

In the hostels there are no social activities or encouragement for people to work. Beyond the hostel, there is the benefits gap, that scandalous disincentive interminably countenanced by successive governments including the current one. The hostel rents are so high and housing benefit reductions start at so low an earning level that the occupants would be poorer off working for the minimum wage. As they live close to the breadline already, why should they wish to get even closer to it though they may wish to work?

At Turnaround, we believe work is a major element in the glue that keeps the social fabric together alongside the other primary elements: good family relations, loving domestic partners, children and common leisure pursuits and hobbies. For those without private wealth, the very existence of these latter elements as well as, to some extent, their quality is dependent on the revenue they earn for, if money doesn't buy you love, poverty can quickly help you lose it.

However there are many other tangential benefits to a job apart from a wage that is rarely appreciated by those in work at the time. Yet their loss is keenly felt too and felt in a very hard way by those who find themselves out of it even if they are still financially secure. When this happens there is 'a sudden depreciation of the self' as the author Elias Canetti puts it in 'Crowds and Power', which 'no one ever forgets.' People turn inward unable to relate to others, badly damaged and with their confidence in pieces

Turnaround provides something perhaps unique in London and certainly rare elsewhere: a place that people can use as a surrogate work place all day from Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. They get regular breaks for free tea and coffee round a table and alongside the volunteer staff that have known homelessness themselves so there is hardly any of a 'them and us' attitude. Gradually new users start to relate to those around them just as a new joiner to a company starts to relate in the staff canteen. We aim to provide an environment that helps our clients re-establish social discipline, timekeeping, a regular pattern to the day, and self esteem as a basis of strength from which to quit the benefits system. Up to 80% want to do so. There's no time to say more except this:

(1) Helping people displaced from society become placed in it again is not easy but we believe the main routes to success are those emphasised by

Pierre Abbé in his Emmaus movement. See [`find out more`](#) at the Emmaus website.

(2) Some of our clients are too badly damaged for economic independence to be a practical objective. Improving the quality of their life still matters to us however and is not a trivial issue. But for those who have recovered their confidence, what **Business in the Community** provides is absolutely vital, the final key to the happy ending we want: induction into placements where they can make the attempt to return to work but where, if they fail (for some will) the roof and unemployment benefits are still there as a fallback.

Thank you for listening to me and, please, if you are already participating **in Business in the Community** keep it up because it is of great value and if you haven't participated in it yet, join it.