



# FAITH IN ACTION

## helping with homelessness

### Faith in Action Merton Homelessness Project

**Stories from the Drop-In** (all names have been changed)

#### **Providing basic care**

*People sleeping rough may have gone for weeks without a wash or a decent meal. We provide a warm welcome, a square meal, and a shower.*

Volunteer Nic helps run the showers and the laundry. He describes the wonderfully positive change those who have had a shower and a shave for the first time in maybe three weeks. We provide nourishing hot meals and do people's washing too.

#### **Finding accommodation and a job**

*We are making every effort to help our service users register with the agencies they need to help them get off the street and into accommodation and a job. All this now has to be done online. We have six laptops with internet access, and are grateful to volunteers who help service users fill in the online forms. We are pleased to report that we haven't seen several former service users recently because they no longer need us.*

**Jacek.** Andy the project manager met Jacek who had been a regular user of the Drop-In. He had not been in for some months, and was working and looked extremely well. He said that FiA Drop-In was the best of all the services that he had used – it is 'like a family'. He thanked Andy very enthusiastically.

**Ben** left his family home after being physically attacked by his father. He came to the Drop-In straight from hospital, having nowhere else to go. He was very distressed and the staff and volunteers offered a hot meal, a shower, a friendly face, and a rapid response. We contacted the local outreach team from Street Link and after speaking to them, made an arrangement that they would look for Ben that very night. We helped Ben arrange an appointment at the Job Centre to establish a claim for Job Seekers Allowance and therefore help with housing costs. We lent Ben an Oyster card to enable him to get to the Job Centre and a sleeping bag. He hardly had to use the sleeping-bag, as he was picked up that same night and taken to an organization called No Second Night Out who have arranged housing.

**Hussain** had been helped by FiA when he was homeless. Now in work and securely housed, he comes in on his day off to volunteer.

**Arthur** was another local man who had lost his job and wasn't able to pay rent to a friend he was leasing a room from. He was sleeping on the night buses because he couldn't bear to sleep rough. This posed a problem, as we couldn't report where he was sleeping to an outreach team. Due to our close relationship with another organization that offers outreach, they met with Arthur in the Drop-In and did an assessment there. They then arranged to phone him in the middle of the night so that he could meet them off the night bus. They were therefore able to take him directly from there to No Second Night Out, and he is now in temporary accommodation with the plan to move back to Merton.

**Temilade** had lived and worked in Merton for 20 years. He went abroad to care for his elderly father who was very ill, leaving a friend to pay the rent on his flat. When he returned some months later, the rent had not been paid and Temilade had been evicted. He discovered that he was not even entitled to benefits as he had been abroad for longer than three months. FiA supported Temilade during these next difficult months – referring him to the Winter Night Shelter, helping him to claim benefits on the day that he became entitled. We made referrals to various organizations that could provide housing, helping with forms and offering some help with rent / deposit. He recently went to view a studio flat in central Wimbledon that was offered through Fresh Start Housing.

### **Merton rough sleepers**

We are seeing increasing numbers of people at the Drop-In who are sleeping rough – about half the average attendance of 65. The official street count of Merton homeless follows strict government criteria and counts those visible on the streets. However our experience is that many of our service users choose to conceal themselves, hiding maybe in undergrowth or an unattended outhouse, and they may not be included in the figures.

One such is Len, back in work and camping in an unobtrusive little tent until he'd earned enough money to pay the deposit on a room. He was then able to go on paying the rent, so we helped him with the deposit.

### **Working with Winter Night Shelters**

The Merton Winter Night Shelter runs from 30 November to mid-March, and most of the 12 places available are taken by Homeless Drop-In Centre service users who would otherwise be sleeping rough.

Last winter several Winter Night Shelter guests got up early and went off to work with a package of sandwiches, their work too low-paid and/or insecure for them to find accommodation easily.



# FAITH IN ACTION

helping with homelessness

## Help for Homeless *and Vulnerable* people

If you are suddenly homeless and have *nothing at all*, what would the Drop-In Centre offer you?

- A warm welcome
- Hot or cold drink and breakfast
- Somewhere to shave, shower and trim your hair
- Washing a load of laundry
- A delicious (and nutritious) two-course lunch
- Computer access and assistance with filling in online forms, preparing a CV or applying for work online
- Full assessment of what help you need. Advice workers can help with applications for benefits and make referrals to housing services
- Access to the Job Centre Plus outreach worker
- Help with getting essential identification papers such as a passport or birth certificate
- Access to a teacher of English as a foreign language or a literacy teacher
- Help to register with a GP, testing for TB, and flu inoculations and health checks
- Somewhere to charge your phone, or use our phone to make important calls
- Sleeping bag or fresh clothes if you need them
- Somewhere to relax and play ping-pong or bingo or a table-top game
- A listening ear, a shared joke, or formal advice
- And *above all* .... somewhere you are safe and there's someone on ***your side***.

***All this costs £17 per person per day.***

**Careful management by our professional staff and volunteers means *we make every penny count.***

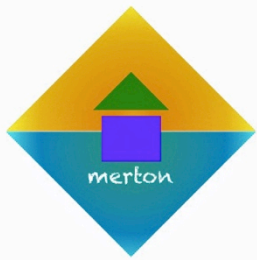
---

**Please support our work for the homeless and vulnerably housed**

**[www.mertonfaithinaction.org](http://www.mertonfaithinaction.org) • [www.justgiving.com/faithinaction](http://www.justgiving.com/faithinaction)**

**Merton Faith in Action Homeless Drop-in Centre**

**Wednesdays & Fridays at the Salvation Army in Kingston Road, SW19 1LT**



# FAITH IN ACTION

helping with homelessness

## Homeless Drop-In Statistics

During the 12 months to October 2015 there were 6800 service user attendances, averaging 65 people per session, with 225 new people attending this year.

### **We have provided:**

- 7000 breakfasts and lunches
- 3000 showers
- 600 laundry sessions
- 2500 computer sessions to help with job applications
- 1000 food parcels
- 150 English language support sessions
- 150 appointments with the Job Centre Outreach worker
- 240 attendances at Polish-language alcohol support groups

### **We have also:**

- Helped 30 people into housing
- Provided regular health assessments
- Helped with NI registrations and passport applications