


# CHANGE

*A Year Like No Other*

Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness

April 2020 to March 2021





*See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness  
and streams in the dry wasteland.*

Isaiah 43:19

*Welcome  
(back)*

## ***What happened last year?***

**Sitting at a desk in October, having the opportunity to reflect on what KCAH has achieved has made me swell with pride.**

The Government's pandemic call to arms of 'everyone in', meant that KCAH stayed frontline, leading on what we now know to have been the biggest accommodation offer to homeless people in Kingston.

## ***Change had begun.***

During this time, we lost an anticipated winter night shelter, we gained a support team and we opened the repurposed JOEL stabilisation centre.

***A total of 167 people were supported off the streets in a collaborative approach. The staff team at KCAH exhibited enormous resilience and capacity to adapt to an evolving need throughout this time.***

We stand in a fortunate place knowing that KCAH is stronger than ever. We saw change, we embraced change and we continue to make changes.

**Georgie Forshaw, Operational Director**  
**[georgie.f@kcah.org.uk](mailto:georgie.f@kcah.org.uk)**





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# A Year of Change

***“From this evening, I must give the British people a very simple instruction. You must stay at home...”***

Regarded as vulnerable to Covid-19, I had been sent home from work as I was heavily pregnant with my daughter, Noelle. From one day to another I kept in touch with my colleagues virtually and home-schooled my son instead of those last few days prior to Maternity Leave being spent cooing over baby-gifts.

Despite the gravity of the televised call to a national lockdown, many of my colleagues were still in the office. 'Key Workers'. 'Essential'. *Heroes*.

On the frontline of the Everyone In Scheme, they were there for our clients through it all, both the ones sleeping rough and those already in accommodation but in need of support.

***There is no manual on how to provide support in a pandemic, but the team went above and beyond when many of us went home.***

How do you sum up a year like the one we just had? When considering the theme for this review, I kept coming back to *change*. Because **everything** changed. The way we worked, the way we communicated, the conversations around race and climate, our relationships, our society, our lives. WE changed.

The year was not just a year of heartbreak and loss, but one of growth, unity and compassion. I hope you'll feel inspired by the stories from our community and I thank you for your ongoing support of KCAH. Another huge thank you to Sue Cole as well, who covered my Maternity Leave so brilliantly during such a challenging time.



*Camilla and 'pandemic-baby' Noelle*

**Camilla Wheal - Communications Officer**  
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# Life Back on Track

**Sarah has lived in KCAH-run accommodation for the past couple of years. Despite facing tough challenges, including street homelessness and addiction, she is working hard to turn her life around, with support from KCAH.**

*"I became a mum when I was very young and never really had the chance to go to college or start a career. I first came across KCAH when I became street homeless and got a place in their winter night shelter. When the pandemic hit, I was moved into a local hotel and now I'm living in a shared house.*

***My dream is to set up a website or shop, selling upcycled furniture. I really love being creative and transforming old pieces into something that people will want to buy.***

*I've been encouraged by KCAH staff to look into starting a college course next year, which is quite daunting. I have started volunteering by doing some gardening at KCAH, which I've really enjoyed. I'm also taking part in art workshops organised by KCAH.*

*Taking these baby steps really helps reduce my anxiety about meeting new people and being in new situations. Now I feel that, with support from KCAH, I'll finally have the confidence to get to college next September. If I didn't have KCAH, I'd have to work with lots of different agencies and that would be really overwhelming. In my experience, KCAH focuses on the person, not their problems - their support has been second to none."*

*(We have changed Sarah's name to protect her identity.)*



*Sarah*



# A New Way of Working

Being able to 'dance in the rain' when change interrupts our everyday is not always easy, but when the pandemic meant that the KCAH night shelter couldn't open, Sophie Mayor, Resident Support Coordinator, and her team embraced a new challenge.

When RBK block-booked the local Travelodge for people facing homelessness during the first lockdown, the KCAH Night Shelter Team, together with other local organisations such as Voices of Hope, responded to the emergency. When the local hotel opened to the public again, the team started housing people at two hotels in Lambeth instead. It was a case of adapting to a constantly changing situation.

*"KCAH is more linked into the sector than ever", explains Sophie, crediting partnership working with the recipe to a successful 'Everyone In' scheme, which saw a record amount of rough sleepers housed.*

What was originally an emergency response evolved even further. New team members joined and filled a language gap with their fluent Romanian and Polish. The team are also providing individual support and have changed their focus:

"We have learned to work in a strength-based way", reflects Sophie. An example is a client with autism who is also a talented musician. KCAH arranging for him to have access to a music studio made all the difference and gave him the confidence to open up and access further support.



Sophie

# Out of Isolation

**Stephen and his Support Worker, Meghan, can finally meet face-to-face but at the height of the pandemic the couldn't. Here they give their different perspectives on isolation in lockdown.**

*A year to remember, a year to forget... And what changes it has wrought to life for all of us, whether homeless or settled or in that transitory 'limbo' in between. "The year my bin went out more than me", as someone said.*

*As Clinically Extremely Vulnerable due to COPD, this time, I have been mainly self-isolating. It's kept me from friends, from travelling, from museums, libraries, from courses and groups, but I have picked up a hobby. After many years where it would have been impossible, I'm building a model railway. That is due to having a permanent place in Sheltered Accommodation.*

***KCAH really came up trumps for me at the end of my two years with them, contacting charities and housing groups from Sussex to London and I now have a beautiful little flat that's all mine.***

*So, I'm thriving and it's all thanks to KCAH who have helped so many others at the same time. I really do not know where I'd have ended up without them.*

**Stephen, KCAH client**



*Stephen and Meghan*





# Challenge Accepted

*I worked from home in March 2020 until mid-May 2021. Gone was the commute to work. Gone was the camaraderie shared amongst colleagues over lunch. Gone were the face-to-face chats with tenants. During this time, all that remained was my laptop and work mobile. Everything had changed. Facing the same uncertainty about the future as everyone else, I needed to push my own fears aside and provide support to our tenants.*

***Yet I was faced with an overwhelmingly tricky challenge – how do I support others in the face of something this overwhelming when I barely know how to cope, myself?***

*The Access Project's support took the form of regular phone calls to our tenants. These calls were opportunities for our tenants, all isolating alone in their bedrooms, to speak to someone else outside their four walls.*

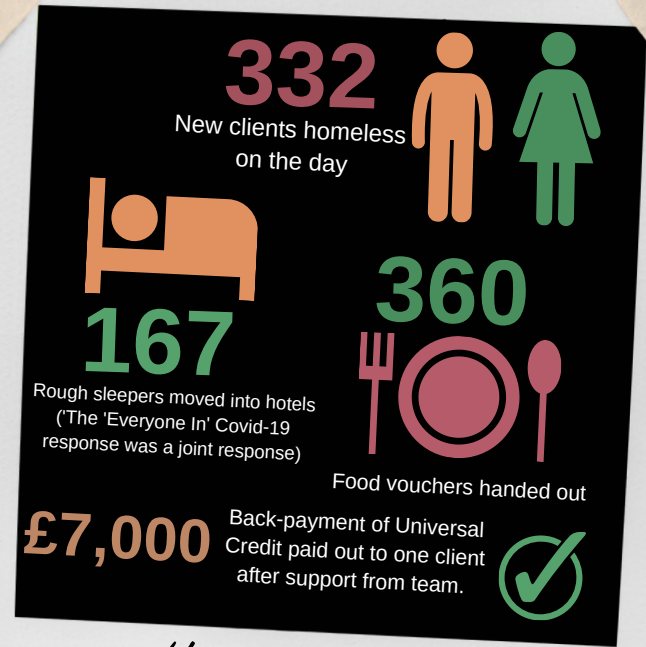
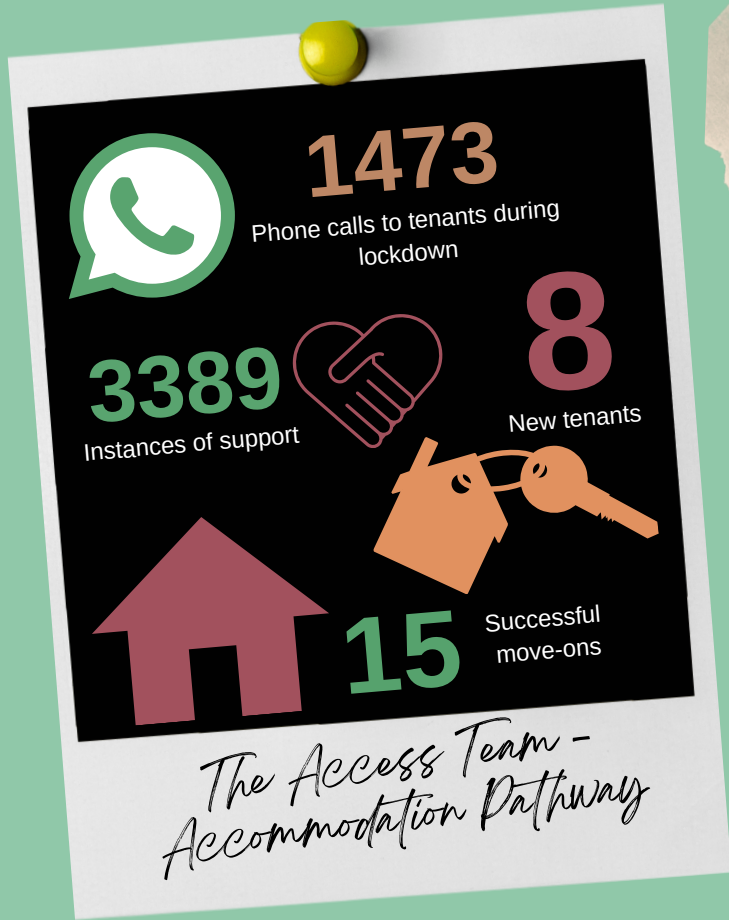
***I strove to make sure our tenants knew that just because you are alone, you do not have to feel lonely.***

*There has been a massive shift in social awareness of socio-political issues in the last eighteen months. Discussions about public health, community, racism, sexism, and ableism have been ruminated by us all. We have the power to decide how we embrace and harness this change. I know I will be taking forward more patience, compassion and resilience. Like Haruki Murakami wrote in 'Kafka on the Shore', "When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in."*

**Meghan Jenkins-Paterson, Access Support Worker**



# A Year Like



# NO Other



*The Resident Support Team*

## *Kind Words About Us*

**"You played a pivotal part in helping me return from a very dark place."**

**"I appreciate [KCAH's] help, understanding, patience, care and work."**

**"Thank you for being amazing. You literally gave me the will to go on. I will never forget your kindness."**

**"You are angels. And you have got me on the mend as well. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it!"**



*Jamie*

*"We had a choice to stay or go home; we chose to stay. We put ourselves at risk to help others."*

*"I have learnt that I'm made of a lot stronger stuff than I ever gave myself credit for."*



*Ailsa*

# *In the Eye of the Storm*

**When the Covid-19 pandemic reached Kingston, KCAH's doors remained open. Housing Advisors Jamie Robinson and Ailsa Oakes reflect on responding to a need no one saw coming.**

Initially the team handed out food and sleeping bags to around 50 people in desperate need for accommodation outside of KCAH. With the national shortage of PPE at the beginning, it was a very anxious time for us all. Quite a lot of our staff ended up catching the virus in those early months. The pressure on services was immense and once the 'Everyone In' scheme was introduced it was all hands on deck. 167 people in housing crisis were helped into hotels.

*"There was so much uncertainty", explains Ailsa. "We carried on consoling and reassuring people that they wouldn't be outside during a pandemic."*

*"We were one of the few organisations in Kingston open to see people face to face", adds Jamie. "We would make each other laugh and constantly check in on each other." At first, he bottled up his emotions but it would catch up with him later.*

The mental health of clients plummeted. Those housed in hotels during the first lockdown were offered another housing option but there were no hotels on offer in the second or third lockdown, nor the option of night shelters. During this time two rough sleepers also passed away. Ailsa credits her team for getting her through such a dark time. "I cried quite a lot", she says.

The ban on evictions has now been lifted, Universal Credit has been reduced, rent arrears are high and many are unemployed. "Our numbers are going through the roof", explains Jamie. The waiting room at KCAH is busy and the team are there with a welcoming smile, ready to greet whoever walks through the door. A lot has changed since March 2020, but that hasn't.

# How You Can Support Our Work

The need for our services is greater than ever, but the pandemic has hit us hard financially. Donations are down and we need your help. Some of the ways in which you can support our work are:

- **Make a one-off or regular donation** to KCAH through Just Giving or CAF Donate. Visit their websites and search for KCAH or scan this QR-code with your smartphone camera:
- **Set up a Standing Order** - visit our website and click on 'How You Can Help'.
- **Leave a gift in your will** for KCAH. Even a 1% donation makes a huge difference to us.
- **Fundraise for us** by taking part in a sponsored event of your choice.
- **Invite us to talk** at your school, community or faith group.
- **Follow and repost** about us on Facebook @kcahuk, Instagram @kingstonkcah and Twitter @kcahtweets.
- **Sign up for our Newsletter** on [kcah.org.uk](http://kcah.org.uk).
- **Donate items** of use to our clients such as sleeping bags.



*"For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

**If you are in housing crisis in Kingston, you are always welcome to come and see one of our Housing Advisors Monday to Friday 10.00-13.00 at St Peter's Church Hall, Kingston, KT2 6QL**



# Looking To the Future

**As we look ahead to the future of tackling homelessness in Kingston, we are pleased to welcome Aileen Almond as our new CEO:**

*Our theme for this year – change – is particularly apt for me, as I take over from Matt Hatton as CEO of this wonderful charity. Although KCAH and I go back some way – I've been a volunteer and a trustee - having the opportunity to lead the organisation is definitely a new chapter.*

*One thing I know won't change is the amazing commitment to helping people in housing crisis I see from our staff, volunteers, trustees and all our supporters. I feel blessed to be working alongside such an incredible team.*

*This review tells the story of how KCAH supported people facing homelessness during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

***Sadly, there is a great deal of uncertainty ahead for many people and their housing situations. An estimated half a million people are in rent arrears because of the pandemic. This means we may face rising demand for our help over the coming year.***

*But I know that we will do all we can to help people in housing need find the right housing solution for them, and – more than that - to give them the right personalised support so that they are able to shape a better future for themselves.*

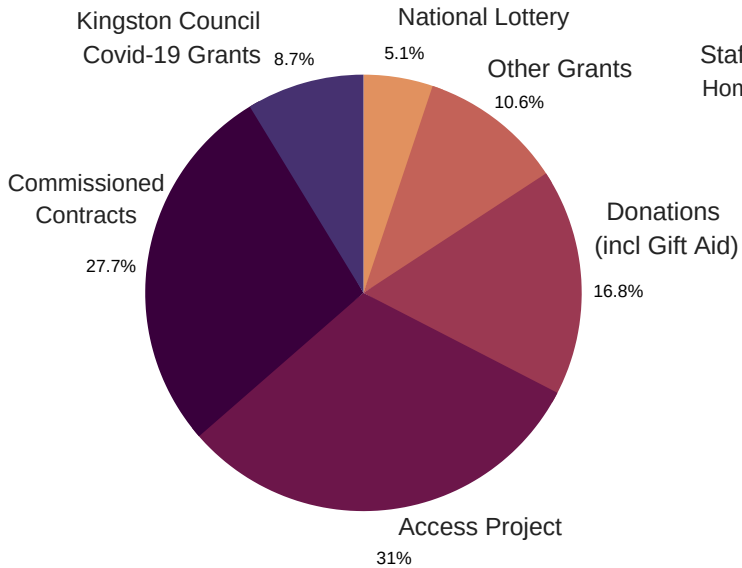


*Aileen*



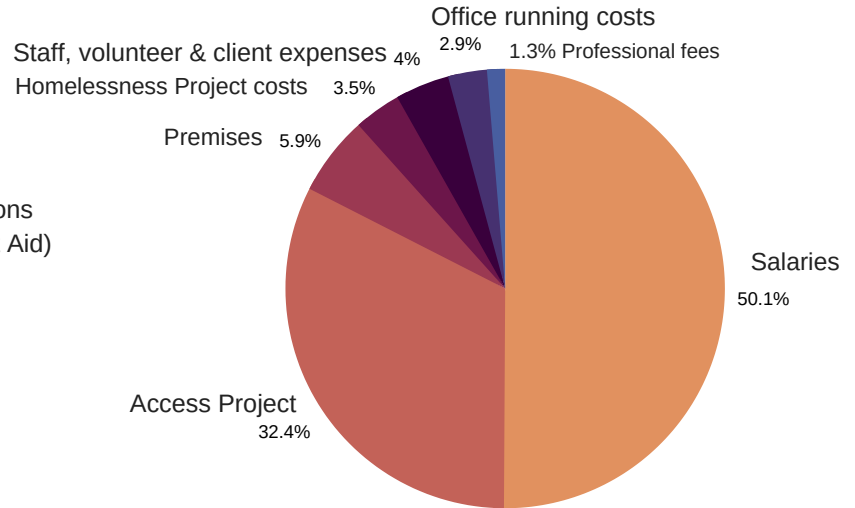
# Money Matters

## Income Source



**Total income: £1,439,590**

## Expenditure



**Total expenditure: £1,145,678**

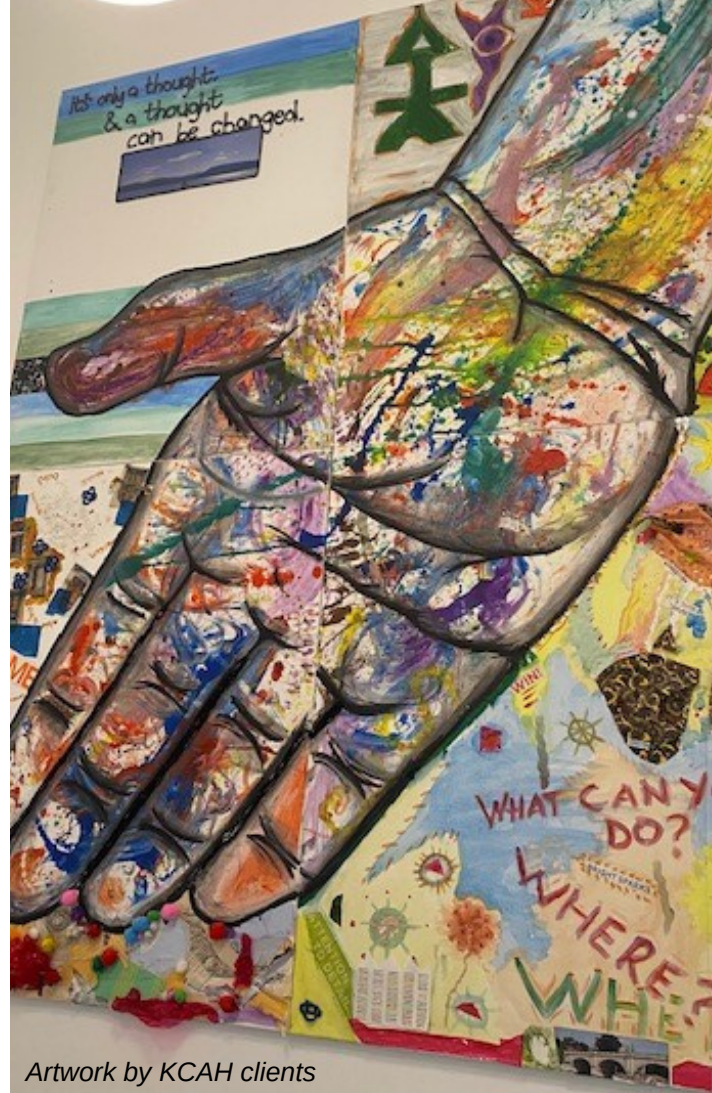
# Thank You

We could never have imagined the year reflected in this review and 'thank you' really doesn't seem enough. But still, thank you so much for your support, donations and prayers.

During the pandemic, it was made crystal clear to us what fantastic friends and partners we have in other organisations supporting Kingston in crisis such as RBK, SPEAR, Kingston Foodbank and Voices of Hope to name a few. We want to thank you all for your dedication, drive and compassion.

A huge thank you to our fantastic staff team, trustees and volunteers. Thank you to our commissioners, funders, fundraisers, charitable trusts, community groups, schools, businesses, churches, other faith groups and our online community. You brought hope to an often dark and desperate time.

***We would also like to dedicate this review to those we lost during this time. We miss you. Our ongoing work tackling homelessness in Kingston will be in your memory.***



Artwork by KCAH clients

# Final Thoughts

Despite an incredibly difficult year for us all, it is rather strange to consider that COVID-19 may have had some positive impacts. Some of those who were housed in hotels locally, under the government's 'Everyone In' scheme, were moved into more permanent accommodation in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) and one-bedroom flats. Our team provide support to each person, supporting them with any physical and mental health issues, skills development, and their ability to live independently.

The 'Everyone In' scheme saw us suspend our Winter Night Shelter, and KCAH was faced with the challenge of restructuring how we combat homelessness in the borough. We were unable to deploy our usual response of working collaboratively with local churches and an enormous bank of volunteers to run our shelter. The KCAH staff remained front line throughout the pandemic, showing resilience, incredible flexibility and determination.

***Moreover, we shared our building with the Joel Project which had operated an all year-round shelter for those experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, it closed in December 2019 and whilst our plan was to reopen it in the spring of 2020, Covid-19 restrictions prevented this. We had to adapt. We were aware of the need to support those with severe drug and alcohol issues, so we sought funding from Kingston Council to open a drug and alcohol stabilisation residential centre. I am proud to say it opened in March 2021 and can accommodate seven residents.***

This year has seen considerable changes for us as an organisation, and the staff have been wonderful in responding. We are also grateful to our volunteers and supporters, who continue to help make our work possible.

In May this year, Matt Hatton, our former CEO, took a career break after 18 years of extraordinary service to us and the people of Kingston. We wish him well for the future. Aileen Almond, who has been deputy chair of the trustees for the last three years, has joined us as our new CEO. Please join me in welcoming her to the KCAH team.

**Roger Sutton, Chair of the Board**

# BECOME A #CHANGEMAKER

Help us raise much needed funds by donating towards our Change Maker campaign on CAF Donate. Visit our website or scan the QR-code for more details. Together we can continue to make a real difference to people in housing crisis in Kingston.



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