

human spirit

Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness

A year in review 2018/19





Welcome

Hello and welcome everyone,

At the KCAH AGM a year ago, I stood in front of the audience telling my story about how I had given up and found myself homeless. But that was until I was saved by the wonderful people at KCAH. They gave me help, hope, love and self worth that continues to this day.

A year on and I am very glad to say I am living in my own home. I am painting again, writing, cooking and getting a lot of pleasure from growing a wide variety of plants including an avocado and banana tree. It has been a long journey and for me to say that I get pleasure from something after everything I've been through shows how strong the human spirit is. This is our theme this year.

'Human spirit' comes in many guises. You can see it in people who survive terrible hardship against all odds, or in a parent who works a job they don't like all their life just to be able to provide their children with the things they never had. It's in people who, even though they may have problems in their own lives, go to work and truly make a difference in other people's lives.

KCAH go above and beyond. They believe in people who have stopped believing in themselves. They care. That is how they renewed my human spirit and gave me a reason to be happy again.

We hope that you will feel as inspired and encouraged by the stories in our Annual Review as we do!

Rachel Parker, former KCAH client and Access Project Tenant

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Review created by Camilla Wheal, KCAH Communications Officer. Interview on page 14 by Volunteer Communications Assistant Romilly Mavin and Camilla Wheal.

A huge thank you to Matt Hatton, Hilary Orton and Romilly Mavin for invaluable sub-editing skills and feedback.

Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and who put in the hard work behind the achievements in this report. And THANK YOU to every single service user for everything you contribute and inspire even when you might not realise.

Human Spirit

What makes someone get up in the middle of the night to head out into the cold and volunteer to help complete strangers at a Night Shelter?

What makes someone push themselves beyond what they ever thought possible, to fundraise for us?

What makes someone, after years of abuse, gather up the courage to leave their unsafe home and ask for help?

What makes someone want to try rehab just one more time?

What makes someone buy a warm sleeping bag for someone they have never met?

What makes a local business call us up asking "We would like to help. What can we do?"

What makes someone put their hands up saying, "I actually can't do this on my own; I'm going to need help"?

What makes someone else say, "I'll help you"?

We felt that 'human spirit' really summed it up. This year, we want to celebrate the amazing people who make KCAH the organisation it is.

Thank you for inspiring us with your heart, compassion and drive!

Camilla Wheal, KCAH Communications Officer



The courage to go for it

It was with a huge amount of butterflies that we opened the email and through our fingers read 'Congratulations! Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness have been shortlisted in the Best Charity or Social Enterprise category at the 2018 Kingston Excellence in Business Awards'. It was the first time we had ever entered an award. We were incredibly pleased to finish runners up - 'Highly Commended' by the jury, at the big gala night at Raven's Ait in October 2018.

Thank you to the team members involved in the extensive application process and thank you to everyone behind the achievements and hard work that the application itself was all based upon. And of course thank you to our clients who are the reason we do what we do.

To have the courage to put ourselves out there has certainly contributed to an increased confidence. And we take time to celebrate our successes and achievements.

At the time of writing this we are also pleased to announce that we have made the final again, for the second year running. Fingers well and truly crossed! Thank you for all your support!



Journey

*Born innocent, helpless, hungry , life's journey just begun
Nourished, nurtured, cherished, loved by a perfect mum
I grew and thrived, learned and loved, worked, enjoyed, I glowed
The happiness within me like a river flowed
Then the evil found me, attracted by the light he wanted to extinguish
Now I had to fight
But slowly into darkness, anxiety and pain
Years of mental torture
Was driving me insane
I didn't care, I didn't live, I didn't dare to dream
It's like I was invisible, not heard or ever seen
I finally escaped, I ran away from hell
But now I was a shattered soul, a broken empty shell
I didn't think I'd make it, I didn't think I'd cope
Until a group of strangers offered me some hope
They told me I was worth it
They offered me a way
They all became my family and still are to this day
So when I do have problems, or when I'm feeling low
I know on my life's journey
I've somewhere safe to go.*

By Rachel Parker, former KCAH client and Access Project Tenant



*The
courage
to try
again*



"I thought that people would be disappointed in me and have a go when they found out that I had relapsed but it was the complete opposite. I was welcomed back with open arms", says Steve.

Despite having been addicted to alcohol for over 20 years, street homeless and in prison several times, Steve is looking well, currently in rehab. "I have been clean for a hundred days", he says but then quickly corrects himself; "No, sorry, that's a lie. *On Sunday*, I've been clean for a hundred days". We meet on a Friday. But every day counts.

Georgie, KCAH Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator, initially told Steve about the rehab facility he's now in. At first, Steve hesitated but a chance encounter with an old friend changed his mind. The friend, whom Steve knew as an addict, looked healthy, well dressed and had put weight on. He told Steve that he had been referred by Georgie to the same facility that Steve was contemplating turning down.

"The coincidence overwhelmed me and I put my hands up and thought I'll go for it", he says.

Steve appreciates now being surrounded by people who can relate to each other's struggles and who support each other. He enjoys waking up early, putting BBC 6 or The Waterboys on, and shaving every morning. He's dealing with a painful past and is proud of how far he's come. He tries to make amends with people that he feels that he's hurt.

"KCAH turned my life around", he says. "Georgie has always been an overwhelming support."

"Steve's accomplishments have been made by having the conviction to try. He has had the courage to keep making leaps of faith. I am proud to have been part of his journey", says Georgie.



The impact of a smile

*Suzanne, Night Shelter Volunteer,
and Sophie, Night Shelter Co-ordinator*

After receiving funding from Ministry of Housing, we were able to open the doors to our Winter Night Shelter for six months instead of the previous year's six weeks. 251 individuals and three dogs were given shelter, community and warmth in the bitter cold. We sat down with Suzanne, who volunteered for the shelter, and Sophie, Night Shelter Co-ordinator, to find out what it was like to volunteer and run the shelter.

"I always felt really guilty because I didn't know how to interact with homeless people. I didn't want to do the wrong thing", explains Suzanne. "But there came a point when I thought that I just had to get over myself and I attended the volunteer training session."

Wanting to make a difference in her local community, Suzanne headed to her first volunteer shift feeling nervous, not knowing quite what to expect. What she didn't know was that it was to become the first of many shifts, setting up the bed area, preparing food, welcoming guests, making tea and coffee, or having a chat or a game of Scrabble.

"I remember going home that first evening, feeling exhilarated. The evening had actually been fun which surprised me. I didn't think I would enjoy it that much," she says.

Looking back on the six months that saw over 350 volunteers sign up for shifts, Sophie says: "The shelter has won an award and been nominated for others too but what I'm most proud of is how the shelter has united the community. Since our guests are so diverse, it was important that our volunteers were too. And they really are."

Reflecting on how the seemingly small things can mean so much to someone who has come in from the streets, Sophie reminisces about some of those unforgettable meetings with the guests.

"I don't think people really understand the impact a smile can have on someone who is on the streets", she says.

If you are interested in volunteering for our Night Shelter, please email winternightshelter@kcah.org.uk

accommodation pathway



41

tenants, formerly homeless

82%

successful move ons



"The staff are always on hand to talk to"



16

helped into work or to sustain employment



12

benefited from training organised by KCAH



59%

benefited from attending a KCAH activity

94%

rated the support received as 'good' or 'very good' and felt valued and respected

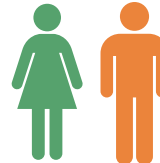


82%

felt that their Health & Wellbeing had improved since living at the project

housing crisis intervention team

-two Housing Advisers providing housing and welfare benefits advice



482

new clients

"Five star assistance and professionalism. In other words, 10/10"



1116

repeat visits dealt with



71%

of respondees said that their self-esteem and confidence improved as a result of KCAH linking them with community activities



756

food vouchers distributed



82%

of respondees ate healthier food as a result of the help that KCAH gave them



167

clients who declared themselves homeless were found accommodation

the night shelter scheme



251
guests



3
dogs



210
men



41
women



62
guests helped move
into sustainable
accommodation
(ongoing work)



4438
meals served



189
nights



350+
volunteers

media/social media



74%
increase in
Facebook followers

106,000

Record amount of
times our tweets were
seen Feb 2019 on
@kcahtweets

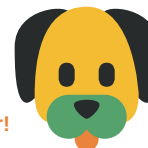


54,124
people reached by our night
shelter post on 2 Feb 2019 on
Facebook

10

articles featuring our
work in local and
national press

The three top interests
of our Twitter followers are
dogs, science and the weather!



1305
views of 'Paul's Road
to Recovery' on our YouTube channel



32%
Our Instagram
followers

68%

volunteering



8942
hours contributed

which equates to
£94,338.10



Calculation based on London Living Wage

*Digging
deeper
than
deep*



Matt with his well-deserved London Marathon medal

When a charity place in the London Marathon became available, KCAH Operational Director, Matt, jumped at the chance. Having taken a ten year break from any serious running, he saw an opportunity to reconnect with his love of running as well as raising some much needed funds for KCAH.

"I thought, I run KCAH and so I'll run *for* KCAH," he says. "I wanted to do something for myself too and I needed that goal to keep me going. It was also important for me to fundraise for a local grassroots charity and my heart and soul is with KCAH, having worked for the organisation for over 15 years."

Not being able to train consistently due to injuries and finding time between a busy work schedule and family life, proved a challenge, but digging deep, Matt managed to stay on track and found that the regime had a positive impact on more than just his fitness levels and speed. "The training undoubtedly improved my mental health, my energy levels and my resilience during a time that was particularly busy at work", he explains.

On the big day, whilst the KCAH team gathered on the Embankment, ready to cheer him on, Matt hit a wall after mile 10, having gone out too fast at the start. "It was a case of mind over matter from there", he says. "I can honestly say that at various points, I was broken."

So, has the experience put him off marathons forever? Not at all, it turns out!

"I have already signed up for next year! Because you get to that finish line and you feel relief but also absolute euphoria. It's addictive and I really want to do it again!," he smiles.

Matt completed the 26.2 mile route and raised over £6,000 for KCAH, money that will go towards the essential work we do to support some of the most vulnerable people in the borough. Our hats are well and truly off. Well done, Matt!

*"The team at
KCAH were
absolutely brilliant
and the care was
unbelievable."*

*"These people have
kept me from
killing myself."*

*"The impact they make
comes from a place of real
care and belief in the
people they support, and
they extend this care and
kindness to volunteers
who lend support to
them."*

*"A professional
team who
genuinely cares"*

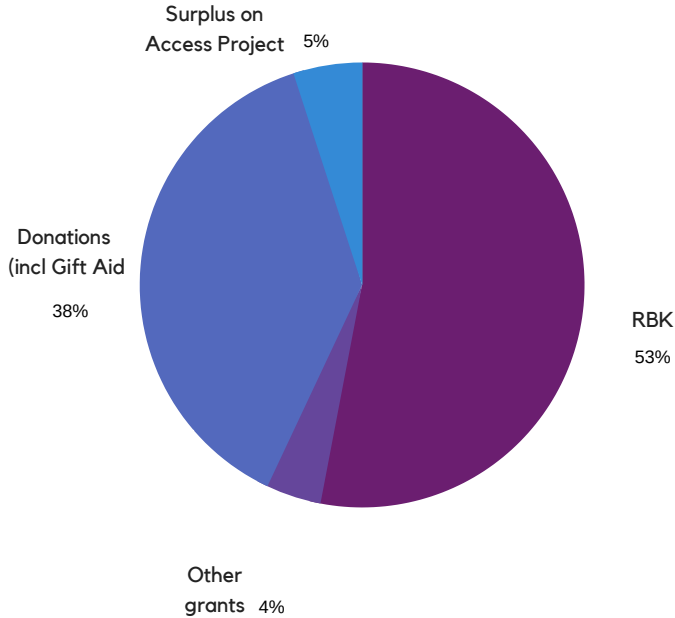
about us

*"My experience of
KCAH has been
absolutely
wonderful.
You put dignity
back in my life."*

*"KCAH saved
me!"*

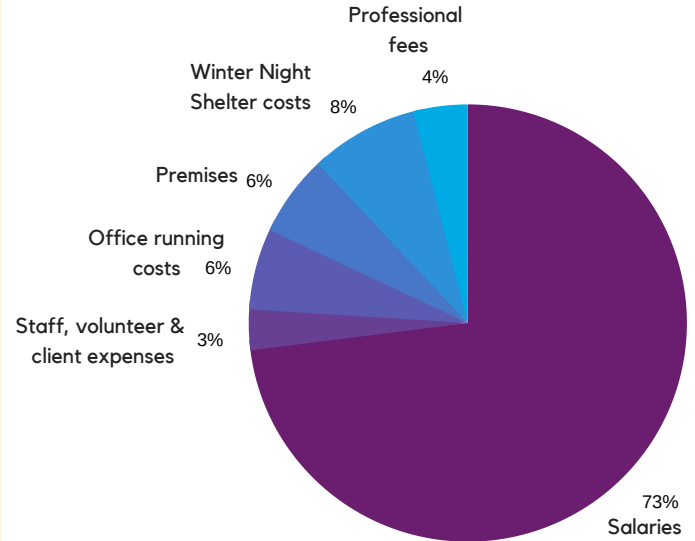
Money matters 2018/19

Where did the income come from?



Total income: £427,000

How was it spent?



Total expenditure: £422,000

A full set of Financial Statements, including a breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funds, is available on request.

Auditor: Ark Accountancy



*"I felt like I
had gained a
new
family"*

"I was homeless for three years due to becoming a victim of rape which led to me to taking drugs," says Lauren. She first came to KCAH in 2016, homeless and with the odds seemingly against her.

At one point I felt as though my life was ruined. How would I get anywhere with a criminal record and a drug addiction?," she says.

Through KCAH, Lauren was offered a room in one of our shared Access properties. Going to counselling and visiting the KCAH Job Club, she started to look towards the future again.

"I had a lot of support and I felt like I had gained a new family," she explains. "Enrolling onto a course in Health and Social Care, Matt and Ali got me a book to help me through my course which I ended up passing," she says.

Having completed a Peer Mentor course too, Lauren is now volunteering working with people who are experiencing rough sleeping which she finds incredibly rewarding. Reflecting on her painful past, she says:

"I fell down and I was helped back up. Now I'm in my own place with my own things. I love it. It's made me realise that no matter what happens, there is always light at the end of the tunnel."

Ali Bennett, KCAH Tenancy Sustainment Officer, has supported Lauren on her journey with KCAH. She is proud to see how far Lauren has come;

"Lauren is incredibly focused and determined to turn her life around. She's also kind and empathetic to people with difficulties which makes her a great champion," she says.

(We have changed Lauren's name to protect her identity)

our amazing team 2018/19

Staff Team:

Matt Hatton - Operational Director
Camilla Wheal - Communications Officer (p/t)
Becky Mills - Grants Fundraiser (p/t)
Steve Baughan Accountant (p/t)
Angela Adams - Bookkeeper (p/t)

Accommodation Pathway:

Derek Ralph - Access Project Manager
Meghan Jenkins-Paterson - Housing Support Worker
Ali Bennett - Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Housing Crisis Intervention Service:

Georgie Forshaw - Senior Housing Adviser/
Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator
Irek Chmielewski - Housing Adviser
Jamie Robinson - Housing Adviser
Sophie Mayor - Night Shelter Co-ordinator

Board of Trustees:

Roger Sutton - Chair	Bambina Blagden
Aileen Almond - Vice Chair	Des Kay
Bob Bailey - Treasurer	Edward Lowe
Hilary Orton	Adam Jenss
Michelle Apostolou	

Outgoing trustees: Ken Lowes, Kerry Thomas and Ruth Thompson

With special thanks to Caroline Ewart (volunteer minute taker)

Office Volunteers:

Ian Curry
Jillian Dempsey
Caroline Pickett
Alvis Straupe
Mike Simpson
Adam Smith

Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers:

Adya Manoj
Yvann James-Middleton

An extra big thank you to all our seasonal staff and 350+ volunteers who ensured the night and day centre scheme was a success.

In loving memory of Debra McCarthy, KCAH Housing Support Worker who sadly passed away on 11 October 2018 following a short illness

Thank you

What would we do without you?

In whatever way you are supporting KCAH, we would like to say 'Thank You' from the bottom of our hearts.

You help change lives and you make new beginnings possible.

Hundreds of groups and individuals are now supporting KCAH and we are not able to list you all here.

Thank you to our commissioners, funders, fundraisers, charitable trusts, community groups, schools, businesses, faith groups, volunteers, staff and online community. You have all joined us in the fight against homelessness in Kingston and you make our work possible.

*Every pound donated, every sleeping bag given, every hour volunteered, every social media 'like',
every mention of our work to someone else, matters.*

Thank you.

Final Thoughts



Roger Sutton, KCAH Chair

Since becoming Chair of KCAH last October, I have been gaining a clear insight into how the charity operates. What is very evident to me is that 'Human Spirit' embodies the work of KCAH.

For people who use our services, they find themselves in housing crisis for a whole variety of reasons. Often we see that it requires immense inner strength for a person to pick themselves up from a series of situations or traumatic events that have contributed to their homelessness.

Our staff and volunteers are witness to the emotional turmoil that enters our front door on a daily basis. It is their special qualities which bring them alongside those who come for help. It is this team who enable people to discover their inner strengths. It is this team who are stubbornly steadfast in finding housing solutions.

KCAH's success and indeed responsibility, depends on nurturing the human spirit of both the people who need us and the team itself. The demand for our services means that KCAH needs to be a strong, resilient, forward-thinking charity in order to serve Kingston people who fall on troubled times. That will always require human spirit.

Roger Sutton, Chair

We need space...

Let's make it happen! KCAH wants its own building to establish a permanent day/night centre that complements existing provision. We want a solution-based building that ensures nobody in Kingston needs to sleep rough and everyone gets the immediate help they need. Can you help?

Do get in touch with Matt Hatton at KCAH by emailing: matt.h@kcah.org.uk with a Subject heading of 'Building for Solutions'



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