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WHAT'S HAPPENING

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Pay attention to homelessness this Christmas

02.12.15

[TPD]

Sunday 6 December sees the start of this year's [Radio 4 Christmas Appeal](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ChristmasAppeal) (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ChristmasAppeal>) with St Martin-in-the-Fields.

The relationship between BBC Radio and St Martin-in-the-Fields goes back a remarkably long way with St Martin's broadcasting a radio Christmas Appeal for its work with homeless people for 89 years, although I have been the Radio 4 producer of the appeal for just the last three.

While the nature and extent of homelessness may have changed in that time, the causes are similar: relationship breakdown, job loss, mental illness or a toxic combination of several.

(TPD) who I met at the Connection at St Martin's, put it vividly. He said: "Within one month, I lost my dad - who was very close to me, my marriage broke down and I was made redundant. It's like standing in the middle of a roundabout and getting hit from every side."

It's talking to people like (TPD) which shows that it really can happen to anyone. And that everyone it has happened to needs patient, expert, long-term help to get out of it. And that's what the Connection at St Martin's provides.

It's a day centre and night shelter for homeless people at the side of Trafalgar Square, next to the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Half of the money raised each year by the Radio 4 Christmas Appeal goes towards the work of the Connection, which starts with the Outreach Team who go out into the streets and talk to homeless people.

They can talk to someone over months or even years before winning their trust and persuading them to come in to the centre to have their needs assessed. Homeless people have often lost their faith in other human beings so this takes skill and patience as well as time.

[TPD]

[TPD] acknowledges that distrust and suspicion made him very difficult to deal with: "In the back of my mind I was thinking 'what do they want from me?' It took me a long time to realise that they didn't want anything from me, other than for me to go away, but to go away in a nice way."

After sleeping rough on and off for six years, [TPD] was given help at the Connection to find suitable housing and he now has his own flat.

"This place lives up to its name, Connections. It's building bridges...it helps people feel not alone. That there is somebody out there who loves them, and sometimes it's not easy because we're quite stubborn really!" said [TPD]

Once people come to the Connection, there's warm food and showers and washing machines. ' [TPD] she stresses it's not a place of inertia.

She said the aim is to help people move on from homelessness: "Nobody just sits and gets ignored, or can hide. This is a place of action, it's about helping people move on in their lives."

[TPD] took part in the Step Up volunteering programme, working in the kitchen where he rediscovered a great talent for baking.

What's really struck me is the way this place reconnects people to the talents and interests they had before homelessness. Charities over-use the phrase 'rebuilding lives', but here I've seen it in action.

One misapprehension Radio 4 listeners sometimes have is that money they donate will only benefit homeless people in London.

~~This is far from the truth, because half of the donations go to the Vicar's Relief Fund, (VRF) St Martin's other charity. This enables crisis grants of up to £250 to be given to people round the country who are homeless or who are in danger of homelessness.~~

[TPD]



[TPD]

explained: "They may find no-one is prepared to give them a flat because they can't put down a deposit. Well we can help with that. If their support worker calls us and says a £200 deposit on a flat would make all the difference, we trust them.

"Where else are they going to get that £200 from?

"They're not going to get a flat and if you don't get the first foot on the ladder, you could get nowhere. The VRF is about bridging gaps between good intentions of people involved in the system, and the understandable scepticism of a landlord who has been let down before."

What makes it so precious is that the grant applications, which are made by housing and social workers on behalf of their vulnerable clients, can usually be turned round with 36 hours. With a grant from the Vicar's Relief Fund, [TPD]

"The burden of the last three years feels like it's been lifted," [TPD] "I've got something back which I'd lost, a bit of a purpose. I still feel like I've got something to give. I'm only 55, I don't feel that it's over...I've really got a chance to start again, and I will."

The theme of this year's Christmas Appeal is Pay Attention.

The words come from the French philosopher and political activist Simone Weil, who wrote that those who are unhappy have no need for anything in this world, but people capable of giving them their attention... Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.

[TPD] says we don't all have the time and skill to give homeless people the attention they need. St Martin's does.

So do pay attention to the Radio 4 Christmas Appeal this year, and to homeless people

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Forging a new relationship with our audience

01.12.15

[TPO]



On Saturday, 31 November, 30 young people from African and African Caribbean backgrounds gathered in Salford to talk about the BBC.

On 3 December, a group of black men in Hackney, will do the same.

These meetings are the living embodiment of what Director-General Tony Hall means when he says he wants us to have a direct relationship with everyone we serve.

The young men and women in Salford and Hackney are forming the first "deliberative juries", and form part of a pilot to find new ways of working with groups we have traditionally found hard to engage.

[TPO]

is helping to shape the OurBBC project.

He said: "We are aiming to build new, direct, two-way relationships with audiences. We want to engage with them as creators, as well as consumers, to re-invent how we educate, inform and entertain for the internet age."

At its most basic level, this means audiences having a direct influence on our day-to-day content but, on a wider level, also impacting on policy and strategic direction.

Developments in digital technology mean we can now directly involve audiences in what we do.

[TPO]

said: "As we move from being a broadcaster to a multi-media platform, there are more opportunities for our audiences and content producers to interact and create value with each other."

The new relationship with the audience will help reinvent how we educate, inform and entertain by:

- Better identifying and understanding what viewers want
- Involving audiences in designing content and services
- Giving audiences more great experiences for them from the BBC
- Helping a wide range of audiences engage in corporate/strategic decision-making.

[10] added: "Building on our innovative use of digital media, we will create and sustain an ongoing conversation with our audience. We can see many different ways in which audiences will participate in the BBC of the future, from signing-in to get personalised services, to curating content/services to involvement in shaping our strategy."

"This does not mean creating a superficial democracy," ... [TPD] "Nor does it mean we will abdicate professional judgement. It does, however, mean creating new, direct ways of involving audiences in what we do and how it is run."

We currently undertake an impressive array of audience research which is used extensively in commissioning content. There have also been significant strides made in listening to audience views and opinions about service design and decisions made at the BBC (from the Radio 1 Youth Council to BBC Taster). The 'Our BBC' relationship will go further.

"The 'Our BBC' relationship will go further," : (TPD) "It will create new ways for audience members to engage with us and with each other, and provide a way for us to use insights directly from the audience."

As well as the "deliberative juries", other ways of connecting with audiences include the BBC Pioneers Forum, which is a mass online engagement, research and networking tool developed as an extension of myBBC functionality and an Innovation Lab for the development of new ideas and insights from audience members and thought leaders to influence policy, practice and decision-making.

Speaking to the Cardiff Business Club recently, Tony Hall said: "During the course of the next Charter, I want us to become the most accountable public service in Britain. Our aim is to put the BBC firmly into the hands of its audiences."

"Within five years, we want to have engaged the public in assessing and shaping every BBC service."

"And, within 10 years, we want to have built a strong enough relationship with a genuine cross-section of the public to involve them directly in making the biggest decisions about the BBC's future – its scope, scale and funding."

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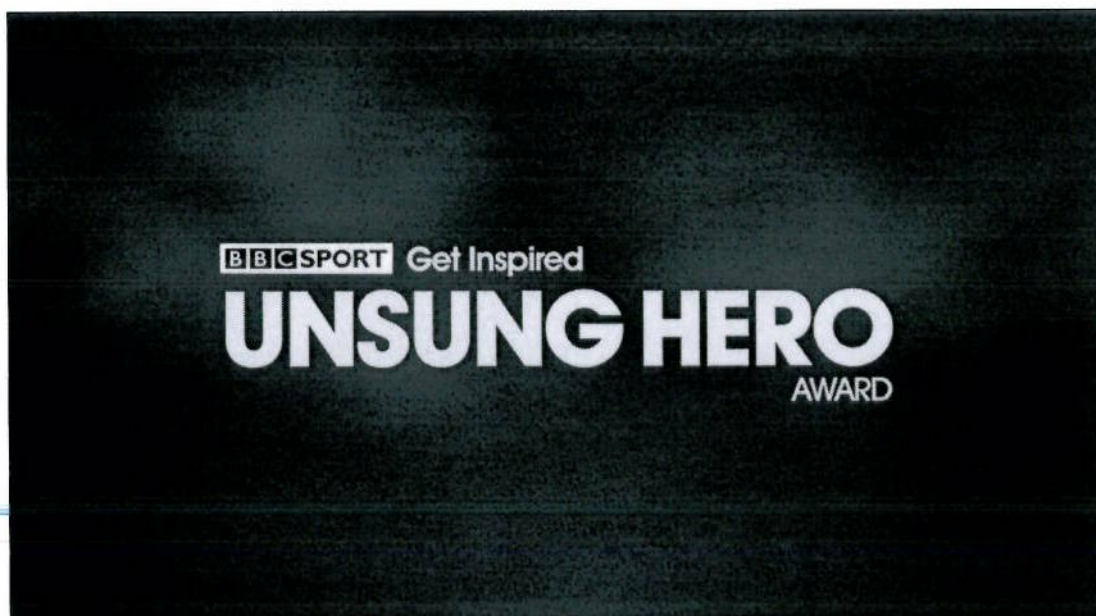
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Nominate a colleague who inspires you

27.11.15



For the second year running, BBC Sport is running the Internal Get Inspired Unsung Hero Award for staff across the BBC.

Last year a member of staff at BBC Scotland won the award for inspiring a group of colleagues to do lunchtime circuits sessions.

Her nomination read: "She plans exercise for about 10 core folk, but anyone is welcome, and encourages us all to get outside and try our hardest - even when cold and wet. We have men and women from finance, radio, television, learning and drama - from beginners to pros. - I have never felt fitter!"

Do you know someone like this at work?

Perhaps someone who leads a lunchtime club, or goes out of their way to plan after work activities for staff - or even someone who encourages you to cycle to work or take the stairs...

We want you to nominate a colleague that goes above and beyond their duty in lending their time to encouraging and motivating others to be more active in the workplace.

The winner will be announced on 15 December, 2015.

To nominate a colleague, complete this form and email it to [redacted] he nomination period closes on Monday 30 November, 2015.

The winning nominee will receive tickets to the Wimbledon Ladies' final and the person nominating will also receive tickets to one of the Wimbledon rounds.*

Nominations follow a simple set of criteria outlined below:

Both the nominee and the nominator must be BBC staff

The nominee's efforts must be during work, including pre work, lunchtime and after work activities

The organised activity doesn't have to be linked to sport, they can also include dance, yoga, general fitness and other 'activities'.

The shortlist of nominees will be judged by an internal panel, focussing on but not limited to, the impact of their contribution at work, the range of people involved and the personal commitment made.

If you have any questions regarding the nominations, criteria or judging - please contact [redacted]

*If the winner was nominated by more than one person, their names will go into a prize draw and one will be selected at random to win the tickets.

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Discovering the Emerald Isle

27.11.15



Last weekend on BBC Two, a new two-episode documentary aired with presenter Simon Reeve taking viewers on an exploration of Ireland.

It saw Simon embark on a journey across the Emerald Isle, reaching into the rich history of both nations. He encounters fascinating people and places in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, while delving deeper into the topics of religion and politics.

Ariel caught up with Simon to discover what it takes to put a journey like this together.

Simon explained: "Initially, it's simply someone having an idea.

"There is a development meeting, where people put forward their ideas. Religion and Ethics were interested in exploring Ireland, which was a little left-field for me, in terms of what I've done up until now.

"But it turned into a brilliant idea, and working with Religion and Ethics was great.

"Ireland as a title, as a name, speaks of a land of faith. So faith, belief and identity was a good way of looking at Ireland - past and present."

The project started with just one full time employee getting it off the ground, but by the time the final cuts were being polished off ten months later, nearly two-dozen people had been involved.

"It was a very small team out on the road," explained Simon. "An Assistant Producer, myself, producer director, and of course a magnificent camera man.

"There are usually a few people employed full time in the run up to filming but often for a couple of months before the project really gets off the ground there might just be one person working on it full time.

"They carry a lot of responsibility and help to shape the journey by coming up with ideas that go through the mill of discussion from the part timers like me that arrive a bit later."

Simon also shone a light on the simple approach he and the team took in making sure the viewing experience is a genuine and authentic journey of discovery: "It's quite simple really. I go on a journey, I meet and discover strange and magnificent stories and people, and we try to tell a tale to give viewers an insight into a part of the world they don't know much about.

"We also try to give them a bit of 'travelly' fun at the same time.

"We went into this as non-specialists. None of us have a degree in Irish history and, in some ways, that was a real benefit because we came at it fresh and new. We had an outsider's perspective and were learning on screen as we went along. We effectively lived the experience that we hoped to take viewers on.

"But in the background, having people who can check and challenge what we are saying and doing is really important as well.

"We made this in partnership with the Open University - and some of them not only have degrees in Irish history, but also Professorships - they actually build and mark the courses. They know their onions.

"The experience of filming in Ireland and particularly Northern Ireland was nerve-racking because of our quite appropriate desire to get the history right and show balance.

"In Northern Ireland, the situation is still so tense that sometimes a single word will matter in a way that they just don't in the rest of the UK."

With around two dozen people involved, 10 months of work, countless hours of research, sense-checking, editing, discussing, debating, travelling and
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filming – we asked Simon why? Why is it important we continue to try and educate people through our television service?

"I just think it is absolutely essential that the BBC is out there telling these stories and helping people understand the world.

"It's a fundamental requirement in a connected society. I just can't think of anything more critical.

"It's very easy to think that everybody knows everything because we've got so much information available at our fingertips. But a lot of online information is unreliable and one of the magnificent things that we, the BBC, can do is curate and shape that information and those stories for viewers so they get a better understanding of our world."

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Why is it so hard to talk about suicide?

26.11.15

BBC presenter and producer Ben McGrail has been honoured with a [Mind Media Award](http://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/mind-media-awards/) (<http://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/mind-media-awards/>) for a radio programme he produced and presented about suicide in Somerset.

It went out in May on BBC Somerset's Mid Morning show, and tackled the often-ignored subject with tact, dignity and in a manner that encouraged conversation. Because of this the local council's public health department nominated the show in the radio category, and Ben was handed the award at a ceremony on Monday 16 November.

Up against the likes of Radio 4 and LBC, he said the entire experience meant "an awful lot".

"It's a national thing for a very well respected charity on an issue that is really important to the programme I present," Ben explained. "Mental health has been a consistent theme for the two years I've been presenting the programme.

"Things like Robin Williams, studies by Mind... all of these things gave us reasons to discuss it on air and the more we discussed it the more it became clear that people wanted to open-up and talk. We've been quite strong at pushing that. We want people to know there is support and we're there to talk and we're passionate about it."

'A big issue in Somerset'

The programme that won the award, 'Why is it so hard to talk about suicide?' was a three-hour show purely on the subject of suicide. It's not the first time the show has talked about people taking their own lives and Ben says it certainly won't be the last time.

"Since the programme in May we have had another phone-in about suicide. It's a big issue for us here in Somerset.



Ben on stage at the Mind Media Awards with BBC Deputy News Editor, Toby Castle and Jo Brand

My next aim is to look at the stats for people that are waiting for NHS help and the time people wait to get that help - I think that's what needs to be nailed down in figures. I want to challenge the NHS locally and nationally.

"This is a personal crusade for me. The thing is, in Somerset, our suicide rates are high. Between 2011 and 2013, 50 people took their lives each year. During that same time period 28 people died in crashes on the roads. We are always talking about road safety but avoid the subject that clearly impacts on more people."

As an area, Somerset has proportionally low funding for mental health compared to physical health, something that Ben thinks needs to be addressed in order to rectify the county's issue with people choosing the end their lives.

"The show was about being upfront about it, matter of fact, same as you would talk about physical health. I wanted to take away the stigma.

"I had a lot of support on the day, but I did all the ground work and met all the people involved and did all the pre-recs. It was a good two months of planning putting it together - finding the right guests, making sure everyone is comfortable doing it, working out the right mix of guests on the day. At the end of the day I had to make sure it was really good radio."

"My show relies on people getting in touch - it's a phone-in show. But because it was quite a specific subject I wasn't anticipating too many people joining in. I wouldn't say we had higher than normal calls, but we had people willing to share their stories. Lots of people got in touch to share the experiences they had had over the years.

[TPB]

"We couldn't say 'committed suicide', we were advised that the technical term is 'completed suicide', but I found that very alien and distant, so we referred to it as 'taking your own life' or 'dying by suicide'. We also had to be on guard for anyone sharing a story about how someone ended their life - the BBC has really strict guidelines on this in case anyone listening is considering taking their own life and finds encouragement in what they hear."

"We even took the Mid Morning show out of the building, broadcasting live from from Mind in Taunton and West Somerset (<http://mindtws.org.uk/>) and during the show I officially opened their new premises there. It was a really positive end to the show to cut the ribbon on a new service for the people of Somerset."

"I found out I was put forward for the award in September. I didn't think I would win, so I hadn't prepared anything... but then I didn't realise winners would have to make a speech anyway. My award was the second of the evening so I didn't have much time to think about it.

"After the programme went out I received an email from a woman whose daughter took her own life in January. She basically said that the programme had helped her to understand some things and provided comfort. At the awards I met her husband. He said he listened and appreciated the show. That was really nice.

"In my acceptance speech I said if it helped one family it was worthwhile. It sounds clichéd but that's how I feel."

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Introducing 'The Big Interview' on Ariel

26.11.15



Ariel has introduced a new feature, 'The Big Interview', check out the first one with Eleanor Oldroyd from BBC Radio 5 Live.

[Read more \(/fo/ariel/the-big-interview/Pages/default.aspx\)](/fo/ariel/the-big-interview/Pages/default.aspx)

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