

Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness

SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER



We wish all our supporters and service users a lovely Easter

Help Matt run homelessness out of town!

Early in the morning on Mother's Day, 31 March, when many a sleep-ins were cashed in and breakfast trays with much deserved treats were prepared, our Operational Director, Matt, had left his children with strict instructions to pamper their mother. He himself was taking on the 16 mile long route on Kingston Race Day in the morning chill!

You might think that 16 miles is enough running for a while but the Kingston race was just a warm up. On Sunday 28 April, Matt is taking part in the London Marathon to raise money for KCAH and we couldn't be more proud. 26.2 miles might seem daunting but Matt is determined to complete the race to support some of the most vulnerable people in our borough - those facing homelessness.

If you can sponsor Matt, please do so on <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MattHatton1> or visit our website www.kcah.org.uk. Thank you for your support!



Inspired by Gethin

We were fortunate to be able to invite service users and professionals in the borough to an inspiring day at KingsGate Church with speaker Gethin Jones at the end of March.

Gethin spoke about his childhood growing up in care, his experiences with the prison system and how he managed to turn his life around. His powerful message of hope will stay with us for a long time and we thank him for sharing his story so generously.

We also want to thank our friends at KingsGate Church in Kingston for all their help with the day and for providing the gorgeous space. Thank you also to everyone taking time out of their busy day to spend it with us!

To find out more about the work Gethin does, please visit www.unlockingthepotential.co.uk.



Tea with the Mayor



We were honoured to be invited to the Mayor's Parlour in Kingston to have tea with Mayor of Kingston, Thay Thayalan, and Deputy Mayor, Olivia Boulton, on a sunny afternoon in March.

A group of staff, volunteers, service users and Board members were invited to the Parlour as a thank you for the work KCAH does to support homeless people in the borough. We want to thank the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for their hospitality as well as thank the Mayor's driver, Brian, for looking after us so well and for his impressive and humorous historical knowledge of Kingston, of which we are incredibly proud to be a part.

"I was treated like a 5-star guest"



Michael at the colourful Holi Festival in Nepal

Passionate about photography since the age of 10, Michael lights up when reminiscing of his adventures through eleven Asian countries, capturing the breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultures. "I was happy", he smiles.

But it was when returning to the UK from his travels that Michael found himself without anywhere to live. An advert looking for volunteers to work on a houseboat in return for food and accommodation caught his eye. He applied and was invited on board to do electrical work, plumbing and DIY.

The conditions on the boat were substandard and breached every regulation possible. The rooms were unheated and dirty, warm water exceptionally limited and the dust from a coal fire covered the floor. The owner of the boat controlled the operation with an iron fist and was intimidating and abusive towards the volunteers.

"[But] I was desperate and desperate people do desperate things.", he explains.

It was winter and Michael started getting nose bleeds, lost weight rapidly and developed a skin rash from washing in river water. After 10 weeks, Michael had reached his limit.

At a visit to Citizen's Advice a couple of weeks earlier, he had been given a KCAH flier which he had kept safe and hidden. He now decided it was time to attend the KCAH drop-in. The initial meeting was with our Housing Adviser, Irek, who offered Michael a cup of coffee and a solution - the KCAH roaming night shelter, hosted by seven different churches in the borough. He couldn't believe his ears.

"I could get off the boat that night? It was surreal", he remembers.

That evening Michael visited the shelter at St John The Divine in New Malden, an evening still very vivid in his memory. There he was welcomed with kindness, respect and he was finally warm again. The amount and choice of food was daunting and the service above anything Michael could have expected.

"They really set the tone. I was treated like a 5-star guest!", he says. He now refers to the shelter as an extended family.

The visit to the KCAH and the Night Shelter was the start of a new chapter for Michael. Through KCAH and Fresh Start Housing he has now secured a room in a shared flat. It is clean, safe and warm. He has got keys in his hand again. Having just secured a new job with the Post Office, the future looks much brighter.

"My experience of KCAH has been wonderful. You put dignity back in my life", he says.

Thank you to Michael for sharing so generously. We wish you all the very best for the future. To see Michael's beautiful photography, please follow Michael Crawford-Hick on Instagram @mchphoto

Thank You

Funding our services can be a challenge and we are over the moon to announce that we have received two grants that will go towards the salary of one of our existing Housing Adviser posts.

The Leathersellers' Company have awarded us a grant of £20,000 over four years and **London Catalyst** have awarded us £5,000 towards the post. What a difference it will make! Thank you so much to both organisations.

Thank you also to all the volunteers who made the Night Shelter and Day Centre Schemes that operated over the winter the huge success they were. Please look out for our Impact Report on the Shelter Scheme which we hope to publish on our website at the beginning of June.

Join us?

- Are you interested in **joining our Board**? Perhaps you have a speciality such as HR, Safe Guarding, Data Protection or Marketing? Contact Matt Hatton on matt.h@kcah.org.uk
- Would you like to cycle the 100 mile **Prudential Cycle** on 4 August to raise funds for KCAH? Do you have your own bike and kit? Contact Camilla on camilla.w@kcah.org.uk

A visit from Specsavers

Our friends at Specsavers in Kingston came to visit our morning centre, The Pathway, on a Sunday morning in March. They offered our guests free eye tests and complimentary glasses if needed. The team were so friendly and professional and we are pleased to say that 10 people who are street homeless or are using KCAH's services can now see a lot better than before!



Please pray for

The people who used the shelter over the winter and who are now back rough sleeping. We helped over 45 people into other accommodation. For some, we are still trying to find solutions