

# NEWS

**Nehemiah:  
rehabilitation,  
prison work  
and supported  
housing for  
men breaking  
free from the  
cycle of drugs  
and crime.**

**WELCOME** to our new look Autumn newsletter. Nehemiah has been through lots of change recently and is stepping into a new season. We're excited to update you on the growth of our programmes and share some stories of the men whose lives have been turned around in the past year.



**NEWSFLASH! DONATIONS TO NEHEMIAH DURING THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER WILL BE DOUBLED WHEN YOU DONATE TO US VIA THE BIG GIVE WEBSITE! [www.thebiggive.org.uk](http://www.thebiggive.org.uk)**

## FEATURES

### A VIEW FROM INSIDE PRISON PROGRAMME (Pg 4)

*"I was first arrested when I was 12 - I don't remember what for..."*

### NEW TEAM AT NEHEMIAH NEHEMIAH STAFF (Pg 6)

*Meet our teams working in the prison and at our house in Streatham.*

### NEW HOME, NEW LIFE SUPPORTED HOUSING PROJECT (Back page)

*"After leaving prison if I hadn't come here to the house I think I might have given in..."*

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## Why is Nehemiah needed?

The Nehemiah Project provides professional and life-changing support for men living in London who are trapped in a spiral of addiction and crime. We believe everyone deserves a second chance. Poverty, abuse and neglect during childhood cause severe emotional damage in young people, who often turn to drugs and crime to escape their feelings of anger, fear and guilt. Nehemiah's unique programmes tackle the root causes of these painful emotions so that men can develop and break free from the destructive cycle of addiction, crime and prison.

Based in London, Nehemiah has been working inside prison and out in the community for over 18 years. We offer a holistic approach by running a six-month rehabilitation programme for men whilst in prison, followed by a three-month Supported Housing Programme for graduates of the prison course (or other rehabilitation courses) who are released back into society. Finally we offer up to twelve months at our Move-On House in Clapham, where support is gradually reduced as men become fully integrated back into the mainstream community.



*"I was first arrested when I was 12 - I don't remember what for, it was probably theft..."*

**GRADUATE**

Our dedicated staff lead each community of men through an intensive programme based on a 'tough love' approach using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) within a therapeutic community setting. Patterns of addictive and criminal-thought cognitions are identified, challenged and then replaced with a new set of beliefs and behaviours rooted in the truth – that every human being has intrinsic worth and huge potential.



## A New Direction

Working with 20 guys day in day out at Wandsworth Prison, life is never dull on the Nehemiah unit. Our unit at Wandsworth is specially designated for Nehemiah's rehab work, so prisoners who come to us are able to be physically separated from men on the other wings for a full six months whilst they tackle their addictions to alcohol and drugs and get to grips with their offending behaviour.

The timetable here is pretty heavy, with the guys going through daily process groups, key-working sessions, community meetings and psycho-educational groups, where we teach them about their thought patterns and how to change them. Over the course of the six months, this adds up to over 900 hours of therapy contact, so what we're offering them has a real chance of being sustained when they reach the outside of these walls.

People really can change. A story that has stayed with me recently is of a hardened criminal who abandoned his son, but after his release last year was reconciled with him and has now taken him into his home as his official guardian. Another encouragement to us was a man who was offered early release but refused it because he wanted to stay on our unit and complete the course.

What we're hoping for now is:

- *wisdom for our team in all areas of their work here*
- *genuine hope for all the men on our programme and a commitment to change*
- *sustained funding and donations so we can continue the work at this high standard*

Finally – a huge thank you from me and all my team here to every one of you who has donated to the work of Nehemiah over the last year. What you are supporting is so important, and we value your support immensely.



**“Our six-month intensive rehab course inside HMP Wandsworth is going from strength to strength.”**



**SYD COY, DIRECTOR OF PRISON OPERATIONS**

## A view from inside

Dougie was raised in South London, in an area where every family around him seemed to be trapped in the same situation – absent fathers, single mums struggling to cope, and kids drawn into crime from a young age. *“I was first arrested when I was 12 – I don’t remember what for, it was probably theft. My mum tried everything she could to keep me on the straight and narrow.”* When asked about his Dad, Dougie’s face closes over and his answer is short: *“My Dad has hardly been in my life.”*

Despite his Mum’s efforts, a pattern of criminal behaviour set in and Dougie spent several years in and out of youth detention and then prison. At the age of 21 he was sent down for 12 years for armed robbery. *“My son was 14 months old when I came in.”*

Dougie describes prison life as *“madness and crime”*. He spent his time in his cell *“thinking up what crimes I could commit when I leave, to get money.”*

Nine years into his sentence Nehemiah came knocking on his door. *“Two of the guys from Nehemiah turned up at my cell door and started telling me about the programme. They said they had a unit separate from the wing and it had a gym. That did it for me, I thought I’ll go and just skive it for 6 months on this course so I can use that gym.”*

Transferring onto Nehemiah’s unit and enrolling onto A New Direction with 19 other men, daily life changed drastically.



*“At first I hated it. People kept throwing rules down my throat – no TV in the daytime, no sleeping in the daytime, you’ve got to be in class all day.”* Coming from the main prison, it was a shock for Dougie to receive so much attention. *“On the normal wing no-one seems to care about your problems, you’re just a name and number, and the attitude from staff is ‘We’re just here to open and close doors, don’t bother us with anything’.”*

The turning point for Dougie came during the second module of the programme. *“We started learning about how the brain works, and suddenly I got hooked. All of a sudden I could see myself in the things they were teaching us – about criminal addictive thinking, about the stuff we do to make ourselves feel better, and how we convince ourselves we’re doing things the right way.”*

*"I fought in my head for a while about it: can I change, do I want to change? Because it's hard to change and crime is the easy way out for me. But I knew I had one more chance when I got out, and if I messed up I'd be back for a life sentence."*

A core part of A New Direction is thinking about goals for the future and identifying dreams and aspirations. *"My son was 14 months when I came in, and now he's 11 years old. My dream is to be a success when I get out, to settle down and have another child, be in a relationship and have a home."*

Dougie is an exceptionally strong candidate for success after release, having worked with huge commitment to achieve a Level 3 NVQ in personal training. He now has a job lined up as a personal trainer after his release.

Dougie's parole is approaching in September, and asked if he has any fears or concerns, he says quietly, *"Failure. Having to commit crime again, coming back to jail. Slipping into the old lifestyle."* What would help him from slipping back? His answer comes immediately: *"Having someone to talk to. Someone I can ask simple questions, like how do I open a bank account. Someone who can give me support, and that will give me confidence."*

Dougie hopes to move to Nehemiah's Supported Housing project on his release.

I ask if he's still in touch with his mum. He nods firmly: *"That's what I'm going to do on my first day out, is see my Mum."*

NAMES AND PERSONAL DETAILS HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT IDENTITIES

*"Stealing cars, drinking, fighting, burglaries ... that was normal life for me and my friends, I was always up to no good."*

**DOUGLAS**

Many people know that drug use is high in prison, but did you know the full extent of the problem? These hair-raising stats show the scale of the battle being fought:

47% of new inmates use heroin or crack cocaine prior to entering prison  
73% of new inmates have taken an illegal drug in the 12 months prior to entering prison  
55% of drug-users admit to committing offences in connection with their drug use ... Needing money to buy drugs is the most commonly cited factor.

# 47%

**OF NEW INMATES USE HEROIN  
OR CRACK COCAINE**

## Meet some of the Nehemiah team!

*And some of our fabulous supporters ...*

A huge **thank you** to James Mullaly, Lucy Wadham, Juan Cafferta and Kathryn Allen. These awesome supporters are so loyal to Nehemiah that when we took a rain check on our annual Ride and Raise Challenge in July, they went ahead and planned their own mini bike ride to raise funds for us! Riding 50 miles from Guildford to London, they raised over £700 for Nehemiah's work, and we are hugely grateful - thanks guys! We look forward to welcoming lots more folks back into the saddle next year...

And an equally huge '**good luck**' to Malcolm Bream and his team, who will be doing a 24 hour sponsored walk around the Isle of Wight this month to raise money for Nehemiah – *whoop whoop!*

## “It’s more than just a job...”

“There are two phases to getting clean. Firstly you need to make the decision to change your life, and secondly you need to follow that decision through in a practical way. The practical stuff is the huge challenge. That’s where Nehemiah comes in.

When I was getting clean from drugs myself, the hardest thing was breaking old relationships and setting up new ones. Nehemiah supports the guys at our house so they don’t feel alone. When I left rehab 11 years ago I met a lady from a church who was a real inspiration to me – she had got sober 4 years before me and she was a devout Christian. She helped me meet new people and build positive relationships. ►

**L TO R:** ROBERT OBERMAN, QUALITY & PROGRAMME MANAGER, AND SUPPORTED HOUSING WORKERS LUCY CLARKE, DAVID HORRIDGE AND TOMASZ PIEKAREK



The most valuable thing about Nehemiah's approach is that the support we offer is consistent. The staff here really invest their time into the residents. Dave and Tomasz (two of our Supported Housing Workers) will find any opportunity they can to spend time with the guys, just hanging out in the kitchen or the lounge. They actually care about the guys, it's more than just a job.

So far the story which has touched me most is of one resident who had a really 'successful' background and owned his own business, but his personal experiences pushed him into drinking, and he ended up homeless. He was walking past the Nehemiah house one day and just came and rang on the doorbell, seeking out the help he knew he needed.

Working here we have such an opportunity to make a difference to mens' lives here. Within our therapy groups I always try to find the balance between being empathetic – understanding what might lie behind someone's defences or behaviour – and being challenging, because you need challenge in order to break a negative cycle. Once that's broken, there's a chance for something new to come out instead."

**BARBARA HOLDER**



**Barbara Holder is the newest member of our Care Team at the Supported Housing Programme in Streatham. A mother of four, Barbara first heard about The Nehemiah Project through her involvement as a Youth Worker in the local area. Having broken out of a lifestyle of drug-use herself many years earlier, Barbara was intrigued by Nehemiah's rehabilitation approach. She initially worked with us as a volunteer, before joining the staff team in a full time capacity.**



## New home, new life...

### THROUGH NEHEMIAH'S SUPPORTED HOUSING PROGRAMME

John' is 27 and is currently a resident at Nehemiah's Supported Housing Programme, where he came to live after release from HMP Wandsworth "I was taken into care at about 11 or 12 and moved around foster families. My general lifestyle from then was stealing cars, burgling houses, drinking and smoking cannabis. At 15 I was placed in a young offenders' institute. I was just in and out of prison from then on.

*I did try to stop drinking for a few months when I was 24, but the only way I could do it was to smoke loads of hash instead, and it didn't last long. I started gambling, playing roulette at the bookies, and losing hundreds of pounds at a time. Gambling and drinking are not a good mix. Most times when I got drunk I couldn't remember what I'd done. I'd wake up with blood on my hands and not know what happened, or I'd be surrounded by all this stuff and not know where it had come from. That's a really scary feeling.*

*It got to the point where I was desperate for help. I thought I would either end up killing myself or killing someone else. I wanted to get myself locked up so I wouldn't be able to drink, so I went to a local police station and started smashing all the windows in the place. I got what I wanted – I went back to prison. That's when I saw leaflets about the Nehemiah course and I met Syd. He took me onto the course and I'm so grateful to them because I couldn't have done it on my own.*



*After I was released I went to stay with a friend in his flat, but he was an alcoholic and it was really hard for me. I stayed sober, but I went back to see Syd and he could see I was struggling. He suggested I come here (to the Supported Housing Programme) and it's been really helpful. It's stable here, and structured. If I didn't come here I think I might have given in.*

*I've got myself a job, doing some labour work as a hod carrier, and I'm saving money because I want to buy myself a burger van and have that as a job. When I leave here I'm hopefully going to live at Nehemiah's Move-On House in Clapham, and I'm really looking forward to that. There's lots of things I want to do now – going to the gym, seeing my girlfriend and my daughter, and I want to learn the guitar. Lots of stuff is happening and I'm really grateful to Nehemiah because I don't think I could have done it on my own."*



## How do our programmes work?

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The Home Office findings on drug treatment for prisoners have found three types of treatment to be most effective:

- *cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) programmes*
- *therapeutic communities*
- *12-step programmes*

Nehemiah uses a CBT-based programme to identify addictive thought patterns and behaviours, whilst at the same time supporting residents to interact with one another in new ways within a therapeutic community setting.

Our approach to rehab also fulfils the Home Office criteria for treatment to be:

- *tailored to individual needs*
- *of sufficient duration*
- *followed up by high-quality aftercare, both in prison and for a significant period of time following release and re-entry into the community*

Nehemiah is one of only two charities that have a designated unit within a prison and a supported housing programme for men after their release.

## OPEN DAYS

Wednesday 10 November 2010  
from 6.30 – 8.00pm

Wednesday 8 December 2010  
from 6.30 – 8.00pm

An opportunity for you to come and hear about our work, and meet some of our residents and staff here at the Nehemiah house.

Do let us know if you would like to come.

For more information please contact Olivia on [olivia.kilbee@tnp.org.uk](mailto:olivia.kilbee@tnp.org.uk)

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