

ALUMNI PROFILE

CLARE HANBURY (BEd, 1979–1983)

Clare Hanbury, Director of Children for Health, talks to the Homertonian about her career.



Your work has taken you around the world – how did this begin?

After Homerton, my first job was at an international school on a Kenyan pineapple plantation. I had met with the Principal, Ms Shrubsole, to ask if I should go to Kenya or do my probationary year in the UK first. "Do your probationary year", she said, but I ignored her advice! I taught general subjects, drama, and music to children aged 9–13. Using drama in situations allows children to learn how to problem solve, which is completely different to traditional acting. Drama can transcend language ability and age. I then taught in an international school in Hong Kong. In my free time I worked with Vietnamese refugees, volunteering on a language programme helping the refugees to read English. I became quite political during this time and wrote about the experience of refugees for the local media. I even appeared on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme to discuss the issue.

Do you have a favourite lasting memory from Homerton?

The lecturers at Homerton, such as in the outstanding drama department, were fantastic, and Trish Maude in particular was a huge influence on my teaching style. I remember sitting in the old gym in the Ibberson Building (now the Combination Room) with 60 children raring to climb on the PE apparatus. Trish was so engaging that not a single student messed about, shouted, or put a foot wrong. Trish completely commanded the room. She demonstrated the precise craft of teacher training at Homerton, its mix of artistry and technical skill, like the most perfect choreography. My time at Homerton taught me to plan and focus but also to be creative. It gave me confidence in my own ability and in others' ability to follow me. The whole experience left me feeling completely invincible.

How did you get involved with the charity sector?

After four years working in international schools in Kenya and Hong Kong, I returned to the UK for an MA in Education in Developing Countries. I was studying at the University of London's Institute of Education, and became involved with

The Child to Child Trust which was based there. The Trust pioneered children's participation in health – we trained the world's leading agencies to equip children with the skills to stay safe, stay healthy, and achieve their potential. During this time I met two of my greatest mentors, and founders of the charity, Dr Hugh Hawes and Professor David Morley, who helped develop my understanding of peer development and the importance of children teaching children in Africa. Drama, singing, and role play are key to the methods we used. We worked together to help embed the ideas of children's participation in health into government and non-government child health and education programmes in numerous countries.

Can you tell us about your own charity, Children for Health?

Children for Health is a charity dedicated to the promotion of health education in developing countries. It focuses on developing children as agents of change and communicators of essential health messages, both to their families and their communities. I founded the charity after a conversation with the wonderful Anna Joy, then Director at the Cambridge-based Humanitarian Centre. The Centre was set up as an innovative think tank, allowing academic minds and development practitioners to sit together and talk about healthcare by running seminars and talks based around current issues. I came up with an idea called 'The 100' – to give children 10 health messages across 10 topics which they can learn and share with their community. The idea was similar to what the Centre was already promoting amongst academics – take a theme and spread the message.

The Centre also helped me to obtain seed funding for the charity by putting me in touch with the multinational software design company ARM. ARM offered funding but insisted that it had to be as part of a charity. They gave me until 5.30pm to create a Board and open a charity bank account – this was at 1pm! Thankfully, I succeeded, and we launched Children for Health formally at the National Theatre, London, in July 2013. Our core '100 messages' project has been a great success and the messages are

being developed into posters, translated into many languages and distributed in many formats. Each time a child shares a message it helps to influence the family and community. A simple message such as: "To wash hands properly, use water and a little soap. Rub for 10 seconds, rinse, and air dry or dry with a clean cloth/paper, not on dirty clothes." can become a doorway to a discussion on how to make real change so that this message can be turned into action.

What is your favourite part of your work?

Without a doubt, it's being in the field with teachers, health workers, and children. I have worked on Children for Health projects in Mozambique, Nigeria, and India, and love developing materials and conducting teacher training on location. In Mozambique, I work on a nutrition education project among a community of rural farmers, where 38% of under-five year olds had chronic malnutrition. Although food grows well in this area, people do not eat a balanced diet. Teaching the younger generation here is vital too as the older children look after younger children while the parents are working in the fields. These children can quickly become catalysts for change in their communities. They love the messages and activities. When we reviewed the programme we noticed that the children who took part in the project seemed different from their peers. They stood tall, proud, as though they felt able and empowered to make change. The relationship with their teachers has also changed, children enjoy learning and there is a mutual respect. It is fantastic to see the practical, lasting impact on this community and this work is being scaled up.

I often reflect on how great my time and training was at Homerton and how the many elements of that special BEd Hons degree gave me the courage and skills to do the work I do today.

For more information on Clare or her work, please get in touch at clare@childrenforhealth.org or visit www.childrenforhealth.org to find out more and access free health education materials.