

st martin-in-the-fields christmas appeal
annual review 2008 - 2009

contents

foreword by the vicar	3
about this annual report.....	4
introduction by the chairman.....	5
who we are	5
vicar's relief fund.....	6
public benefit	10
impact	11
who we help	12
income & expenditure	14
last word	15
thank you.....	16

st martin-in-the-fields christmas appeal

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london
wc2n 4jj**

registered charity no. 261359

www.smitf.org/christmas

Trustees:

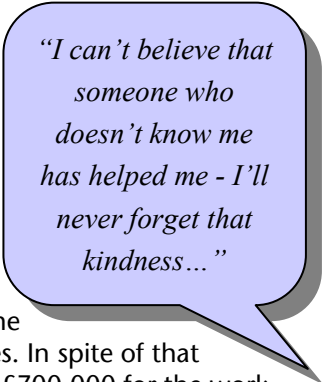
Simon Wethered, Chairman
Revd Nicholas Holtam
Fred Pittock

Nigel Ray, Hon Treasurer
Veronica Fraser
Mike Wooldridge

There is something miraculous about the Christmas Appeal. From the people who phone in response to the Radio 4 broadcasts, to the mountain of post that begins arriving a few days later, to the volunteers who give their time to answer the phones and open the post, and even the technology that allows people to donate through our website and listen to the Appeal and *Received with Thanks* at any time. All of that is quite miraculous.

People are moved by the Appeal to give what they can. Often the amounts are relatively modest, but before long these add together to make a truly remarkable amount, which is used in equally remarkable ways. Again, there is something of the miraculous in this.

Of course, a lot of planning and hard work goes into making this miracle work in the way that it does. Special thanks has to go to BBC Radio 4 for their advice and support, and to their network manager, Denis Nowlan. Thanks especially to Sally Flatman, the producer of the Radio 4 Appeal and *Received with Thanks*, which explains how the money is used and was presented so compellingly by Libby Purves. Sally spends many hours talking to support workers and homeless clients in order to present just the right story to put the Appeal across to listeners. Its success is due in no small part to them.



“I can’t believe that someone who doesn’t know me has helped me - I’ll never forget that kindness...”

The 2008 Appeal, of course, was launched in the midst of the worst economic downturn for decades. In spite of that (or perhaps because of it!), the Appeal raised over £700,000 for the work of the Vicar’s Relief Fund and The Connection at St Martin’s. It showed that, when we’re all feeling the pinch, being generous to people in need is part of what it is to be human: that’s the spirit of Christmas. What better time to celebrate a miracle?

about this annual review

This review of the activities of the Christmas Appeal is for the period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009. The funds used by the Vicar's Relief Fund in this period came from the 2007 Christmas Appeal. The funds raised by the 2008 Christmas Appeal reported here are being used by the VRF and The Connection at St Martin's during the accounting year beginning 1 April 2009.

One of the principal beneficiaries of the Christmas Appeal is The Connection at St Martin's, which helps homeless people in central London and is open every day and night of the week. They provide specialist services to 200 people every day - offering advice, care and support in a welcoming, accessible and friendly environment. Services include a day centre, outreach for rough sleepers, skills training, activity programmes and specialist support for complex needs. By encouraging each person to

The quotes printed in this review are by people who have benefitted from a VRF grant, or from support workers who were sent grants on behalf of one of their clients in need. We hope it is helpful for you to see beyond the information to the changes we have tried to make in people's lives.

address the issues which caused their homelessness, The Connection helps them to gain the skills and confidence to make lasting changes in their lives.

Although The Connection shares premises with St Martin-in-the Fields and works closely with us in the preparation for our annual Appeal, it is a separate charity with its own published annual report and accounts; we will not, therefore, attempt to duplicate their efforts by reporting on

their activities in this report. For more information about the work of The Connection, or to obtain a copy of their annual report, contact:

The Connection at St Martin's
12 Adelaide Street
London WC2N 4HW

☎: 020 7766 5544
e-mail: info@cstm.org.uk
www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1078201
Company Registration: 3852519

introduction


Simon Wethered
Chairman, Christmas Appeal

It is a great privilege – and one of which I and my fellow trustees are only too aware – to be steward of such a very substantial sum of money as this Appeal raises each year. It is also a considerable responsibility, for literally thousands of individuals from all over the UK and further afield entrust us with the task of ensuring that their gift reaches its intended recipients – those in most desperate need in our society.

Accordingly, we take great care to monitor thoroughly where that money goes, and to ensure that it is put to the best possible use – as you will read in fascinating detail in the following pages.

The success of this Appeal is entirely dependent not only on the extraordinary reserves of personal generosity which it succeeds in tapping, but also on the power of broadcasting, and here I would like to pay tribute to all those colleagues at Radio 4 who work with us each year to achieve our common purpose. Without that support, this Appeal would frankly not exist.

Finally, I should acknowledge with thanks the very hard work of our administrator, Craig Norman, and of the army of volunteers who answer the telephones, process the donations, and despatch the letters of thanks; their part, too, is intrinsic to the success of this Appeal, and is very much appreciated.



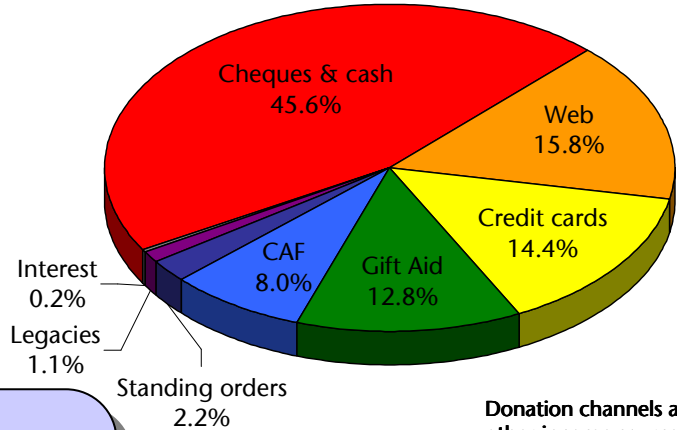
“You have been there for us in times of need helping us meet the urgent needs of the vulnerable members of the community ...”

who we are

During the First World War, St Martin-in-the-Fields became “the church of the ever-open door”, providing a place of rest and support to troops leaving for and returning from the Western Front. In peacetime, the church continued to be a focus for those in need from all over the country. In 1924, the first radio broadcast of a church service was made from St Martin’s. In 1927, Revd Dick Sheppard made the first Christmas Appeal from the pulpit, broadcast on the BBC Home Service. Thanks to the BBC’s then Director General, Lord Reith, each year since then, the Vicar of St Martin’s has made a radio appeal to support our work.

Between 2006 and 2008, our 80th, 81st and 82nd Appeals, a total of over £2.2 million was raised.

The chart below shows the channels through which the 2008 Appeal received money.



Donation channels and other income sources - 2008 Christmas Appeal

"...if the VRF had not provided a grant, our client would be street homeless."

vicar's relief fund

The Vicar's Relief Fund (VRF) is part of the St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal Charity and is funded solely by donations made in response to the BBC Radio 4 Appeal.

Although the VRF is administered by the church of St Martin-in-Fields, it is intended for the whole community of need: we make no distinction for belief, gender, ethnic group, sexuality, origin or legal status. It is hard to define a 'typical' grant: our aim is to help with the basic necessities of life that many of us take for granted such as beds and bedding, clothing and domestic appliances. Debt is a particular problem for those on low income,

so we also assist with paying rent and other arrears, often preventing eviction or allowing someone to move on from temporary accommodation. Others may have no income at all, whether because of delays or problems with their benefits or because of their immigration status; the VRF also makes grants for food and ordinary living expenses.

The amount of each grant varies according to need but is, on average, around £170 with an upper limit of £250. Our hope is that in making such grants we will have a positive and immediate impact, helping to alleviate distress or avert a crisis.

One of our priorities is to provide rapid support in cases where the need is time-critical, such as when someone is at risk of being made homeless. Between April 2008 and the end of March 2009, 34% of the 1376 grants made were dispatched within 1 day of receiving the request. In total, just over half the grants went out within 3 days. The average response between receiving an application and sending a grant was 4.67 days, 14% faster than the previous 12-month period.

The VRF's priorities are to people who:

- are in danger of becoming homeless,
- are currently homeless, destitute and/or vulnerable, and
- have experience of homelessness and are attempting to establish or maintain a tenancy.



“My client has had a wonderful Christmas off the streets in his new home...”

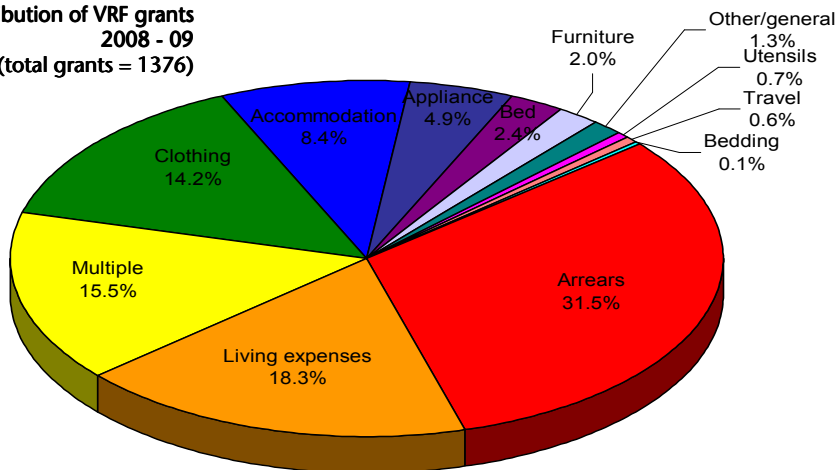
Between April 2008 and March 2009 the VRF:

- received 3362 applications that met our criteria (and an additional 207 that didn't)
- made 1376 individual grants
- the total amount given in individual grants was £228,310 (including £7611 in returned grants and £6315 in interest earned)
- the average grant was £166

The chart on the following page shows the allocation of grants by purpose. The “Multiple” category refers to grants that were made for more than one major purpose e.g. a cooker and a bed.

The VRF requires recipients to sign a receipt to confirm that they have received the grant. Support workers are given 35 days from the date the

**Distribution of VRF grants
2008 - 09
(total grants = 1376)**



grant is made to return the signed receipt. This ensures that grants made to alleviate crisis needs have been utilised in a timely manner. On average, the 1375 receipts returned came back in 22.2 days.

By the end of March 2009, the VRF had on record over 6800 support workers in over 1700 agencies that apply to the VRF on behalf of their clients.

These referrers may be:

- local authority social workers
- support workers in housing associations, tenancy support agencies, hostels, refuges and family centres
- key workers in rehabilitation centres
- advisors in Citizens Advice Bureaux
- probation officers or prison staff
- health professionals
- clergy, including prison and hospital chaplains
- and staff in other voluntary organisations and caring agencies.

Application forms, along with the guidelines and instructions for completing the form, are sent on request, and can be sent by post, fax or as an e-mail attachment. It is not mandatory for applicants to use the form: any written request with sufficient information is acceptable.

Occasionally, we are contacted directly by a member of the public who wishes to apply on their own behalf or to pass the application form on to their support worker to complete. In order to maintain a level of control over the process, it is our policy to send forms only to support workers such as those listed above. Requests from members of the public receive a standard response explaining our application procedure and recommending that they get in touch with a support worker, who can advise them and, if necessary, apply to the VRF on their behalf.

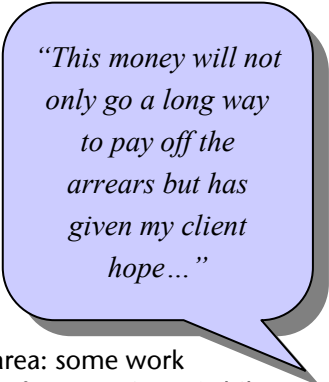
Block Grants

The VRF also uses key agencies to make grants on our behalf through allocation of block grants.

The agencies can be:

- support agencies specialising in working with people in need, vulnerable tenants, hostel dwellers and destitute asylum seekers
- charitable organisations working in areas of poverty
- churches and boards of social responsibility in deprived areas throughout the UK
- hospital social work departments
- CABx working with ex-offenders or people with debt problems

Distributors of block grants have, over time, developed various working methods which they feel are most appropriate to their own or their organisation's circumstances and their particular area: some work on their own, others make grant decisions as part of a committee. While we have provided best practice guidelines, we have not attempted to impose any sort of uniform working method upon the distributors, but instead trusted their local knowledge and familiarity with their client groups.



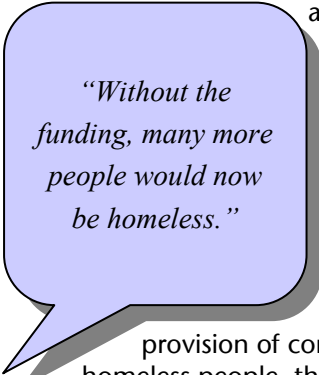
“This money will not only go a long way to pay off the arrears but has given my client hope...”

In the year ending March 2009, £128,000 was allocated in block grants, resulting in some 800 grants to individuals and families in need. Distributors must complete reports to ensure that grants have been made in line with our criteria.

public benefit

The object of the Christmas Appeal is to provide assistance to people in need and suffering hardship, specifically to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The trustees confirm that they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, and prevention and relief of poverty for the public benefit. The trustees regularly ensure that the activities undertaken are in line with the charity's aims and objectives, and have delegated the role of prioritising requests and allocating grants to the VRF Administrator in order that these aims can be met promptly.

During the period April 2008 to March 2009, the VRF made 434 grants specifically to assist with arrears. Many of these tenants had been given deadlines by their landlords and would have been evicted from their homes without prompt action. On average, the VRF made these grants within 4 days. In addition, the VRF provided 116 grants for deposits or rent in advance (average 4.3 days), enabling people to move from temporary accommodation to a permanent tenancy, and 252 grants for living expenses (average 3.2 days) to people who were destitute.



“Without the funding, many more people would now be homeless.”

Without the funds made available from the Christmas Appeal, The Connection at St Martin's would be less able to support the 200 homeless people it works with every day. As unrestricted income, the grant underpins the provision of core services for homeless people. For many homeless people, their contact with The Connection is a catalyst for change: with support, they begin to see choices and opportunities, and make decisions which move their lives from chaos and uncertainty to something more stable and sustainable.

The provision of these grants, made in the time frame that they are, helps ensure that many of the people assisted by the Christmas Appeal, through The Connection and the VRF, are able to begin or sustain tenancies. Without this assistance, many would have become or remained homeless and thus contributed an additional burden to statutory services, housing providers and other services.

impact

Although we sometimes receive personal thank you's from the recipients of grants, or those working with them, it is difficult for us to measure how – and how much – a grant has transformed someone's life. In order to try and understand this, a series of surveys have been carried out, most recently on all 136 grants the VRF made during February 2009. Questionnaires were sent to all the support workers who had made the initial applications. They were asked to rate to what degree (Significant, Noticeable, Some or None) the grant had helped to improve their service users':

- quality of life / physical / emotional / mental well-being
- access to accommodation or the ability to maintain a tenancy
- access to employment / education / training / social activities
- social / community / peer integration.

Grants ranged from £60 to £250 and were for the following purposes:

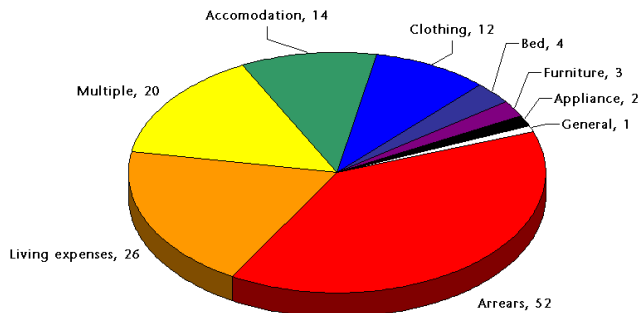
Grants by purpose February 2009

88 completed questionnaires were received, a response rate of 65%.

The key findings showed that **97% of respondents stated that the grant had made a significant or noticeable improvement to their service users' quality of life**, and that **70% of respondents replied that the grant had made a significant or noticeable improvement to their service users' access to accommodation or the ability to maintain a tenancy**.

Although access to employment / education / training / social activities and social / community / peer integration were less significant or noticeable (20% and 31% respectively), comments indicated that these were of secondary importance to their service users.

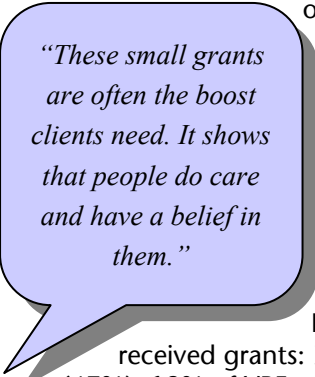
We believe that this was a useful exercise in understanding the make-up of the community of need across the country, the issues that they face, and a measurement of our effectiveness in meeting their needs.



who we help

An ethnic monitoring form is included with the application forms for VRF grants. It is not mandatory to complete the EM form, and any information included or not included is irrelevant in the decision to allocate grants. We ask for date of birth, country of birth, ethnic group, religion and also record marital status, number of parents in the household and whether the client is an asylum seeker or refugee. Of the 3569 applications received in the 12 months up to the end of March 2009, only 869 (25%) did not include country of birth, ethnic group, or religion data. The quality of the data varies when looking at grants (no EM data in only 7.3%) and refusals (no EM data in 35%), but this can be partly explained by direct applications and other generally poor quality applications included among refusals.

Classifications from the 2001 Census have been used in order to make comparisons with the population as a whole. This builds up a useful picture of the community in need across the UK. The client group that is referred to the VRF would appear to be disproportionately young, black and born overseas.



“These small grants are often the boost clients need. It shows that people do care and have a belief in them.”

Where it is provided, this information is recorded both for successful as well as for unsuccessful applications and provides a useful check that all groups have equal access to the fund.

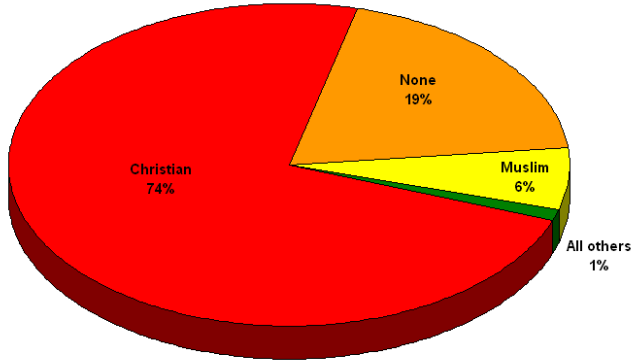
In 2008 – 09, slightly more males than females received grants: 729 males (53%) compared with 646 females (47%). 18% of VRF grants went to one-parent households; 77% went to people without children. That these statistics are skewed away from what could be termed “family support” reflects our stated policy of prioritising people with experience of being homeless, a group which is generally made up of younger males, whose sometimes chaotic circumstances or vulnerability often make sustained relationships difficult. And although homelessness does affect families - with one or two parents - statutory agencies usually prioritise such cases, and so the number being referred to charities such as the VRF will be smaller.

Grant recipients lived in 97 of the 120 mainland UK post code areas, showing an impressive nation-wide reach.

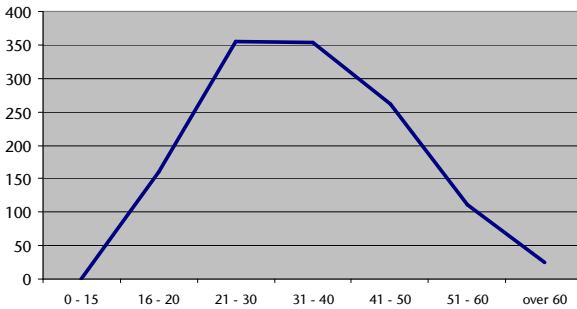
26% of grants were made to people born outside the UK, with 17%

made to those seeking asylum or having been granted leave to remain. A particularly concerning trend is applications for refugees who, having been granted leave to remain, promptly find themselves homeless and destitute due to the inflexibilities of the asylum and benefit systems.

**Grants by faith
2008 - 09**

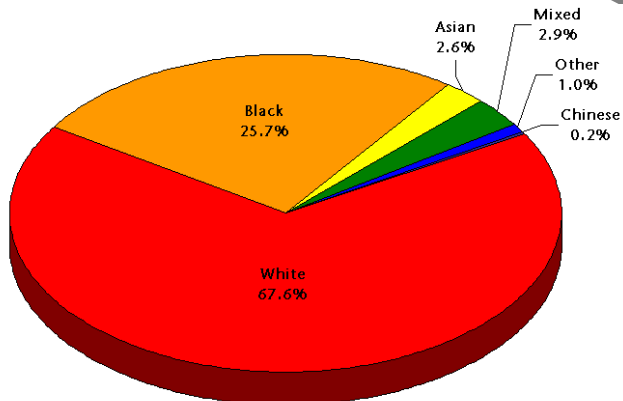


**Grants by age
2008 - 09**

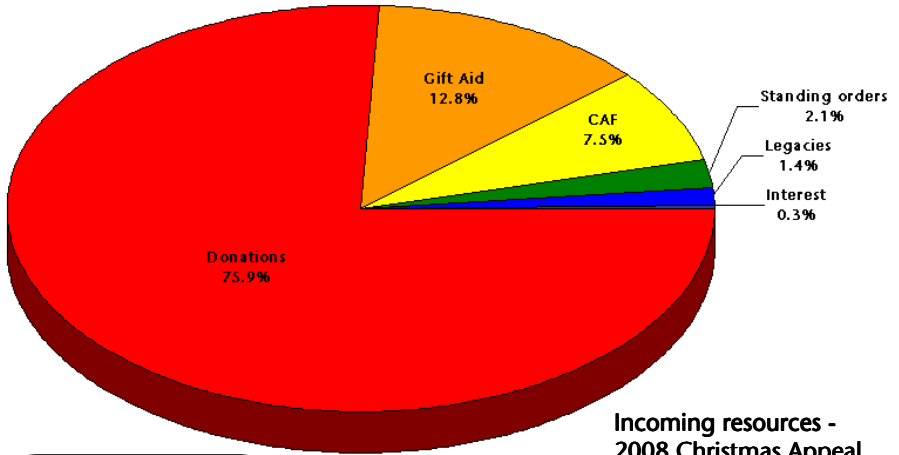


"I can't believe the Anglican church would help me, a Muslim woman."

**Grants by ethnic group
2008 - 09**



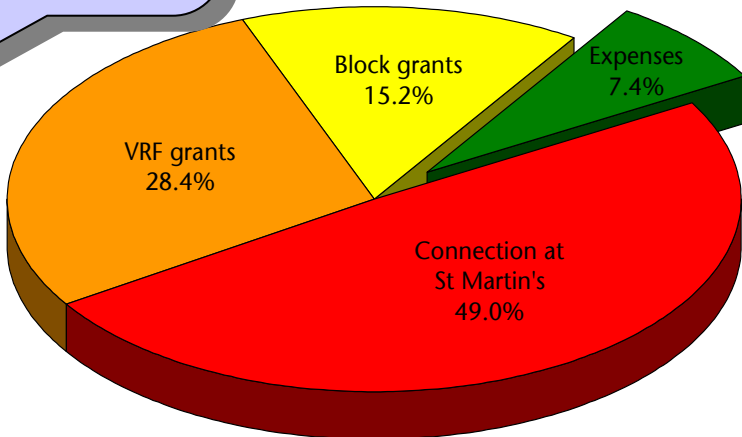
income & expenditure



**Incoming resources -
2008 Christmas Appeal
£701,636**

“Please never underestimate the difference a small grant can make to our clients’ lives.”

**Resources expended -
2008 Christmas Appeal
£730,000**

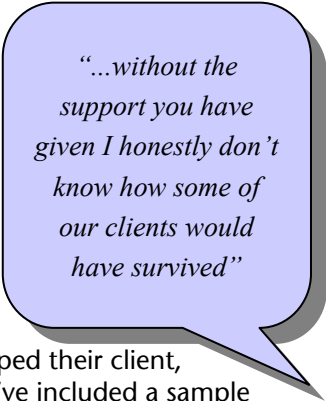


For a full set of accounts, contact 020 7766 1125 or craig.norman@smittf.org

Every day, support workers up and down the country send requests to the VRF on behalf of their clients. The problem may be rent arrears, usually because of delays with benefit payments, that are putting them at risk of becoming homeless; or they may be homeless and have a chance of obtaining a tenancy, but need a deposit, or a bed or cooker to put in it and begin to set up a home. Each request is considered, but the money has to last until the end of the financial year, and if I want to be sure that we can continue to meet crisis needs until then, I have to sift through each request and identify which ones will get a grant and which ones won't. Even though we try to make the money go as far as possible, I still have to say "no" to many more requests than to the ones I can say "yes, we'll help". Making that decision is the hardest part of my job, because I know that there's a person or a family behind that piece of paper who needs help. But it's necessary to prioritise the requests; otherwise we would run out of money in six months and spend the rest of year saying "no" to every request, even those in the most desperate need. Finding the balance between helping and staying within budget is rather like driving down a steep mountain road, riding the brakes just enough to keep the car moving but not too fast that it tumbles off a cliff.

After reading nearly 3600 pleas for help in a year, the occupational hazard of running the VRF could be compassion fatigue. However, before the cynicism sets in, we will receive a message from a support worker about how a grant has helped their client, or a thank you from the recipient themselves. We've included a sample of these in this review.

The help that we are able to give wouldn't be possible without the generosity of many people: our volunteers who give up their time to process donations, and our donors who give what they can to help us help others in need. Thank you.



"...without the support you have given I honestly don't know how some of our clients would have survived"



“...Here love and conscience sing the same refrain.”

*Andrew Motion
(as inscribed on the lightwell of the
renewed St Martin-in-the-Fields)*

thank you

**We are enormously grateful to the BBC who have broadcast the
Christmas Appeal every year since 1927,
to the many thousands of people who respond with donations
to the Radio 4 broadcasts
and to the army of volunteers who staff phone lines and process
donations enabling this vital work to continue.**