



Dreams, alcohol & fragile hope

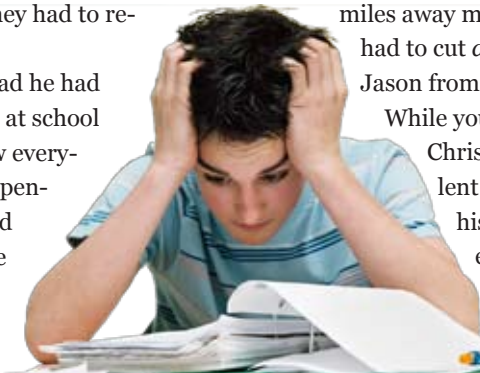
When Jason came to school 18 months ago as an 11 year old, he was instantly identified and referred to me because of his emotional state. I have been mentoring him throughout that time and have been privileged to be trusted with details of his home life.

It soon became clear that his Dad has a serious alcohol problem and when drunk is indirectly violent and emotionally abusive to both his Mum and Jason. Fairly quickly his Mum took Jason out of the home to stay on the floor of friend's flat (three of them in the same room) this soon became unworkable and they had to return to Dad.

Jason told his Dad he had been talking to me at school and that they knew everything that was happening. This shock Dad and appeared to be a 'wake-up' call. Things got better for a while and

I began to see the real Jason, a boy of dreams and smiles, until the next time Dad drank too much. Mum and Jason packed a suitcase and left to stay at an aunt's. Unable to use a computer for homework, and with a limited amount of food in the house meant this as before wasn't working. Jason started getting behind at school leading to a downward spiral of truanting! Before long circumstances forced them back with Dad, as the housing association couldn't or wouldn't help and domestic violence organisations could only offer a safe house thirty miles away meaning they would have had to cut *all* ties from here, isolating Jason from friends and family.

While you and I were enjoying Christmas, Jason had a turbulent season of goodwill due to his Dad's drinking. However the New Year has brought a new start and a new hope which Jason says is fragile but real!



empowering **INDIVIDUALS** to b

Director and unusually quiet

Andy Burns ■ andy@easttowest.org.uk



There has been too much going on this term to fill this newsletter with my ramblings. I trust that you'll be encouraged by the stories of a Gospel of real and lasting Hope.

Yours in Christ,

Teenage counselling service starts



It's estimated by the Mental Health Foundation that rates of depression and anxiety among young people have risen by 70% in the past 25 years. In Surrey, the borough with highest mental health issues among teenagers is Runnymede. A borough that hosts some of the most affluent areas in the UK is also home to the

highest number of emotionally vulnerable young people in the county. It's stats like that which caused **east to west** to respond and appoint Marie Adams (pictured) to establish a teenage counselling service in Runnymede starting in January 2010.

Marie said: 'I'm very excited about being a part of this new venture. I think **east to west** have identified an important need in the local community and I look forward to working with both them and the schools in building an excellent counselling service for our young people.'

The gentle stroll into Windsor...

...continues as we are now just waiting on some funding streams to kick in and then we'll be looking to appoint a Dan-equivalent in Windsor Police Station and possibly a family link worker for a cluster of primary schools.

In the next newsletter we hope to be introducing you to our new Windsor team. How exciting is that?

"east to west enables young people to see the potential they have and to discover how to become all that they can be."

Jill Rowe, Oasis Trust

Bringing HOPE to YOUNG LIVES

Q&A with Dan West

Egham's Police Community Youth Pastor

What are the issues that have caused the young people you work with to engage in criminality

In Egham Hythe and Pooley Green there is a lack of, or no facilities for young people to use, hang out in, get support around issues they may face etc. This plays a massive part in the youth culture within this area. The young people have used their own initiative to find things to do and this has led to a rise in criminal activity and gang culture. It can often be a vicious circle because when bored young people act up they get a reaction from residents, which in turn encourages their misadventure.

What are the challenges you face in working with anti-social young people?

There are many but the main one is getting the young people to realise that they are worth something and building their self esteem, and this depends



on whether they turn up to our arranged appointments which is a challenge in itself! There is a feeling within the local community that you can't leave this area once you are a member of the community. This is a big challenge in convincing the young people to step out of their comfort zone and try something new that may not keep them in Pooley Green.

What are the new things you starting in 2010?

This month I am starting a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) course called Inspire. There are a concentrated number of young people in this area who are unemployed and

have nothing good to do so I am getting them involved in the course. The programme involves the young people meeting once a week. We will be going to visit local training centres for young people to gain qualifications and work experience, and visit work places to give the young people an idea of what is expected of them in work. We support them in CV writing and completing application forms and help raise their self esteem through team building activities and creating positive friendships. The overall aim is to be an inspirational stepping stone for these young people to help them reach their potential.

It's an education

Q&A with Tracey Simcock, Nicki Sudworth & E

What is it like working in the schools?

ES: Working in schools is like being in a small community – there's a constant buzz in a school and always something happening.

NS: The school is such a busy environment, always something more to be done, something new to be arranged or an event to be timetabled.

TS: Crazy! always lots going on, lots of variety, responding to needs that come up day to day and being wise with the time you have is always a challenge.

What are the challenges?

ES: Working in a different way with young people to

most of the rest of the staff. Young people telling me about difficulties in life that they don't want me to share with the school. This means when a young person is being challenged about their behaviour or not completing school work I have to try and act as an advocate for a young person without breaking confidence.

NS: To try to maintain a true distinctive of **east to west** and being set slightly apart from the usual school set up. Making the time to listen to what priorities God wants me to place on the work.

TS: Working alongside some really vulnerable young people and supporting and advising the school in the

best way forward for situations and circumstances. Also going home at the end of the day thinking of situations and have you done all you could have for them that day.

What are the highs?

ES: Hearing that a young person has made progress when the team have prayed for them and when I have supported them.

NS: One of the girls moving to Manchester and asking her head teacher if **east to west** exist in Manchester and could she see someone similar please as she felt she was really 'getting somewhere' with the mentoring.

TS: A huge privilege that the young people trust us



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Our Schools Relational Support Workers

Emma Swinden

and want us to help them. And I just love mentoring and group work.

What are the big issues the young people are facing?

ES: Family breakdown. Mental health issues such as self harm, anxiety, bereavement, drug dependency and alcoholism. Social/cultural differences like discrimination, a young people's potential being limited due to language barriers. Or other social tensions, for example, a young person's family's expectations or values may mean they will respond to situations in school which contradict with the school expectations or values.

NS: Self harm is still huge. Grief for the loss of a loved one but also for the breakdown in family. Underage sex. The pressure to achieve. And substance abuse.

TS: Broken families is a big one – custody battles, court cases, lots of siblings in a single parent family, bereavement. Lots of the young people I mentor often live with grandparents and are working through the rejection of not being with their parents, or finding out of a parent is not their biological parent. Drug and alcohol abuse – again huge issues around this; some becoming dealers to earn money, or have parents that

also have these addictions, even being damaged from the womb; hanging around with older young people on the streets or fields who influence and talk them into trying things. Sexual promiscuity – mainly girls, leading to sexual health issues and some being told they will not be able to have children or some being told they are pregnant. Rape and abuse cases are on the increase and we have to support young people once the police get involved. Behaviour generally is getting worse – so lots more courses taking place! Crime, prison releases, general gang trouble in the community, bullying!



A fresh start

Catherine Burns Supported Lodgings Manager

catherine@easttowest.org.uk

east to west's Supported Lodgings project places 16-17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with families or individuals who are willing to give them the support they need to start a new life. In its inaugural term, Catherine has been contacted with over 18 referral requests and found homes and for five young people, one of whom has already been reunited with family (see the quote on the opposite page).

One young person,

known as Jenny to protect her real identity, is the first to be taken into a family home in this way. Originally from Staines, Jenny had nowhere to turn when an abusive relationship turned sour and clashes with her family meant she could not return home. Jenny suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her older boyfriend, but is now staying with Bex, a host from Ashford. Jenny said: "I can be who I am here. When I was living with my

boyfriend I had to be shy – I had to run around after him and I wasn't allowed to see my friends. He used to use abusive language and he would hit me. Since I've been here, I've started college again and I've had a lot more contact with my family and friends. I'm at college now and I want to work with children some day. Bex is lovely – she makes me laugh and we do things together. She took me bowling on Friday. I'm not in contact with my ex.



Bex and Catherine flying the east to west flag, much to the amusement of Bex's neighbours

I don't want anything more to do with him."

Bex, who runs her own business, took part in the scheme as a way of giving something back to the community. She said: "I just wanted to give someone a new start, someone who hadn't had as good a start in life as I had. Jenny really wants to change. She's gone back to college and I'm teaching her basic life skills like cooking and budgeting. She's bubbly, funny and a quick learner. I had a spare room that was just sitting here doing nothing and I thought, why not? Other people who are thinking about doing it shouldn't be worried – they should just do it because some young people get a bad press when they really need someone to give them a second chance."

If it wasn't for Supported Lodgings...

...I would either have been on the streets or in a hostel which would have scared me. I was used to a family home and it would have been a big jump to learn to live all on my own at 16 years old. The host family have given me and my family the break and time to think through the consequences and has allowed me to re-bond with my family again. If I was in a hostel I wouldn't have changed, but because of their support and boundaries it has meant I can now go home after two months as my dad has seen the change in me.

If you are considering becoming a Supported Lodgings Host then here's the event for you. It's a chance to have your questions answered and concerns eased by meeting existing east to west hosts and their young people.

Date: Monday 8th March

Venue: Hythefield Gospel Hall, Thorpe Road, Egham

Time: 8 – 9.30pm

Please email catherine@easttowest.org.uk to reserve your space.

We're having a ball!

We are quite literally having a ball later this year. This is a fundraising event and the dress code is strictly black tie. It will take place in the evening of Friday 7 May 2010 at The York Club, Windsor Great Park. Cost is £35 per person. You can download an invite with full details from our website: www.easttowest.org.uk



A word from the Chair

The stark reality for a charity is that we'll be the last sector to get out of the recession due to donations dropping off and government funding decreasing the future. At **east to west** we have to assess the risk to our own safeguarding and the safeguarding of those we support.

In our present financial year (ending August 31st) we are projecting a £30k deficit

and the same is true for 2010-11. Therefore in an unashamed way I pose the question: will you join with us financially so that together we can join with those whose lives are so desperate? If you can then please fill in the enclosed card and post it to us and we'll do the rest.

Many thanks and Happy New Year
Paul Marchant, Chair of east to west trust

Next newsletter: September 2010

For regular news updates, become a member of our email prayer group or check out our website: www.easttowest.org.uk



"Panvista have created some outstanding DVDs about the work of east to west and I'd recommend them wholeheartedly." Andy Burns



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