

FOOD for THOUGHT



A passion for compassion

Issue: 8

Summer 2011

UR4Driving - providing the road to success

The Upper Room's driving project, UR4Driving, is successfully continuing to grow, recently securing five-year part-funding from the BIG Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme to continue until 2015.

UR4Driving provides an opportunity to gain a new and valuable skill, and a de facto vocational qualification, for ex-offenders in the transport and warehouse industries – industries that are often still open to those with a criminal record. Before heading out on the road, the selected candidates are given a strict code of conduct, a personal mentor and a daily routine volunteering at the Upper Room FoodBank and other projects across West London.

Bruce Marquart, UR4Driving Project Manager, highlights "*The practicality and benefits of UR4Driving have made it incredibly popular with London Probation services and the men and women who have participated.*"

Simon Cooper from the Probation Service agrees. "*The UR4Driving programme is one of the most exciting initiatives in tackling re-offending rates that I have ever come across*", states Simon. "*Every offender's successful completion of the programme has many benefits (such as) increasing their employability; giving them an opportunity to help and feel part of the community; and improving their outlook on their future and giving them something they feel is worth avoiding further offending for.*"

UR4Driving has now been running for just over a year, primarily funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, and now by the BIG Lottery. With an annual target to support 60 students, we have already taken on 43 in the last six months. Of these, fourteen have passed their practical this year already.

It's a project that works. Many ex-students have gone on to further employment and training and, most importantly, stayed away from re-offending. As such, the project provides ex-offenders with a new, positive future. As Michael, a successful student, states "*The programme made me a positive person and to think ahead and put my past behind me and do what a normal person does with their life.*"

The project has proved incredibly popular and hugely oversubscribed. As Bruce states, "*We are experiencing ten times the demand than we have funding available*". With approximately 100 new referrals per month, it's a challenge to keep up!



Case study

Steve, 28 years old, was finishing a probation of two years for burglary. He had been in prison six times since his first arrest, and was looking at a 3-4 year sentence for his next offence. He had no qualifications, but aspired to be a web designer and professional driver.

Steve's volatile temperament initially made him difficult to work with during his voluntary work assignments. He made progress after one incident when he asked the Project Manager to listen to both sides of the story. When the explanation was given to him, and he understood where he had made a mistake, he accepted this and has never caused any trouble again.

He went on to exceed his voluntary work hours and achieved two licences: a car and a motorcycle licence. Both were passed at the first attempt. Steve has now finished probation, is not in prison, has much more self-confidence and a plan for finding a job that interests him. He has been referred on by UR4Driving to undertake training to be self-employed in a motor trade-related franchise, which will utilise his enthusiasm for driving and his desire for a paid job.

"*UR4Driving has changed me in ways I didn't understand until I finished*" says Steve. "*I want to stay in touch because of the support, the friendly atmosphere, the ability to help each other, and so I can also help poorer people than me.*"



The FoodBank delivering to homeless charity Streetlytes

FoodBank - driving from strength to strength

As well as numerous positive volunteering and driving opportunities for UR4Driving students, The Upper Room's FoodBank continues to provide a food collection and distribution service to charities who give meals to homeless people in West London and beyond.

The FoodBank also provides much of the food for our UR4Meals service, and has enlarged significantly over the last three years, with the annual Harvest Festival in the autumn, regular pick-ups from Whole Foods and Sainsbury's, and other donations from the likes of Red Lion Pictures and Warner Brothers.

For more information on UR4Driving or the FoodBank, contact the UR4Driving Project Manager Bruce Marquart at infoupperroom@yahoo.co.uk or on 020 8741 6550.

UR4Jobs open for business

UR4Jobs continues to find new and innovative ways to support clients back into work.



English classes at UR4Jobs

UR4Jobs at the Upper Room is a specialist service that aims to improve the employability of homeless and marginalised clients and migrant workers in the Hammersmith & Fulham area. The project acts as a one-stop shop for information about living and working in the UK for clients such as people from the new accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe, those with no recourse to public funds and ex-offenders. The project provides an intervention away from the cycle of destitution and homelessness should clients fail to find work or fall prey to widespread exploitation. But sometimes it's not an easy job.

'Providing support for clients who have no access to public funds and fall behind the net of the social system is difficult and challenging' states Milka Witkowska, UR4Jobs Project Manager. *'It is, however, incredibly rewarding if, despite all the obstacles, we are successful in helping our clients achieve their goals.'*

UR4Jobs is currently working closely with the Leonardo Project, run by Roehampton University, to develop a tool enabling migrants to find work – an exciting and very useful service considering the difficulties that many European migrants face in the UK due to language and

skills barriers. UR4Jobs is also working alongside UR4Driving to help ex-offenders improve their employability and their literacy and numeracy skills via one-to-one and small group training.

These are just two of the various ways UR4Jobs is ensuring clients find it easier to secure employment. UR4Jobs continues to assist people through one-to-one support:

- into work and training;
- with health issues and travel home;
- with employment law and ID documents;
- with CSCS tests to work in construction;
- in language of origin.

UR4Jobs is also providing training and events to clients around self-employment, benefits and rights, use of the internet, CV writing and job interview preparation. The project has grown to provide not just Jobs support, but more general and tailored advice and guidance.

'We help people who find themselves in a difficult situation to find a better, more successful future', highlights Waldemar Kaczmarczyk, UR4Jobs Employment Coordinator. *'If they are unemployed, we can find them jobs. If they are homeless, we can help them find accommodation.'*

As with all The Upper Room projects, it has proved popular – since it launched, it has registered nearly 1,500 separate clients, and our website is accessed from all over the EU. We have high levels of service user participation – several ex-service users have become volunteers, and even gained employment with the project.

The project has also built strong links with Homeless Link, Central and Eastern European Forum, BARKA and Thames Reach, ensuring it provides holistic support to whoever they meet.

For more information about UR4Jobs, contact 020 8740 5688 or ur4jobs@theupperroom.org.uk

Continuing to feed the community - UR4Meals

It's been a busy time for UR4Meals, as the demand and support for the service continues to grow.

Originally set up over 20 years ago, UR4Meals is the Upper Room's flagship project. But the Meals service has changed and grown substantially, from providing bread and cheese to high-quality hot meals prepared by our professional chef, Chris Williams.

'For many, this is the only meal they have a day, and here they can get five a day – fresh fruit and fresh vegetables', Chris points out. *'And personally, I also get a lot of satisfaction from both seeing the effort our volunteers put in, and knowing that all this food is being used and not wasted'*.

Chris's background as a top London restaurant manager has benefited The Upper Room enormously over the years, as he has ensured UR4Meals works to excellent health and safety and food hygiene standards. As a result, The Upper Room kitchen was awarded an excellent four stars. Chris works magic with the unpredictable ingredients he is provided with on a daily basis, serving up a diverse and appetising feast to up to 120 hungry guests.

But UR4Meals does not only provide food and good quality meals. Thanks to the continued hard work of Cecilia Seres, UR4Meals Project



Manager, we continue to work alongside a range of agencies, outreach services, night shelters and daycentres. These include Refuge, Betel, the NHS Mobile X-ray Unit, Metropolitan Police and Safer Neighbourhood Team – as well as running creative projects with the Open Cinema (see below). UR4Meals also set up a Mobile X-ray Unit, scanning for TB in October 2010 and May 2011, screening over 50 guests. In the winter months we were able to provide clothing and blankets, thanks to the kind donations of the public.

'From the first moment, I was pleased and amazed by what the Upper Room did, that's why I wanted to get involved' states Cecilia. *'We do the work of 10 organisations in one – we do so much for people in need'*.

UR4Meals benefits from the great quality food delivered from FareShare and donated by Sainsbury's and Whole Foods, delivered by our own FoodBank and UR4Driving volunteers. The Upper Room, refurbished after the 2009 fire, will also undergo further refurbishment over the summer, to ensure we continue to provide a high-quality service and venue for all our guests.

Challenging times for soup kitchens.

These are hard economic times, and it has been in the news recently that many soup kitchens – and charities in general – have closed or faced closure across London. This pressure on other charities has

had an impact on us, and the service is as much in demand as ever, if not more so.

'We are getting a lot of new clients coming from day centres that have closed down' highlights Cecilia, *'and we have lots of other new visitors who have found it so hard in the last few months that they have no food or place to sleep.'*

There has been a noticeable increase in visitors, up approximately 20%, with an average of between 100 to 120 visitors per evening. UR4Meals provided over 22,500 meals over 220 sessions in the last year alone.

'With recent legislation changes, reconnections have become harder, and we have also struggled with new restrictions in terms of finding people accommodation,' Cecilia states. *'This winter was quite difficult, and it may get harder – but we continue to help as many as we can.'*

UR4Meals is an incredibly important service, which is valued enormously by our guests. Of course we could not do this all without the support and dedication of our dedicated staff and volunteers. We would therefore like to thank all the 28 currently active volunteers, and the other volunteers who have supported us over the year. For more information call 020 87405688 or email cecilia.seres@googlemail.com

Events and activities – Lights, camera, action!

Upper Room clients take centre stage in exciting film projects

Over the last year, The Upper Room has been working with Open Cinema to host the Open Film Club – a successful film project, including film-making projects, screenings of major and independent films and visits from film stars and makers to The Upper Room.



Across 2010 and 2011, we hosted 20 Open Film Club sessions, screening a range of films to over 500 attendees, and including guest visits from Paul McGann (Dr Who) and Bafta-award winning filmmaker Martina Amati.

Martina subsequently worked with The Upper Room guests to make a short film, *Florin's Dream*, about hopes, dreams and aspirations – and including an epic trip to the beach!

"Martina and Home Films' work lit up the Open Cinema office as it already had festival audiences internationally - and we knew that the team would bring energy, intelligence and delight to work with a team of member-filmmakers at The Upper Room", highlighted Christoph Warrack, founder and CEO of Open Cinema. *"Great images and stories have already emerged from this project, and we look forward*

The Harvest Appeal is coming!

Every October, we hold our annual Harvest Appeal. Last year, friends and supporters of The Upper Room responded to our annual Harvest Appeal with their usual wonderful generosity over a five-week period. Many of the 78 churches and schools who participated brought their gifts to The Upper Room and the UR4Driving volunteers also picked up donations from across west London. Bruce also spoke at more than 20 churches and school assemblies in support of the Appeal. We estimate that last year we received up to 30,000 tins of food which, with the other goods we receive, are used to feed our guests and guests of other soup kitchens across London as part of the FoodBank project.

We are keen to engage with as many schools, churches and organisations as possible in this year's Harvest Appeal this October. If you would like to be involved, provide any donations, or would like The Upper Room to come and speak, please do get in contact. Call 020 8740 5688 or email upperroom.adm24@yahoo.co.uk

to the resulting film being seen and discussed across the network and beyond".

The film was premiered as part of London's Open City Film Festival in June, and will shortly be available online – watch this space!

Other events and activities

The Upper Room recently hosted a summer Barbeque, with the support of volunteers from Ealing Volunteer Centre and IT company EMC, who are continuing to help The Upper Room with donations and IT and marketing advice.

The Upper Room also hosted the UR4Meals Clients Christmas Party, and Volunteers and Staff 'Winter Thank You Party'; and an UR4Jobs Easter Lunch funded by the Polish Consulate.

The Upper Room was proud to take part in the Census 2011, to ensure local and national government has a realistic and accurate picture of the residents and the issue of homelessness in the area.

Green Days

A huge thank you to all who attended and supported Green Days on 11th and 12th June, both the Upper Room staff and trustees who worked on the stall, and all the public who came down to visit. It was a great turnout, despite a rather wet Sunday, though this didn't seem to dampen spirits! Congratulations to Paula and Anna for correctly guessing the number of pennies and sweets respectively.

New staff and volunteers

The Upper Room is pleased to welcome several new staff members to the team:

- Milka Witkowska joined us at the end of 2010 as the new UR4Jobs Project Manager.
- Nadine Ofosu-Adjei is the recently appointed UR4Driving Administrator, and joined us at the beginning of 2011.
- Michael Chandler is the new Operations Director, and joined us at the end of February
- Waldemar Kaczmarczyk has just joined us as the new UR4Jobs Employment Coordinator.

We would like to thank Tim Marek for all his hard work in this role up to now, and wish him all the best in the future.

And finally, a huge thank you to all our volunteers who have supported and continue to support us across all our projects. These include a range of residents from the local community and surrounding parishes, and ex-service users and clients who have been successfully supported. Without the support of all our volunteers, The Upper Room couldn't do what it does. So, thank you!

Who we are and what we do

The Upper Room is a registered charity dedicated to the relief of poverty, suffering and social disadvantage working with the vulnerable, marginal and homeless of West London. All its services are free and the common theme is improving lives and feeding communities in need. **The three Upper Room projects, UR4Meals, UR4Jobs & UR4Driving**, support and enable people to regain their confidence and health, improve their employability and life skills, and tackle loneliness and social isolation.

How to support us

The Upper Room charity receives little government funding and relies on grants, donations from individuals, churches, schools and community groups who are generous with fundraising events, to continue providing its services. If you would like to support us, please get in contact or visit <http://www.theupperroom.org.uk/4/Make+a+Donation>

For more information, contact us

Tel: 020 8740 5688

The Upper Room is a registered charity no. 1004354
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**Why not
volunteer?**

Call
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