of the hope and connection provided by SMHOW.

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## SMHOW CONTINUED ...

### Support for the homeless community

The State Minister for Housing joined us at SMHOW and served a meal and met with service users this month. We continue to promote the work of SMHOW and advocate for the important work supporting our



homeless community and sharing results of the outcomes of our support work. In December 2023 we supported seven people into permanent housing after years of homelessness. Ray pictured below right is one of the people, placed into housing.



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### Artwork

We were delighted to receive a stunning painting gifted to us by Clay, a valued member of our indigenous community who has been coming to St Mary's House of Welcome for many years. The beautiful artwork reflects the significance of the Emu. They were spirits that soared through the skies above, looking over the land. These birds were incredibly helpful, so it makes sense that Emu in the Sky helped Indigenous people predict what was happening in the world around them. The painting tells Clays story and shows his talent and contributes to the warmth of our space. As a gesture of giving back, Clay generously presented us with this painting, and we are truly appreciative of his thoughtful contribution.



### Robina Bradley

*Chief Executive Officer*





# VINCENTIAN CARE PLUS

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In the heart of London, Vincentian Care Plus (VCP) has once again embraced the spirit of community and giving during the festive season. I am thrilled to share the heartwarming story of how our dedicated team came together to deliver Christmas meals to our cherished service users.

## **The Planning Stage**

The journey began with meticulous planning to ensure that every detail was taken into consideration, most importantly those who were spending the festive period alone, as well as dietary preferences. The VCP community is a melting pot of different cultures and we strive to ensure everyone feels seen. From traditional Christmas delights

to special dietary requirements, every aspect was carefully considered to make this initiative truly inclusive.

At first, everything was not going to plan! With the busy festive season, a lot of the options we had available for Christmas Meals in 2022 were not available this year, as well as limited grocery delivery slots available. In 2022 we distributed 40 Christmas meals. However, in 2023 we had 110 meals to deliver! The food parcels included a festive meal, dessert and (non-alcoholic) bubbly.

My journey began at 7.30am on the 22nd December with a trip to Sainsbury's Winchmore Hill, North London. The staff were incredibly helpful being that the store was incredibly busy, and three trolleys later I was enroute to the VCP Office.

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## VCP CONTINUED ...

### **Delivering Joy To Doorsteps**

The magic happened when the entire VCP office team and carers rallied together, each contributing their own unique skills to make the deliveries a success. Utilising the carers' on-the-ground knowledge of the area, we split into five delivery teams with two drivers and the rest on foot.

On the day, the VCP team transformed into elves of kindness, donning festive attire and loading up vehicles with bags for life and boxes carrying carefully packed Christmas meals. The joyous convoy embarked on a mission to spread happiness and warmth to the doorsteps of our service users. From logistics to communication and food preparation, every aspect of the operation was a collaborative effort. It was inspiring to witness the team's dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

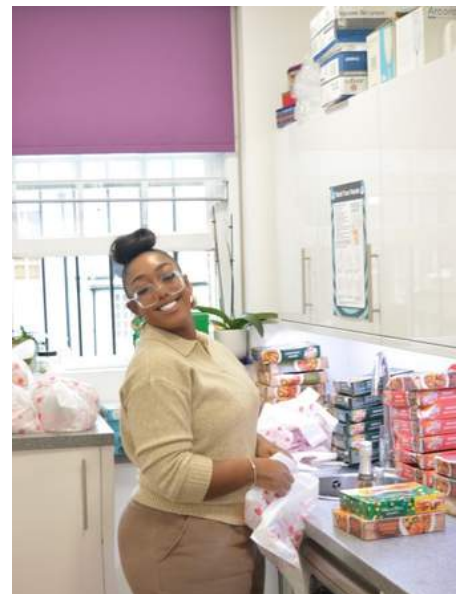
### **Personal Connections**

One of the most heartening aspects of this initiative was the opportunity for the team to personally connect with our service users.

Beyond delivering meals, the team spent time engaging in conversations, sharing stories, and exchanging festive greetings. These interactions went beyond the professional realm, forging a sense of community and solidarity.

The impact of this small gesture was profound, reaching beyond the nourishment of the body to the nourishment of the soul. Service users expressed gratitude not only for the delicious meals but also for the companionship and the genuine care extended by the VCP team. For many, this act of kindness became a beacon of hope during a time that can be challenging for some.

Witnessing the dedication and compassion of both the office and care team has been an immensely rewarding experience. This initiative not only reflects the values of our organisation but also exemplifies the power of collective goodwill and resourcefulness. The VCP family looks forward to continuing such endeavors, spreading joy and making a positive impact on the lives of those we are privileged to serve. And by God's grace, we do it all again in 2024!





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## VCP CONTINUED ...



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### Home Care Awards 2024

VCP is delighted to have been selected as a Finalist at the Home Care Awards 2024! The awards seek out examples of expertise within companies providing home care in the UK. VCP entered the Specialist Care Expertise category for its innovative approach to address complex issues at a local hostel for men experiencing homelessness, Edward Alsop Court (EAC). The service, which was established after the team recognised an

unmet need at the hostel, focuses on building trust and achieving greater independence, which has already enhanced the lives of many residents at EAC.

Congratulations to the team on this very well-deserved achievement. We wish you good luck at the final awards ceremony, which will take place on Friday 1st March at the National Conference Centre in Solihul.