2010/11 was a rollercoaster journey for Salmon as the high water mark of funding receded under the impact of the national debt and deficit crisis. At the end of the year, our longstanding Executive Director, Mark Blundell OBE, left to take up employment elsewhere. Mark had been responsible for driving through the re-development of the building so that today, Salmon is the largest purpose built youth centre in the country – and all achieved without leaving us in debt. With the award of significant amounts of Transition Funding from the Government, we have until April 2012 to find alternative funding, complete our re-structuring and set our course for the future.

The riots of August 2011 have changed the way that policy-makers look at youth work. Interestingly, there was little trouble in Bermondsey. Even more interesting, people have started to talk about the importance of working with young people at much younger ages, even as young as 8. Salmon has been running a very popular and successful club for 6-9 year olds for ages. For many of our kids, this is where those important long-term relationships that are the foundation of successful youth work are forged.

Many consider that the violence and looting was opportunistic; others that it indicated evidence of a moral breakdown and a broken society. But we must always remember that the vast majority of young people were not involved and were as shocked and horrified as everyone else. For me, the disturbances highlighted the rootlessness and disconnectedness which some experience. Experiences which flow from the injustices and inequalities in the human condition and society, which Christianity, the rock on which our work is based, aims to address.

We will continue to provide the best youth work activities and opportunities for our young people. What drives our work is a belief that a personal relationship with Jesus offers a faith which provides meaning and purpose in life, hope for a better future and love which finds fulfilment in putting the needs of others before our own.

Anthony, 18

“Salmon is fun and gets me out of the house. I can do something constructive. I am a young volunteer, because it is good to help other people. When someone has a problem at home and you are able to make them smile for two hours, you make them feel better about themselves. I like to be as helpful as I can. The more you put into something, the more you get out of it. It doesn’t hurt to be helpful! Not anyway.”

Adrian Greenwood, Chair of Trustees

I met Marcus, along with his fellow students, through their weekly adventure class. Marcus has learning difficulties and was initially quiet, having trouble following instructions accordingly. He started applying himself, even though he initially appeared uncoordinated and fearful of heights. He enjoyed the physicality of the climbing wall, the Leap of Faith giant swing and trampolining.

Interestingly, none of the lads had climbed to the top of the wall during our adventure class. Given their age and fitness levels this was always curious to me, but I did not mention it to the group.

One day, Marcus came to our open climbing club session. Somehow he managed to climb to the top of the wall. He was committed, fearless and had a very clear intention to make it to the top. During the next adventure class, he repeated his success and climbed to the top of the wall in front of his mates. He was certainly happy and proud of his achievement.

He surprised himself by what happened next. All of his classmates made it to the top of the climbing wall that very day. He was the inspiration and the break-through man and everyone knew it and acknowledged Marcus for what he had created. One can imagine the impact on his self-confidence and self-esteem.

The name of the young person has been changed for privacy reasons.

Robert Razz, Sports Worker – Adventure

The name of the young person has been changed for privacy reasons.

FOREWORD

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How Fourteen-Year-Old Marcus Made a Difference

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The name of the young person has been changed for privacy reasons.
The past year saw us perform resiliently in what was, and continues to be, a challenging time for the voluntary sector. A number of revenue grants ran out during the year contributing to a 20% fall in revenue income. As a responsible organisation, we have considered and implemented the measures needed to ensure our ongoing viability. These included halving our staffing compliment from thirty, undertaking careful cost analysis and achieving efficiency savings where feasible. Our focus and commitment to young people however remains strong and the current staff members are responding well to the challenges. They remain skilled and committed to delivering services to local young people to the usual high standard. But it is only with the continued support of funders and supporters that we can continue to deliver these much needed services to young people now and well into the future.

We will keep on enjoying our vibrant Thursday evening club, where 100 plus children between 6 and 9 take part in a range of arts, including sports, arts and role of games. The club is provided thanks to investment from funders and partnerships with staff members and volunteers that will hopefully just for the rest of their teenage years. We will start our weeks with our Salmon Sunday sessions, offering young people an opportunity to explore Christianity. We hope that they may discover faith, hope and love for today, helping them to stay strong in their journey of life, whatever comes their way.

We will continue to engage young people in social projects that relate to their social, political and physical environment. Young people will be involved in focus groups, events, campaigns, volunteering and attending the Edenbridge scheme and contributing to their wider community.

Our Trustees’ Annual Report and Audited Accounts for the year to 31st March 2011 will be available on request.

FINANCES

We’ve carried on our extensive hope for the future – not only in the face of each individual young person that we encounter but for the skilled and passionate workers that remain, for the enthusiastic young volunteers and new shiny cohort of trained adult volunteers.

Our income for the year ending 31 March 2011 was £1,823,788.

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Like the young people who come to the Salmon Youth Centre, all our volunteers have something to offer, whether it be good advice, encouragement or new skills. From the extrovert, to the sporty, to the artistic, practical, quiet and thoughtful, all can bring something new and positive to youth work - and to their own lives in doing so. Among the volunteers at Salmon, there is someone for every young person to relate to.

“Just being able to relate to young people is great. To have a conversation, to get them to open up. It's a really good feeling. Sometimes you sit there and sort of think they're just bored. Sometimes they don't come and I know I will have to go to them. You can see they're looking at you, trying to figure out what you're about and you're looking at them thinking 'what are you all about'. But if they want to talk, they choose you, rather than you choose them.”

Natosca (28), Film Student

“My children of 8, 9, 11 and 15 all come to different activities at Salmon. That's why I wanted to get involved myself, as a volunteer. It is good that children recognise you as a local parent in the club. They know who I am and see me walking on the streets of Bermondsey. I enjoy getting involved in cooking. Me and my daughters learnt to make crumble at Salmon and now we make it at home as well.”

Tina (32), Full-time Mum

“If I wasn't coming to Bermondsey to volunteer, I really would be in a bubble.”

Mary (51), Play Therapist

“I love living at Salmon as a Resident. We have a lot in common because we all enjoy working with young people and sharing our friendship and faith. The feeling of community is really strong. My favorite is working in the same clubs with a few other Residents and knowing that we make a great team.”

Jenny (22), Resident

“I like teaching people new skills, like playing chess. I'm not very good at chess, but I know the rules. I enjoyed finding out that I had the patience to teach them the rules. I actually think youth work is quite a self-reflective activity. It makes you think about how you interact with people of every creed and colour. I grew up in a small town in the countryside, my dad had a tractor, I live in Highgate and work in the media. If I wasn't coming to Bermondsey to volunteer, I really would be in a bubble.”

Richard (29), PR Consultant

“The thing that brought me into youth work, that gave me inspiration, was when I was younger. The dynamics and insecurities of teenage years. The way groups can be lifted or brought down by negativity, or positivity. It's something I can bring to a group. Playing dodgeball is a great example of this. A lot of the young people don't want to play initially. They don't want to show themselves up by playing an unfamiliar game. But after about 10 minutes they're buzzing.”

Michael (36), PhD Student

“My children of 8, 9, 11 and 15 all come to different activities at Salmon. That's why I wanted to get involved myself, as a volunteer. It is good that children recognise you as a local parent in the club. They know who I am and see me walking on the streets of Bermondsey. I enjoy getting involved in cooking. Me and my daughters learnt to make crumble at Salmon and now we make it at home as well.”

Richard (29), PR Consultant
Thank you to everybody – staff, volunteers, residents, parents, funders, supporters, fellow Trustees and Council of Reference members for making our work with young people possible!

Names in purple are of people that left during the year.
Our Mission
The Salmon Youth Centre in Bermondsey aims to inspire young people to realise their potential, to contribute positively to the communities in which they live and discover meaning and direction for their lives.

Our Vision
Our hope is that the young people may recognise and respond to the Christian faith, which is the basis of our work, and which we believe gives true meaning and direction for life.

With grateful thanks to all our supporters and funders:

Alan and Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund
Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation
Gordon and Louise Izatt
Henry Smith Charity
J.W. Laing Trust
The Draper’s Company
Maurice and Hilda Laing Charitable Trust
The Jerusalem Trust