

## West London Missions Day Centre

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### Background

West London Mission's Day Centre, the WLDC is a UK charity based in London, and one of five social work projects of the West London Mission (WLM). For almost 35 years, WLDC has been providing a valuable service for the homeless (e.g. rough sleepers and those in temporary accommodation) and vulnerably housed people, who require further help and support. The Centre supports around 90 people every day and over 1400 individuals every year, opening its doors to a diverse array of people, from all walks of life, many with addictions (i.e. drugs and alcohol), some ex-prisoners and others on the extreme margins of society. The Centre's visitors can be broken down into the following:

1. One third of its visitors are rough sleepers,
2. One third live in hostels or temporary accommodation and,
3. One third are re-housed but look to the Centre for advice and ongoing support.

The Centre is run by a small staff team supported by volunteers. The Centre has an 'open door' policy, offering help and consistent services to anyone who needs it, regardless of gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion or sexuality.

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*This case study identifies WLDC's activities, services, challenges and issues.*

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### WLDC aim

The Centre's main aim is to both support people's (the visitors) immediate needs and address some of the deeper, more complex issues of homelessness and poverty that many of their clients face. The Centre places high value on recognising and understanding individual needs. It both supports people in crisis need and those who are able to explore change. Through the use of resources and support services the Centre aims to make sustainable changes to people's lives and help it's visitors make the transition from living on the streets or insecure housing, to secure accommodation and experience more fulfilling lives. The managers, staff and volunteers at the Centre, understand how support, from a basic level of providing immediate resources through to specialist provision such as health care and counselling, are necessary to alleviating the problems surrounding hunger, addictions, homelessness and poverty.

### Drop-in services and Activities

The Centre has a wide variety of services and activities; these include the following areas:

#### 1. Basic needs

The Centre provides a wide range of facilities, resources and services that meet their clients' immediate and basic human needs, these include food from the canteen (breakfast and lunch), clothing store, bathroom, showers, laundry (washing machine and drying facilities available), luggage store, a quiet room, hairdressing, specialist healthcare and many more.

## 2. Advice and referral service.

More than half of the visitors use the Centre's advice and referral service. The Centre offers professional and appropriate support according to the client needs and aspirations, advising on all areas, including night shelters, hostels, resettlement, tenancy support, benefits, job skills, identification documents, form filling and finding the appropriate help. The Centre provides specialist support services aimed at tackling more complex issues, e.g. in the areas of mental health, substance misuse and offending. The Centre transforms lives through offering positive and encouraging advice, aimed at turning feelings of powerlessness towards hope, confidence and self-worth.

## 3. Health Services

The Centre has a Medical Department with doctor's surgery. Westminster Primary Care Trust provides this service. This service is essential, as the vast majority of the homeless visitors experience health complications, due to the nature of their lifestyles. This service can help identify health problems at an early stage, this can lead to a more likely recovery.

## 4. Education Workshops

The Centre provides educational workshops, aimed at helping the homeless visitors acquire valuable skills and helping in the transformation process, through developing it's visitors feelings of confidence, motivation, self-worth, well-being and sense of purpose. Some of the workshops are run and developed in partnership with other organisations, e.g.

- DIY and construction skills: The City of Westminster College provides training courses in DIY and construction skills at the Centre, offering clients the chance to learn new skills and help with future employment opportunities.
- Basic computer training: Help with a basic introduction to word processing, literacy and numeracy support, and use of the internet. In a partnership with John Lewis, the Centre received new computers in 2007/8.
- Art and music workshops: Aimed at eliciting creativity, talents and improving skills amongst the visitors. Art and music can also allow the visitors to express their experiences of homelessness, show the contribution homeless people can make to society and can challenge negative stereotypes.

## 5. Recreation room

WLDC also has an entertainment room (TV/cinema) with a collection of DVD's. A great deal of these DVD's, along with clothing, can be attributed to the kind contributions from local supporters.

## Challenges

Finding the adequate funding is an ongoing challenge for the Centre and to break even and run effectively it requires more than £400,000 a year. WLDC's parent body WLM's contributes the bulk of this; but the Day Centre still has a fundraising target of £140,000 to raise each year. With the Centre being based in the heart of Marylebone, London it relies greatly on local support. Unfortunately each year the Centre is unable to meet their funding requirements, which places a great pressure on the delivery of it's services and resources. It is documented that *"at any one time, 380,000 people in Britain are either homeless or vulnerably housed"*, therefore without support from homeless Day Centre's, like WLDC, the homeless will not receive adequate support, in the form of basic necessities specialist healthcare, and counselling.

## Conclusion

WLDC is about vital support and opportunities for empowerment and change, assisting homeless people by making referrals into accommodation and support services, advocating on their behalf and offering activity programmes to build self esteem and develop skills. The Centre has meaningful occupation and activities at their core.

## How to Support

There are many ways to help support WLDC, some of which are:

- Gifts made out to WLDC will go straight to our work with homeless people. Of all WLM's social work projects, the day centre most needs your support. To make a regular or one-off gift please download the donation form [here](http://www.wlm.org.uk/documents/wldcform.pdf) (<http://www.wlm.org.uk/documents/wldcform.pdf>). For more information about how you can support the Day Centre, please contact the centre's Fundraiser on 020 7569 5915, or email: [john.deacon@wlm.org.uk](mailto:john.deacon@wlm.org.uk)
- Organising a fundraising event.
- Volunteering at the centre.
- Helping raise awareness of the Centre's work. Use a number of advertising methods and techniques that will enhance awareness of this worthy cause, e.g. include in email signatures, newsletters, and articles.
- Corporate sponsorships and donations could hugely help the Day Centre and lead to investment into new activities and increased support. This could be the marginal difference between a homeless person being homed or living on the streets. It is important that we tip the balance in favour of these vulnerable people!!

Please email [john.deacon@wlm.org.uk](mailto:john.deacon@wlm.org.uk) for further details or visit the website at [www.wlm.org.uk](http://www.wlm.org.uk)

## How Article 13 supports WLDC:

Article 13 has established an informal relationship with WLDC to advocate their missions and activities using a number of methods and techniques that will enhance awareness of this cause.



*For more information on WLDC please email Manager John Deacon on [daycentre@wlm.org.uk](mailto:daycentre@wlm.org.uk).*

*Contact number: 020 7569 5917*

*Fax number: 020 7569 5919*

*Or visit <http://www.wlm.org.uk/wldcent.htm>.*

*Address: 134-136 Seymour Place*

*London*

*W1H 1NT*

*Location map: [view location map for W1H 1NT](#)*

“We are grateful to those who make this possible” (John Deacon).