

# *The* **Action**

Edited by Matt Hatton

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Dear Readers

We wish you a very Happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year. God is always by our sides and we pray that he will bring you joy, peace and happiness during 2011.

Christmas is a time when the story of “No Room At The Inn” is recounted and it tends to touch everyone’s hearts. How relevant that story is to the work of KCAH, that Jesus was born to the world in a homeless setting. How relevant it is, too, that the Kingston Churches’ Winter Night Shelter is able to demonstrate God’s love for the homeless of Kingston by offering them somewhere to stay on Church premises this winter. It is so heartening that the night shelter guests will be protected from the elements and experience a warm welcome, food and a secure place to sleep.



Homelessness is likely to be a much hotter topic over the next couple of years and we expect that the services of KCAH will be in higher demand than ever before. Our message is therefore to please keeping praying and supporting our work – this is paramount to the Charity. Leading up to Christmas, the response of Churches, Schools, Individuals and local groups like the Brownies to fundraise for KCAH has been overwhelming. Thank you!

**Matt Hatton, KCAH Operational Director**

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## KCAH News Update

The AGM in November was a resounding success. KCAH went public on the fact that we plan to relocate our offices to St Peter's Church, Norbiton. This will essentially be phase one of a wider scheme, the Joel Project, which aims to see the local Churches and the local community as a whole, working towards building a permanent night shelter/sanctuary built on the grounds of St Peter's Church. The Joel Project is distinct from KCAH but we see ourselves as an integral part to the vision of helping some of the most vulnerable and needy people within the Kingston Borough. If you wish to know more about the Joel Project, what it means and how you can support it, please contact Matt Hatton on [info@kcah.org.uk](mailto:info@kcah.org.uk) or leave a message on 020 8255 2439 and he will contact you with more information.

The Kingston Churches Winter Night Shelter is well under way for the second full season. Thank you to everyone who is getting involved in one way or another. Once more, the necessity for a shelter has been demonstrated by the fact that on the first night, seven people took refuge in the shelter. The weather was atrocious with the first heavy snow of the year falling that week. Already, two of the guests have been placed into the local YMCA, freeing up a space for others who may need a bed for the night. As I write this, the Shelter is full with two men on the waiting list hoping for a space to come available.



Laura Gafoor is our newest member of staff, replacing Daniela Lewis as one of our two Housing Advisers. Laura has settled in well at KCAH and her positivity is always appreciated when clients attend KCAH. Being given a big smile when they are often feeling at their lowest ebb is always a good start. KCAH may not always be able to resolve someone's immediate problems but at least they are attending a place where they are welcomed.

Becky Mills is now doing work for KCAH one day a week as a fundraiser and her article highlights her focus. In the current climate, it is more crucial than ever that we maintain our high profile among the churches but also bang the drum of homelessness within the rest of the local community. Small things will make all the difference to us. For instance, if you can nominate KCAH as a Charity to your local Waitrose so they can consider raising money as part of their monthly Charity appeal, please go ahead! Also look out for our latest news on our website [www.kcah.org.uk](http://www.kcah.org.uk). We do struggle at times to keep it up-to-date and we recognise that this is an important way of communicating with everyone in the world of modern technology. So check out our website from time to time to see how well we are doing!

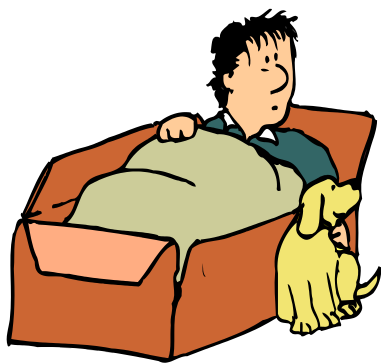
Many thanks

**Matt Hatton**  
**KCAH Operational Director**

## DOES ANYONE HAVE THE RIGHT TO SLEEP ROUGH ?

Does anyone have the right to sleep rough? This is a question I have had to face recently as Westminster Council seems determined to remove street sleepers from their streets. Their view is that no-one should be allowed to sleep on Westminster streets for more than one night and their long term aim is to set up a system where this can be enforced. They will send them back to the areas they have come from if need be.

Most rough sleepers would rather not sleep on the streets but there are a number residing in Central London who prefer to live on the streets as they do not wish to accept the disciplines and lifestyle of most of the population. Others are just not capable of holding down their own accommodation and it is not enough just to place people in accommodation without focused and on-going support.



Many street homeless people are not organised or motivated enough to claim housing benefit properly. They fail to adhere to the systems expected of them to make and maintain a valid claim. In addition, they do not eat properly and they cannot manage the utility bills even with the use of key meters. The net result of this is that they sit in cold and dark flats feeling very lonely because their friends are not with them. They eventually give up their flats and become homeless

again. If they have drug, alcohol or gambling problems and are not prepared to deal with these issues, it only makes things worse. Mental health is also a big issue which is often left untackled.

There are also a few people who do not claim benefits at all as they prefer to live on the proceeds of casual or agency work which is here today and gone tomorrow. Casual or agency work causes havoc with benefit claims and so people in this category can end up sleeping on the streets because they are unable to pay rent on a regular basis to a hostel. If they do give up their work, they are considered to have made themselves unemployed and this can bar them from claiming benefits.

So back to my original question: **Does anyone have the right to sleep rough?**

My personal answer to this question is “yes” as long as they do not cause inconvenience and annoyance to others and do not obstruct the pavement. In fact, I think there should be special free covered housing provided for people who choose this lifestyle or are forced to endure it.

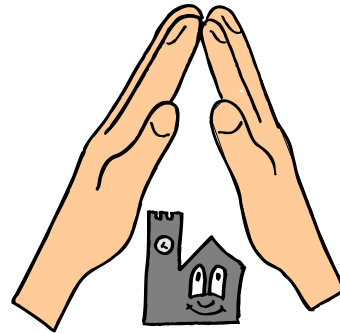
However, the authorities will not agree with this viewpoint and this is why some friends and I have run the Agape “soup run” on Victoria Embankment for the last 15 years. At the current time, we see about 15 rough sleepers, mainly men, each week. They are really grateful for the food we bring and the friendship we give. We are not being told by Westminster Council to stop our work although I believe this is coming. Westminster Council has already started moving homeless people and

“soup runs” out of Howick Place, Victoria and I believe this policy will soon be adopted throughout the Victoria area. There is some pressure for people to use “building based services” and the King George V hostel in Victoria is to be used for this purpose. However, I have been told that Westminster Council have brought pressure to bear to close the Salvation Army “drop-in building” in Rochester Row, Victoria. This will be a great loss to the homeless fraternity.



I also hear it rumoured that Westminster Council and the police might use the Vagrancy Act 1924 to drive homeless people out of the borough completely. This is totally unacceptable. It seems that Westminster Council considers that they have more than their fair share of homeless people and they do not want them sleeping on their streets when the public come to London as tourists for the Olympics in 2012. My guess is that many will be forced to migrate to the outer London boroughs and this may cause extra pressure in Kingston.

Please pray for a lasting and fair solution to problem so that street sleepers are not just on without properly providing for their real Pray also that we will be able to go on meeting of street sleepers when we go to the Embankments on Wednesday evenings.



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**Bob Bailey, KCAH Treasurer and Organiser of the Agape “Soup Run”**

## The Night for a Homeless Person

When the menacing, evil blackness of the early night invades and overwhelms the last remaining daylight, that's when it sets in for the homeless people: the despair, the fear, the dread.

You see, a night for many of us is a relaxing time where we can catch up with sleep or watch a film or two. But for a homeless person, the night is far from relaxing, the night is unforgiving and merciless.

The hard, icy cold concrete floor serves as a mattress and any spare belongings are used as pillows. I wish I could tell you that that was all that homeless people had to endure but that would be lying.

The world is home to some very pitiless and cruel people who are always on the lookout for vulnerable people stuck by themselves; they're easy prey. These night assailants are an ever present danger for those who live on the streets.

The relentless winds constantly thrash at the bare skin of those who are desperately trying to escape the realms of reality and drift off into the marginally more relaxing state of slumber.

Demonic silhouettes of the doomed souls that lurk the streets constantly looking for an opportunity to take anything that may make their life slightly more bearable lurk among the dark shadows, out of the light. As the prowlers draw closer to them, the terribly overwhelming sense of fear begins to dominate the innocent and they lie frozen, sick with dread.

The torrential rain starts to pelt down, soaking everything in its destructive path. Murky puddles of cold water fill up all around and as the ground dampens and mud washes away, so does any hope or optimism that is left within the soul of the homeless person.

Then, slowly but surely, the light of a new day begins to rise behind the clouds of the night: relief for those on the street. But the terrible, treacherous events of a homeless person's life are far from over and they know that when the sun rises, many new problems will occur.

However, that is a story for another day.



**By Matt Robinson, 15 years**

## Volunteering at KCAH

**We are very grateful to all our KCAH volunteers and for the help they give us throughout the year. Volunteers come to us from a wide variety of backgrounds and situations and they supplement our work in many different ways, much of it in the office. Many people from the churches help with the Night Shelter which is now a vital service in the winter months. There are also opportunities to help in other ways – please turn to Page 12 and read the KCAH Christmas Wish List!**

**Hilary is one of our office volunteers, who started with us earlier in the year.** “When my little boy was happily settled in full-time school, I decided to give some time to a worthy cause in a way that would suit the cause and my family life. As a member of local church, I had heard a bit about KCAH, so I decided to email them to see if there was any way I could help.

Although I hadn't been in full-time work for the previous 10 years, I had done some part-time administration and volunteered regularly for a charity in central London, so my office skills weren't completely rusty.

Since there are only 5 staff in the office, all of whom have their time fully taken up with the drop in, appointments and the often complex issues that the clients present with, there is always something of a more routine nature that needs doing.

The housing advisers and Access Project staff have clear areas of responsibility, so much falls on the Operational Director's shoulders to keep everything - the *business* - running smoothly, although I appreciate that much is also done away from the office by Trustees and others. Some volunteers have specific jobs that they carry out each time they come in, and I am now building up a list of specific tasks, such as opening the post, checking the general email account etc., and it is no longer a case of 'What do you want me to do?' at regular intervals. There is always so much that needs doing in the office and I really enjoy being given little projects and sometimes having the opportunity to look at things to see if they can be made more efficient. I am also very happy to undertake those must-do jobs such as envelope stuffing, if it means the others can get on with their usual work. The time always flies by - there is never a dull moment!

The office is very busy, especially on Monday mornings when I am usually in. Yet, however busy the staff are, they are always kind, respectful and friendly and willing to give time to everyone. Anyone who has ever visited the office will know that the premises are not ideal in terms of size or storage facilities and, sometimes, just spending some time sorting and arranging the food donations can be of enormous help to the staff. The location has some good points: it is discreetly tucked away yet right in the heart of Kingston. KCAH really comes across as an oasis of help, care and giving to people, often in crisis, in the midst of the busyness of our borough.”

**When you think of *Giving*, it is not just about money – it is also about prayer, time and skills - and we can always use them all.**

**Hilary Orton, Volunteer - Administrator**



## Pete's Story

Hi. My name is Pete and I want to tell you a bit about KCAH and how that, without them, I probably would not be here today.

A while ago, I was feeling extremely low following the passing away of my landlady who was also my friend. Due to circumstances during that time, I then found myself without anywhere to live and I did not know which way to turn.

It was so bad that I suffered a breakdown. The council put me in touch with KCAH and they were able to find me somewhere to live in their Access Project. But it did not stop there. They helped me sort out problems with the Council and also resolve issues I had with my bank.



KCAH provided support and a friendly face when I needed it most.

As time passed by, I was able to find a part-time job in a charity shop and from there KCAH have now got me involved with Crisis – working towards a home project. I really owe so much to the whole team at KCAH and want to thank all those who kindly donate money to them in order for the work to continue. When I move on, I know KCAH will be there to help me and from the bottom of my heart, I thank them. It gives me strength to move forward.

**By Pete, a KCAH tenant of the Access Project**

## Fundraising at KCAH

### Keeping the fun in Fundraising!

Come the first of November this year I reached the dizzy heights of doing work for KCAH as a self-employed Fundraiser after volunteering from September 2009. It has been a great year, though my commitment to raising money for a cause really close to my heart was severely tested when I slept outside in sub-zero temperatures in January! I had to jog round the Memorial Gardens in Kingston in an attempt to warm myself up. During Passion Week I survived on milky drinks (and the odd glass of wine!) but I raised over £1,200 so the hunger pangs were definitely worth it!

Fundraising can be really fun, I promise you. If you don't feel like fasting next Lent or non-stop carolling this Christmas, then it would be great to think up your own idea for raising money - the wackier the better! It is so easy to set up your own fundraising page on **just giving.co.uk** (or I can do this for you) and you can reach so many more people and it saves you the bother of collecting all your hard earned money after the event. Fundraise in a group if you don't feel brave enough to do something on your own and make a real impact on the lives of homeless people in your local area!

### Winning ways with Trusts

We have secured £20,000 from Lloyds TSB and £12,000 from the Adobe Foundation. We have had our grey cells much exercised by our Big Lottery Application. We await the outcome in December. Even if our bid is unsuccessful we have developed a really rigorous approach to our funding proposals which will no doubt pay off in any future applications to Trusts and Charitable Foundations.



### Backing the C in KCAH

Since June I have been employed as a paid fundraiser for the Joel Community Trust - no mean feat as it didn't exist at the time! We are now officially registered with the Charity Commission and we plan to build a community based on the monastic values of hospitality and compassion on the site at St Peter's, offering a whole range of services for homeless and vulnerable people. The first stage of the project proposal is to relocate KCAH. KCAH will continue to offer their existing services to the whole of the community: housing and benefits advice, tracking down places in established hostels and running the Access Project. The second stage will be to build an adjacent sanctuary and centre for the delivery of pastoral care for those most in need of it, run by the Joel Community Trust. We will also offer friendship, food and spiritual nurture and opportunities for learning new skills, both from within and from outside the Church community in the Borough. I feel very privileged to be part of this project which obviously includes much needed new premises for KCAH adjacent to St Peter's Church, forming the nerve centre of our Christian response to the problem of homelessness in our local area.

Have a blessed Christmas!

**Becky Mills, Fundraiser for KCAH**

## **Sleep Rough (Again) So Others Don't Have To!**

After the success of last year, the **Sleep Easy event** will be back in January, asking people to 'Sleep Rough so others don't have to'. On **Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2011**, Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness (KCAH) and YMCA London South West (YMCA LSW) want people to brave the cold night and sleep out in the Memorial Gardens in Kingston Town Centre to raise money and awareness for the homelessness issue in Kingston.

The event will start at 7pm and will involve plenty of entertainment, games and competitions throughout the night. Last year's popular shelter building competition will be back, as will the promise of hot drinks, soup and food donated by local companies. We will also be inviting those who have taken part to a free breakfast donated by MacDonalds, Eden Street, when the event finishes at 6am on Sunday.

The Sleep Easy is a YMCA national event, with YMCA's up and down the country all taking part on the same night. KCAH is therefore extremely fortunate that the local YMCA is happy to run this event in partnership with KCAH and that the money raised is shared between the two charities. Last year, the event generated £21,000 and we hope to raise more this year. The money that came to KCAH from January has enabled the Charity to pay for a fundraiser for one day a week.



**If you'd like to take part or get involved in the sponsorship of the event, please contact Sarah Ward on 020 8399 5427, or email [sarahward@ymcalsw.org](mailto:sarahward@ymcalsw.org) or visit [www.sleepeasy.org.uk](http://www.sleepeasy.org.uk) to sign up online.**

### **About YMCA LSW:**

YMCA LSW is a registered charity that works across South West London providing a range of services including supported housing; children's work; sports, health, exercise and fitness; youth work; catering services and conference facilities; short stay hostel accommodation and community programmes.

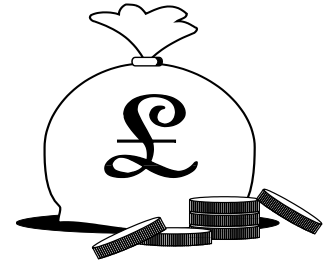
### **About Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness (KCAH)**

KCAH aims to improve the quality of life of both homeless people and people in housing risk in the borough of Kingston and surrounding areas. This is achieved through the provision of housing, advice and advocacy.

## What does the Government's 'Big Society' mean to KCAH?

David Cameron's vision behind his 'Big Society' is very noble – I am all for “empowering” local communities. What I find difficult to comprehend is how this empowerment can be achieved at the same time as making ruthless cuts?

The Government appears to have an expectation that the voluntary sector can deal with much of the inevitable fallout from the cuts that are currently being proposed almost on a daily basis. Yet how can the voluntary sector pick up “the slack” without extra investment to boost its resources?



Consequently, there is a looming fear from within the voluntary sector that the deep cuts that emerge from the Government's Spending Review will have a savage impact on their services. The very services which local communities are so dependent on. Services such as those offered by KCAH.

John Low, Chief Executive of CAF (Charities Aid Foundation), summed up the situation very well when he said, “There is clearly support...for the Government's vision of a Big Society and charities can play a big part in making it happen. However, if charities are hit by a triple whammy of public sector cuts, a drop in donations and increased demand for their services due to factors such as rising unemployment, it will be hard for them to create a bigger society.”

Whatever peoples' opinions may be about the Big Society policy, one thing that does seem certain is that the vital services that are being provided by charities like KCAH will probably be more necessary than ever, in light of the proposed cull of public services announced in the Spending Review. Therefore the government will need to make their intentions clear about how they intend to work alongside charities if we are to help in making this policy a success.

With Cameron's government likely to make drastic changes to the benefits system, this is likely to have an impact on the numbers of homeless that turn up at the door of KCAH. Already we have seen a 12% increase in new clients in the last financial year. So it is fair to assume that the situation is only going to get harder. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reform could lead to increases in the numbers of households with rent arrears, evictions and households presenting themselves as homeless.



If households do need to relocate, with the danger that this creates ghettoisation, there are then other implications that arise from this, like the disruption to children's education leading to reduced attainment. The support services that agencies such as KCAH offers might be severely disrupted, there may be an increase in the number of households living in overcrowded conditions and a decrease in the number and quality of private rented sector properties available to housing benefit tenants.

KCAH's accommodation project for single homeless people, the Access Project, may need a major overhaul if the LHA reforms do take place and if the project is not given a special exemption by the Local Authority. We are paying market rents for most of the houses that we lease. We are therefore reliant on the housing benefit money that we receive to cover the rents and make a margin sufficient to pay for one of our two support workers that run the project. Consequently, it is vital that we try and renegotiate the rent levels that we pay our landlords so that we can still make a clear margin. The government appears completely reliant on landlords being prepared to negotiate lower rents, content with a regular income from their housing benefit directly paid to them in order for the proposed reform to work. It seems something of a gamble so let us hope it pays off!



**Matt Hatton, KCAH Operational Director**

**THINGS TO PRAY FOR**  
**(The KCAH Christmas Wish List)**



1. KCAH wants to hear from potential private landlords from the Church Community who are willing to rent houses to KCAH at below market rent as part of our accommodation project - the Access Project. Ideally, we are looking for a 3 or 4 bed house and, depending on location, to pay rent of between £1,100 and £1,250 a month. KCAH guarantees the rent each month to the landlord so any void costs are covered by KCAH.
2. KCAH is lucky to have sufficient administrative volunteers to work in the office at present. However, what we are looking for is a 'man with a van' volunteer who will be able to do some manual work (removal of old, broken furniture from the houses and any rubbish clearance). Also, any volunteers willing to clean empty rooms in preparation of prospective new tenants coming to view the room. All on an ad hoc basis.
3. KCAH wants Board Members! Either with a background of working in the voluntary sector with marginalised groups or from a professional background with skills to offer KCAH eg marketing, IT, fundraising, human resources.
4. KCAH is currently well stocked with food and bedding - thank you! What we have run out of is sleeping bags for rough sleepers. Ideally sleeping bags with their outer sleeves so that they can be easily carried around. We also need small rucksacks or equivalent bags for the homeless who need a sleeping bag, for example, but have nothing to put it in.

**Please email Matt on:** [matt.h@kcah.org.uk](mailto:matt.h@kcah.org.uk) or call him on 020 8255 2439 if you think you can help KCAH concerning any of the above pointers.

**Please Give Thanks To God For:**

- The loyalty and commitment shown by so many people and agencies in the effort to tackle homelessness in the Borough and, in particular at this time of the year, the Kingston Churches Winter Night Shelter.
- All those who have contacted KCAH and are doing something to help raise money for the Charity this Christmas.
- The prayer support from the churches and the general support and encouragement that KCAH is given from private individuals.