

The Stuart Low Trust

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bringing people together for better health and wellbeing

The background

Stuart Low was a young Islington man who killed himself in 1997 after failing to find the help he needed to cope with schizophrenia. His death prompted local people to form the Stuart Low Trust (SLT) to create better services for other vulnerable people. SLT was established in 1999.

Our mission

Our mission is to ensure that local people affected by social isolation or mental distress have what support they need to manage their lives successfully.

We want to provide social environments where vulnerable people can make friends and feel more a part of a wider community.

Our charitable objectives

SLT is a charity. Our formal charitable objectives are:

“the promotion, protection and preservation of public health and the relief of those suffering from mental, emotional or psychological illness or distress”.

Our core values are inclusiveness and working together

This means that:

- We welcome everyone regardless of where they live or whether or not they are ill
- All those involved with SLT (trustees, staff, volunteers and participants) work together.

We know that what we do helps

SLT has built up a relationship of trust with many of our participants and other organisations. We are well-known and respected in the local community.

- In 2003, we received an award from our Primary Care Trust (PCT) for success in involving carers and service users.
- The PCT cited us as an example of good practice in their 2006 report on *Mental Health in Islington*.
- We are one of three featured charities in *Unlocking the Potential: Volunteers in Islington*, a report by the Cripplegate Foundation.
- We received the award for Mental Well-being in the 2010 London Health Commission awards, in recognition of our programme of monthly outings. We were also shortlisted in the Cohesive Communities category.

Those we help also recognise us - for one, by continuing to participate in our activities even though their lives are usually far from orderly.

Some participants' views

“Sometimes just getting your activity flyer in the post keeps me alive.”

“SLT in my opinion is far and away the best mental health organisation in Islington.”

“You saved my life twice without even knowing it.”

“My medication has been reduced and I no longer see my psychiatrist.”

What we do

We run activities to combat isolation and physical and mental health problems. We believe that these help build friendships and a sense of being part of and helped by the community. The activities we run (and have run) are:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weekly Sunday evening <i>Wellbeing Project</i> which currently offers group singing for all and creative writing. All Sunday night events have a low-cost café serving nutritious hot meals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training courses, including Life / Work Skills training to help people have the confidence to think about volunteering or moving back into work. Those with poor mental health find it difficult to enter employment. This increases their isolation and lowers self-esteem. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for volunteering from participants and people from the local community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly walks and outings to places of interest, including museums, parks and historic London landmarks. These build up people's confidence in finding their way around London and they contribute to a sense of shared culture. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Friday Evening Event, running 52 weeks a year. There is a presentation, activity or workshop, good food, and an opportunity to socialise. Session workers host these events, helped by volunteers. They attract between 35-50 people each week, sometimes more. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the spring and summer, narrowboat outings and long weekends at the Darsham Country Centre, a converted railway station in Suffolk. These respite breaks attract up to 50 individual participants a year. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weekly gardening programme at Culpeper Community Gardens. | |

We produce a monthly events sheet. This is sent out free of charge by post and e-mail.

How we work

The Stuart Low Trust is a hands-on charity. Trustees, staff, volunteers and participants all work together to run activities and help raise funds. We actively encourage participant involvement.

Most of our session workers and volunteers have had personal experience of mental health services.

Why what we offer is special

Although Islington has good mental health services, SLT is a vital additional provider reaching many who fall outside the remit of statutory services. It offers a wide range of activities that cater for different needs and that complement existing services.

We know that the way we work and the activities we provide are unique in a number of ways.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not require people to be referred or to have specific diagnoses. This makes us able to help those out of mainstream services. Often SLT helps people who have never been diagnosed as having problems, but whose lives can be troubled and chaotic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We help people who do not want the 'stigma' of being in the mental health system. Our participants say they want help, but not through mainstream services. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our regular core activities take place 'out of hours'. Research in Islington in 1993 confirmed the demand for more evening and weekend provision - when most suicides occur. There is little provision at this time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not compete with other services. In fact, we actively seek partnerships. • Many of our participants come from outside the borough, often travelling long distances. |

The trustees

SLT is governed by a board of nine trustees. They have a variety of skills and a strong commitment to SLT. They meet ten times a year. The trustees are:

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|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Philip Boyle | Robin King | Pat Mayhew |
| Joseph Lowe (Treasurer) | Virginia Low (Chair) | Margaret Newton |
| Alena Kavenga | Jessica Sales | Eileen Thomas |

The staff

There are currently two salaried part-time staff: a general manager (4 days) and a development officer (3 days). There are also three people who are paid for helping with session activities and a trainee who is paid for help with book keeping. A trustee provides additional accounting support.

Volunteers

There are currently six people who do voluntary work for SLT once a week or more, as well as well others who offer services regularly but on a less frequent basis (for instance, giving presentations, running coffee mornings). All told, we have about fifty frequent volunteers.

Governance

SLT requires all its trustees, staff, principal volunteers and session hosts to have a CRB check. We also abide by a number of policies including: Safeguarding Adults, Health and Safety, and Equal Opportunities. We use the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) self-assessment to ensure that we are working effectively. We are working towards the PQASSO quality mark.

All SLT staff have regular appraisals to check their progress and ensure that targets are met.

We ask participants to complete evaluation forms for each of our projects to ensure that any concerns or new ideas for events or activities are acted upon

Who is helped?

We work with some of the most vulnerable people in Islington and surrounding boroughs - those who are socially isolated and / or have mental health problems. Many also have chronic physical health.

Some of the people we deal with are not in contact with mainstream services. They have either failed to make contact, or do not want to do so. SLT offers another source of community help. We also increase awareness of other services by signposting people to specialist help.

We have provided participants with opportunities for volunteering and training. This has enabled them to think about getting back into work and has improved their self-esteem and motivation. Many participants have reported improvements in their physical and mental wellbeing.

Over the course of 2009-2010

About 170 events were provided by SLT

There were about 3,250 attendances at these events

These attendances came from about 600 separate people

About 60 percent of these are men

About 25 percent are aged 60 or more

About 95 percent have a disability

Funding

Private donations contributed about 10% of our 2009-10 budget, but we are constantly making applications for funds - mainly to foundations and charitable trusts. We appreciate that funding organisations are inundated with applications and are likely to be more so in the current economic climate

Many grants we receive are small ones. Although these are gratefully received, securing adequate, long-term funding is a priority. It would provide the solid base on which to keep our activities going.

Making funding applications eats into our administrative resources, which could otherwise be directed to improving service provision. We continue to work towards obtaining larger grants from a wider range of organisations. We are also trying to increase the amount of funds we receive from individuals, especially in the form of standing orders.

SLT has always been mindful of the need to have secure financing, to build capacity and to have clear ideas about future planning. There have been a number of 'AwayDays' for the trustees and others to facilitate this. The latest one was at the end of March 2010.

We are currently receiving funds from:

- the City Bridge Trust, Coutts Bank, the Cripplegate Foundation, Goldsmiths Company Charity, Islington PCT (Adult Social Services), Mercers' Charity, Merchant Taylors' Charitable Foundation, the Morris Charitable Trust, the Richard Cloudsley's Charity, Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust, and the Tudor Trust.

Currently, we have funding applications lodged with:

- Grand Charity (London Lodge), the Grocers' Charity, the Schroder Charity Trust, the CHK Charitable Trust, Richard Cloudsley's Charity, The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation, The Clover Trust, the Lennox Wyfold Foundation, the John Laing Foundation, Impact Award GSK, Roger Vere Foundation, the Gauntlet Trust

In the past, we have received funds from many organisations, including:

- Awards for all, the Bellinger Donnay Charitable Trust, the Big Lottery Fund, Butchers Hall, the Camden Trust, the City Parochial Foundation, the Clothworkers' Foundation, the Drapers' Charitable Trust, the Grand Charity, Islington Community Chest, Islington PCT, the Jill Franklin Trust, Lloyds TSB, Moulton Charitable Trust, the Robert Gavron Charitable Trust, the Roger de Vere Foundation, and the RS Brownless Charitable Trust, Merchant Taylors' Company

SLT is proud to be a community initiative, but we want to become accessible and helpful to more people

ISLINGTON'S NEEDS

- There are over 200,000 residents in Islington.
- It is the sixth most deprived borough in England.
- In London, Islington has the second lowest life expectancy for men and the 6th lowest for women.
- There are over 40,000 people on the disability service register.
- Over 10,000 Islington residents are on incapacity benefit - 8% of the working age population. This is higher than for London as a whole.
- The suicide rate in Islington is over 70% higher than the average for England and the highest in the country for men.
- 3,000 people registered with a doctor in Islington, have a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorders or psychosis.
- Incidence of mental health disorders among 5- 17 year olds is 38% higher than national average.