

# FAITH IN ACTION

helping with homelessness

December newsletter 2019

## News from the Merton Homeless Drop-In

The needs of the Merton homeless and vulnerably housed are as great as ever, and numbers are rising. We are currently averaging 71 service users per session.

The Drop-In continues to provide for their basic needs as well as helping them to move on.

*Photo shows volunteer Matthew on reception, ready to welcome service users. In the background you can see help with online form-filling.*



## Help with accommodation and moving on

We work with a variety of different agencies which provide accommodation including Spear, Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness, and Merton Council. Here is our staff member Krysia conferring with a Spear worker.

We also liaise closely with the **Merton Winter Night Shelter**. This consists of a variety of faith groups who work with the YMCA to provide sleeping-bag accommodation in their halls, together with a good supper, evening entertainment, breakfast, and intensive help with move-on.

## Case studies

### Dolores

Dolores is a young woman who is a member of a local church. The church referred Dolores to FiA when her family told her to leave. The relationship had become extremely difficult and it was clear that Dolores was finding the strain almost unbearable. We worked with Dolores, applying to various housing organisations offering accommodation to young people, and negotiated with a very helpful housing officer at Merton Council who knew how vulnerable Dolores was.

After a lot of work, Dolores was offered a place in the YMCA, and FiA paid the deposit so that she could move in. Four months later, Dolores moved on to a supported house for young people. A deposit was needed again, and FiA was happy to pay this so that Dolores could have accommodation which will support her in finding work. Dolores is both intelligent and determined to find satisfying work. Now she is looking for work which will allow her to pay her rent while she does an internship to get the experience she needs to work in publishing.

### Dave

Dave had been a postman for twenty years. In his forties he developed serious depression which left him unable to work. He lost his job, was unable to pay his rent, and wasn't coping. When he first came into FiA he was sleeping rough. We worked with Dave for several months, enabling him to have a hot meal, wash his clothes, get a hair-cut, and apply for Universal Credit. We told him about the Sunshine Café which is open in evenings and weekends. Dave says 'It was your positivity that kept me going'.

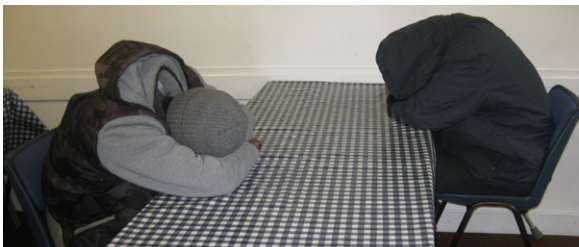
For a whole summer, Dave was living under a holly tree on Wimbledon Common, coming to FiA during the day and going to the Sunshine Café in the evenings. With this support, Dave managed not to sink back into depression.

Dave applied to the Council for housing, and after some months he was offered a flat on a new estate. It is a lovely flat, but was completely unfurnished. FiA helped Dave to apply to charities for second-hand goods and grants to furnish the flat. He came in recently to thank us. Dave has developed strategies which he hopes will not allow him to sink back into depression, and he will soon be back at work.

### Providing support for our service users

Some service users feel isolated. Volunteer Cathy is organising a team of 'Digital Champions' to help them (safely and legally) to:

- access essential services, such as getting bills paid and registering for information, work, or appointments;
- communicate with others, setting up email or social media accounts;
- transact, including filing in online benefit or other applications).



*Rough sleepers may be so tired that all they want to do is sleep in a safe place.*

### Thank you ...

To Mayor of Merton Councillor Janice Howard, who has nominated FiA as one of the two charities she is supporting during her mayoral year. This is a very valuable endorsement of our work.

*Photo shows the Mayor and her consort with our new Chair of Trustees Grenville Williams at the AGM and Open Evening 2019. Welcome to Grenville, and thank you to our former Chair Mel Angel for all her work.*



### Volunteering at the Drop-In

*Volunteer Nicky says:* I can now see that the line between being OK, keeping one's head above the water, and that of drowning whether financially, emotionally or drunkenly is so very tenuous. I have learnt a great deal about my local community and the many issues facing it including the chronic shortage of housing, and the role of the local faith groups in providing food, support and the Winter Night Shelters. I am so heartened by the small acts of kindness that every volunteer here shows to each service user. It is an overwhelming kindness that permeates the Drop-In and all it does.

### Funding the work of the Merton Homeless Drop-In

To ensure that we continue to provide and develop services for the homeless and vulnerably housed, we need continuing financial support from across the local community. With our costs rising and homelessness on the increase, we appeal for help in broadening our support.

We greatly appreciate the regular donations of the generous contributors to our Square Meal Appeal and aim to increase these. Can you help? For how to give, please visit our website.

### Further Information

To learn more about the Drop-In and how you can help, visit our website or contact Andy our project manager on 07843 280419 or email [team@mertonfaithinaction.org](mailto:team@mertonfaithinaction.org).

[www.mertonfaithinaction.org](http://www.mertonfaithinaction.org)

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