

## **Merton Homeless Drop-in**

The Faith in Action Merton Homeless Drop-in is usually open every Wednesday and Friday 10am to 3pm, currently at the Salvation Army Hall, 109 Kingston Road, London SW19 1LT. However, at present it is operating on shorter hours.

Our professional staff team, supported by enthusiastic volunteers, have been welcoming street sleepers and vulnerably-housed people from Merton and neighbouring boroughs for more than 15 years. Here are some of what was offered pre-Covid, and this service is returning.

- Breakfast, hot drinks, snacks and a home-cooked lunch
- Shower and laundry facilities
- Clothes and food parcels
- Internet access
- Assistance with, and advice on, online job and housing applications and Universal Credit benefit claims
- Help in the search for work: assistance with writing CVs, job searches and interview practice.

Access to local statutory and voluntary services is provided by visiting staff from organisations including DWP outreach, Merton Drug & Alcohol and Mental Health Support, and Merton Rough Sleepers Team.

### **Covid-19 pandemic**

When lockdown started in March 2020, the Drop-in had to close completely. This was less of a problem than it might have been, because Government funding and hotel closures meant that many of our local homeless were accommodated in hotels.

Since then, lockdowns have come and gone and our services offered to those in need have varied, depending on restrictions and on what was needed. The Drop-in went through a phase of offering an appointments-only service; this was partially successful, although some service users needed to collect their post, and others found it too difficult to arrive at a specific time. Covid-related support remains available, including vaccinations and lateral flow tests.

The Drop-in is now once again open access, and service user numbers are gradually rising.

### **Future need and future services**

As FiA adds more specialist workers, either by employing them or by hosting regular visiting specialists, the Drop-In can offer opportunities and interventions which are more closely tailored to individual service user needs, while retaining the essential core elements of kindness, warmth, food, and a little sanctuary.

What services will be needed in future, and for how many, are as yet unclear. New services and ways of supporting the homeless and vulnerably-housed will be developed, depending on need.