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MURDER

Police probe missing hour of man stabbed to death

Vitalijs Janovics was fatally stabbed near Bermondsey Tube station on his way home from work. Detectives are trying to trace his final steps.



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BIG INTERVIEW



From being homeless to helping the homeless

At 16, Kevin Rhys-Wright found himself homeless. But, now working for Morgan Stanley, he turned his life around, and helps those less fortunate than himself.

»p10-11

OLYMPICS



■ The Sky Orchestra has been flying over London this week

Picture: Sky Orchestra

Music in the sky marks Olympic countdown

Balloons flying in the skies over Docklands have been waking people this week by playing ethereal music. The Sky Orchestra is part of the celebrations marking a year to go until the start of the London 2012 Games. With the Olympics now just 12 months away, Londoners, and businesses like The O2, are preparing to welcome the world to the capital.

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MUSIC

Screaming fans Wanted

Boy band The Wanted are heading to The O2 on their tour

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■ Jeremiah Sogunle and Kevin Rhys-Wright in Anchor House's music room

The man with a foothold in two worlds

Kevin Rhys-Wright
Homeless charity volunteer

by Alistair Kleebauer
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Kevin Rhys-Wright shares the same preoccupations of many 26-year-olds. He's saving for his first home and applying for a master's degree.

His smartly-turned out appearance, eloquence and focused nature match his profession as well, working for Morgan Stanley's corporate services department in Canary Wharf.

But the fact we are meeting at Anchor House, a hostel and education centre for homeless people in Canning Town, is the first clue that Kevin doesn't fit any easy stereotypes about the corporate world.

Rebellious

Even though he is now a volunteer at the centre in Barking Road, 10 years ago he was on a path which he believes would soon have brought him through its doors for very different reasons.

He says: "When I was 16, I started to experiment with drink and drugs. It was almost like having two lives, one being academic and studious and then having a rebellious streak, going clubbing and sneaking out."

"The pressure to succeed and do better than my parents sent me off the rails."

"I ran away from home." The youngest of three

If everyone is giving to Cancer Research UK, there could be a hospice down the road which is getting shut down

Kevin Rhys-Wright

growing up in the family home in Stamford Hill, even his stable background wasn't enough to shelter Kevin from homelessness.

His defiant gesture turned into sofa-surfing, staying with friends and turning to hostels. It's an all too common experience in Newham, which has the highest homeless population in the UK.

Anchor House, for example, has 180 single homeless adults staying there every year.

Kevin says: "People think that just because you're

homeless you'll sleep in a urine-soaked corridor. I knew at 16 that I didn't want to sleep on the streets."

He classes his own period of homelessness as three weeks and used the help of Victim Support in Walthamstow to reconcile with his parents.

Struggle

But he is all too clear about how close he came, and how close anyone can come, to swapping a life of opportunity for one of daily struggle, saying: "I was quick to turn it around but it could have become three years. Anyone could end up that way."

"If Victim Support hadn't reached out, I would have more than likely ended up in Anchor House."

Following the reconciliation with his parents, Kevin began the process of getting his life back on track.

He was allowed to return to St Thomas More Catholic school in Wood Green to complete his qualifications.

This despite having another obstacle to overcome – having brachial palsy in his right arm, which means it has very limited movement.

He refuses to use that as an explanation for his brief period off the rails though. "I was just a demon child," he says with a laugh.

Explaining his disability, he adds: "I was a big baby and when I was born they had to dislocate my shoulder



■ Kevin Rhys-Wright outside Anchor House in Canning Town

Redevelopment Plans



■ An artist's impression of a redeveloped meeting room and courtyard in Anchor House

Anchor House's redevelopment plans include building a catering training facility, leisure and recreational areas and 25 self-contained "move-on" apartments which will be separate to the main building. They will help residents in

their transition from a hostel place to living independently. Appeals director Guy Insell said: "It is a high-risk time when someone is ready to leave. "This way, they will still have access to full support."

to get me out. I've always been disabled so I've always had an impatience of wanting to hurry up and better myself."

Teaching yourself to type 50 words a minute with just your left hand, for example, helps, as does a politics degree from Kingston University and a business management diploma from Brunel.

It led him to Morgan Stanley, following a spell at Clifford Chance, as well as to Anchor House, where he meets with six residents on a regular basis.

When *The Docklands* visits, he is chatting with two residents, Nigel Miles, 44, and Jeremiah Sogunle, 32, and soon joins them in the centre's music room.

There is much for them to do, from playing pool to helping in the garden, but trustees admit the building is in need of refurbishment as soon as possible.

Established in 1962, the charity helped seafarers from the nearby docks who had fallen on hard times, hence the name.

It is now pursuing an ambitious fundraising programme to find £9.3million



to bring the current building up to scratch and to create new accommodation.

Kevin describes how he fits in: "It ranges vastly depending on what the residents' needs are.

"I meet with a 47-year-old who has special educational needs, he needs help with reading and writing and he is willing to persevere to get back into work.

"And there's a guy who's my age, we have an almost identical upbringing. He is of Sudanese origin, he went to university and did a fine art degree.

"It turns up different emotions. I can identify problems that support workers might not

have picked up on.

"The residents may have to go on a drug rehabilitation programme, need help filling out forms or CVs or finding out where to learn to drive."

It's a role he mirrors in his nine-to-five life, looking after Morgan Stanley's corporate clients, internal staff and visitors to their Cabot Place office.

Having experience of both worlds, what are his views on corporate social responsibility?

"I'm not getting political about Morgan Stanley but in all corporate businesses, there are set criteria of what charities they will give to and everyone gets to vote

[for a charity] but it's flawed," he says.

"If everyone is giving to Cancer Research UK, there could be a hospice down the road which is getting shut down. Anchor House is so close to Canary Wharf but they have it hard."

Kevin could be just the person to open the vital connections with east London's business district. An email he sends following the interview reveals he's got into the access course which will lead to his master's degree in social work at Goldsmiths.

So he looks destined to help others in much the same way he was helped a decade ago.

Celebrity Backers



EastEnder Barbara Windsor (second from left) with staff and residents at Anchor House in Canning Town

Anchor House's fundraising campaign has attracted a number of high-profile supporters including Shoreditch-born Barbara Windsor, former World Boxing champion Barry McGuigan and *Newsnight* presenter Jeremy Paxman, who visited this

month. Paxman describes Anchor House as, "the antidote to compassion fatigue." Kevin said: "If someone like Jeremy Paxman invests their time in Anchor House, it shows that it must be worthwhile."

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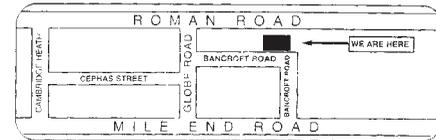


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