



light

Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness

A year in review 2017/18



Welcome



Around autumn last year, I saw a post by KCAH on Facebook looking for volunteers to help run their Winter Night Shelter. I wondered whether I could really be of much use after a full day's work but then resolved that I should at least be trained and ready to step up in times of need.

We all like to think we are caring, compassionate, decent people, but what are good intentions without action? The thought of anyone sleeping rough just metres from me, in my warm safe home, was enough for me to reorganise my downtime and start volunteering. Little did I know that the year ahead would bring not only the 'Beast from the East' but also the hottest summer since 1976!

After a few initial stints at the Winter Night Shelter all apprehensions were quickly dispersed. Our clients are funny, warm, generous people with an emotional honesty that is refreshing. They are fallible humans, as we all are.

One of my stand out moments from the last year was when a client and I were having a late night chat in the Night Shelter about books. Whilst having few possessions and nowhere to call home, he offered to lend me his favourite book out of his rucksack. A small gesture which touched me to the core.

Our clients sometimes bring us many challenges but they also bring us much reward and joy. It is a privilege to earn their trust and be in their lives.

Since volunteering, I have also joined the Board of Trustees at KCAH. I hope you enjoy the stories in our Annual Review. Who knows, perhaps you too will be inspired into action and find your way of 'being the light' as is our theme this year.

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Review created by Camilla Wheal, Communications Officer, with a huge thank you to Matt Hatton and the team-members who shared their experiences and who puts in the hard work behind the achievements in this report. Thank you also from the bottom of our hearts to the clients who so generously shared their stories with bravery and honesty. You encapsulate the theme of 'light' and inspire us all. The saying 'Not all heroes wear capes' has never been more fitting.

Cover photo of light reflecting in the many pieces of mosaic tiles, taken by KCAH-client Luigi

Back cover photo of a lit up path on a walk from Surbiton in to Kingston, taken by KCAH-client Steve E

For more photos and details of the Homelessness Photography Exhibition organised by KINC and KCAH, please visit our website www.kcah.org.uk.

To be the light

"It was just so dark", one of our clients said to me, describing what homelessness felt like. It made me think of that well-known quote about 'being the light we want to see in the world'. If homelessness, loneliness and poverty are 'darkness', then what does 'light' look like?

On a Saturday in early December 2017, snow was forecasted and there was a raw chill in the air. Christmas lights lit up our highstreets and expectation and the smell of mulled wine was in the air already. Presents to buy, people to see and memories to be made. "Wouldn't it be amazing with a white Christmas..?"

Then I received a text from our Operational Director, Matt, saying "Everyday Church are up for it, let's open the shelter tonight. Can you get the word out?" It was like flicking a light switch.

That night, 17 people who would otherwise have slept outside in the cold on the streets of Kingston, risking their lives, found shelter and community. Volunteers turned up on short notice. On social media, our simple post was shared like never before reaching 11,000 people and the support we got from our community was overwhelming. Darkness didn't stand a chance that day.

The stories in this report are examples of the many ways in which we try to be the light in people's lives and the huge impact they in return have on those volunteering and working for KCAH too. Because like Nelson Mandela said; *"As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same"*.

If you would like to get involved with KCAH or support our work, please visit kcah.org.uk and follow us on Facebook, Twitter @kcahtweets or Instagram @kingstonkcah. You are also always welcome to email me on camilla.w@kcah.org.uk. Thank you for your support.

Camilla Wheal, Communications Officer

25 candles

Celebrating our 25th anniversary of tackling homelessness and helping vulnerable people in Kingston this year, we invited some of our clients and supporters, including the Mayor of Kingston, Julie Pickering, to a lunchtime birthday celebration. After a trip down memory lane, we toasted the many achievements of KCAH since 1993 as well as those by the many people we have had the privilege of helping over the years. What a journey it's been!

To every client, volunteer, trustee, staff member, social media follower, donor, funder, partner agency and general supporter through the years; Thank you from the bottom of our hearts! You have made a difference.

If you are a past client of ours and would like to share your story or just give us an update on where you're at now, please do get in touch on camilla.w@kcah.org.uk.

Our new logo

It's not every day you turn 25 and to coincide with our big day, we decided that it was time for a rebranding and makeover of our logo. We wanted a contemporary logo that could stand the test of time. We wanted to avoid any guessing games and for the logo to very clearly communicate what it is we do. We wanted to be about new beginnings, security and safety. And we wanted it to be inviting.

We sat down with graphic designer Karen Powell from the Creative People and she not only took our ideas onboard but she also suggested that we would hone in on the word 'action' in our name. Because after all, that's what KCAH are about. We're not about just talking the talk but we are proud to say that we are on the forefront of tackling homelessness in Kingston.

Karen presented us with several suggestions for logos and they went through a rigorous process of market research amongst clients, staff, trustees and partner agencies. The winning logo encapsulates exactly what we want to convey and we love it. We hope you like it too!



Witam w KCAH!

[Welcome to KCAH]



Irek Chmielewski, Housing Advisor

It can be challenging enough ordering a sandwich and a coffee in a foreign language. Imagine having to explain the intricate circumstances leading up to you becoming homeless, now in need of advice that you might not understand even if you manage to make yourself understood in the first place. Imagine anxiously turning up at the KCAH Advice surgery (HCIS), Polish being your native language, worried about the meeting with the advisor but instead being greeted by a warm smile and a "*Witam w KCAH*" from Irek, one of our Housing Advisor heroes. Suddenly the day seem brighter.

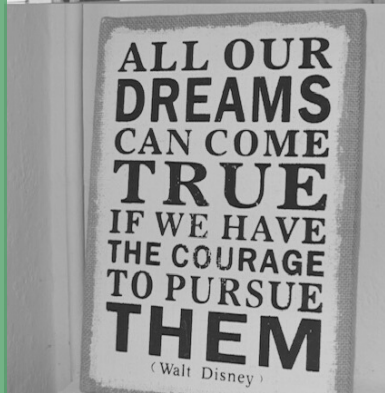
Irek's journey with KCAH started when he himself was a client in need of housing. Volunteering at the RISE café, for people with mental health and substance misuse issues, he soon found that being bilingual was a real asset. Being fluent in English as well as Polish, he started to help the Polish guests with interpreting at medical appointments, at DWP and even at KCAH. Irek had a background in the catering industry but it was Georgie, our Senior Housing Advisor, who, impressed by his knowledge and how well he translated for her Polish client, suggested Irek considering 'doing this for a living'.

"Whilst volunteering at the café, I had read up on housing and benefits legislation. I also started translating for the council", he explains. Little did he know that a role fitting him like hand in glove would become vacant at KCAH but when the Housing Advisor role came up, he didn't hesitate to apply and was successful.

"We can help change people's lives, help them out of the same situation that I was in. We still get quite a few Polish clients. My English was good when I first came to KCAH but it must be so difficult to not even be able to make a phone call. One of my clients is disabled but she can't even call her GP. It must be scary."

But what is it like now working at KCAH? "I never saw myself working in an office but I love the team. We are client focused and we help each other out. It can be stressful but we have fun too!", he smiles.

Light house family



"Would you like a coffee?" As soon as you walk through the door to the Access-property that Sam, Rachel and Laura shares, you feel welcome. Positive affirmations are hanging on the walls and laughter fills the pristine kitchen where Sam prepares hot drinks. The word 'light house' comes to mind. Laura has gone to a job interview and the two remaining girls are both rooting for her. This is a home shared by friends, not just three strangers once set up by KCAH to live together.

We talk about women and homelessness and the perception that homelessness is a 'male issue' and how that might have come about, considering that both Rachel and Sam has been sleeping rough.

"I think that women tend to stay in abusive relationships or households where there are problems, for longer. But I was safer on the streets than with my husband", explains Rachel.

"And I was safer sofa surfing than at home", says Sam. "I was on the streets of Kingston for a while. I was fearful and always watching my back but it has made me stronger too."

The house is one of creativity and growth. The window sill is overflowing with avocado and other eatable plants. The sun shines through the window onto Star Wars and music memorabilia, books and art supply. Sam and Rachel discusses their hopes for the future, having a job with a purpose, leaving the past behind and the difference KCAH has made in their lives. Sam doesn't feel as anxious as she once did and appreciates the support she still receives from the Access team. Rachel is finally settled and appreciates *normality* after years of physical and emotional abuse. And the icing on the cake, they both agree on:

"That we have become friends. That when one of us are down the others make her feel better again. We just get on so well."

accommodation pathway



10

properties



3

extra
bedspaces
for women

85%

successful
move ons



100%

of tenants rate the
level of support
'good' or 'very
good'

84%

of tenants reported
improved health and
wellbeing



one

new property
added

the winter night shelter



746

volunteer shifts



7

30%

of guests had multiple
support needs



7



23

SWEP



45

days



69

volunteer shifts



54

new volunteers
trained

17-21

guests each night

information and advice



380
new clients



82%
of clients reported
improved health and
wellbeing



185
clients helped into
housing

£98,000

recovered in income
maximisations
for clients



19

homelessness
preventions



333

bowls of soup+roll
handed out

Food vouchers
handed out:

685

social media



49%
increase in
Facebook
followers

251%
increase in Facebook
reach

15,503

people reached by night
shelter post on Facebook 16
March 2018



166%
increase in Twitter
followers @kcahtweets

69%

of our Twitter
followers are
interested in politics

494%

increase in visits to
our Twitter page



59%
of our Twitter followers
are women



We joined Instagram
@kingstonkcah

*"Without KCAH, I
don't think there
would have been
any life for me. I
got to a point where
I felt that enough
was enough"*

Steve, KCAH-client



Steve reminisces about hobbies and travels, a life lived to the fullest. He has always been a hard and committed worker, a positive and warm person, someone any employer would be lucky to have on their staff team. But the one thing he never did was save some of his earnings. When losing his job in a security control room, he soon found himself without anywhere to stay and forced to sleep on the street.

"Sleeping rough is the worst experience you could ever have. I never thought it would happen to me but it did. I felt the lowest of the low and got to a point where I felt I would be better off jumping of a bridge."

Through KCAH, Steve found shelter at night which became the start of a new beginning.

"The Night Shelter was fantastic, just brilliant. Without KCAH I don't think there would have been any life. I got to a stage where I felt that enough is enough", he says with conviction.

Today, Steve has found accommodation and is volunteering at the Night Shelter where he was once a guest. He's full of hope and enthusiasm and feels more settled than he has felt for a long time.

"Steve has always been so engaged and polite and every time he's been offered a training course he's jumped on the opportunity", remembers Ali Bennett, our Tenancy Sustainment Officer. "It's lovely to see him do so well and we're really proud of him."

"What KCAH has done for me... I can't sing their praises enough. Volunteering at the shelter is me giving back. I just want to help out and I'm loving it. I know most of the guests too which is a plus. They know that I have been in the same situation as them and can relate", Steve explains. His back is straight, his head held high as with someone who has regained the confidence he once lost. The future looks bright.

"Thank you KCAH! I really appreciate the night shelter; good games, food, staff and sleeping bags!"

"I was sleeping rough and [KCAH] took me in and helped me make a plan and are helping me progress. You couldn't find better people."

"KCAH is a solid ground. No matter how bad things get, I know they'll always be there. Even when I was homeless and scruffy, you wanted to engage with me. I had somewhere warm to sleep and people to meet. And a hot meal which was incredible."

"KCAH is an opportunity to get your life back. They have also really helped with my confidence."

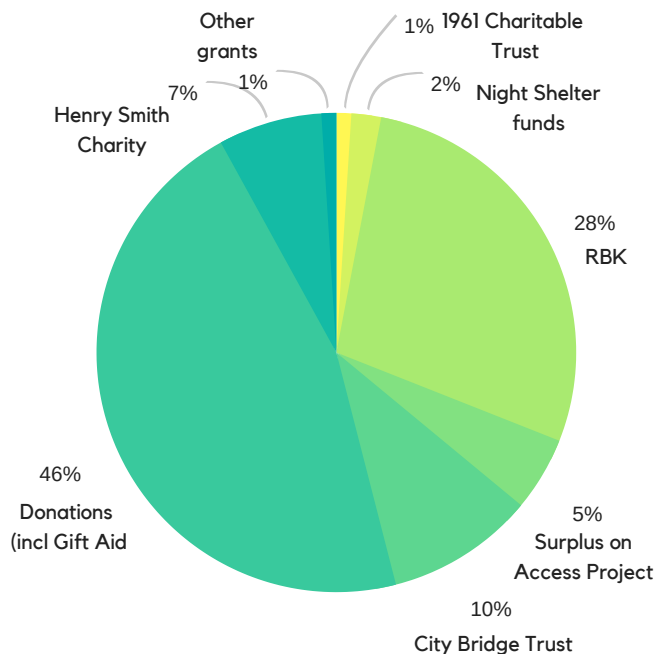
about us

"I know that I can come to KCAH if I need to make a phone call to my doctor or if I need someone to talk to. It's those little things that mean so much."

"KCAH was a stepping stone and I have never been more grateful in my life. I'm still struggling but I've got hope."

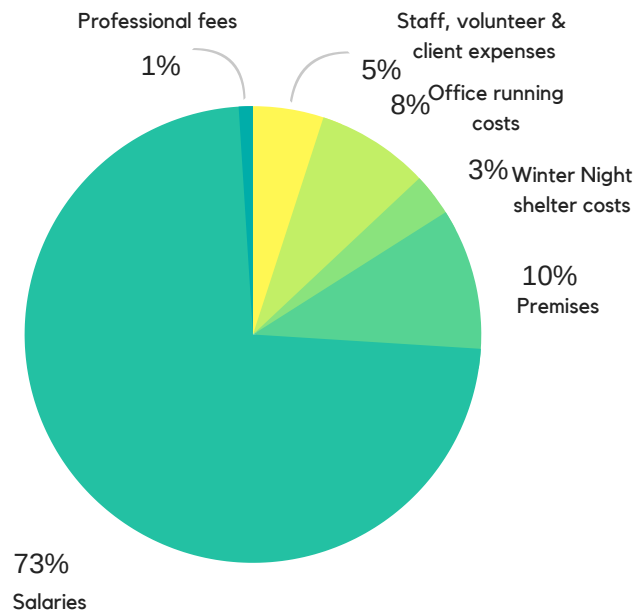
Money matters 2017/18

Where did the income come from?



Total income: 297K

How was it spent?



Total expenditure: 296K

*A full set of Financial Statements, including a breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funds, is available on request.
Auditor: Ark Accountancy*

*"Matt took us on
as a special
case and was
our rock"*



Once ever so often, we deal with a case so unusual there is no manual for it. When looking back at our 25 years, Frances case is one of these.

Frances, her husband and their two children came to the UK from Ghana on a work visa. Whilst settling in the UK, Frances gave birth to a baby girl who was born severely brain damaged and autistic, unable to chew or ever walk.

"I was recommended to put her in a home but I loved her too much", Frances explains. "But looking after her was a full-time job.

When her husband's work visa expired, the family were threatened with deportation despite their youngest daughter being born in the UK, which was the beginning of a long, drawn out nightmare. Their immigration status meant that they had no right to work or receive any financial support. When visiting King's Church in Kingston, Frances was recommended to visit KCAH where Frances met Matt Hatton, our Operational Director, who decided to try to help. KCAH put Frances and her family in touch with lawyers and supported them in court, contacted GP's, MP's and Social Services as well as lent the family money for gas, electricity and food.

"Matt took us on as a special case and was our rock", says Frances. We were broken and I was depressed and sleep deprived but he was so kind, listened and gave us a lot of encouragement."

The hard work and dedication of Matt and the KCAH-team, eventually resulted in the family's status changing to 'Indefinite leave to remain' which meant that the two oldest children could attend college, Frances' husband could work and their youngest daughter could receive the specialist care and support she so desperately needed.

Frances daughter is now 13 years old and goes to a specialist school. She has begun to respond to her name and can finally smile. Frances enjoys the contact she now has with parents in a similar situation. Visibly emotional, she adds: "Matt was a big light in our lives. Without his help I don't think I could have coped."

our amazing team 2017/18

Staff Team:

Matt Hatton - Operational Director
Camilla Wheel - 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
Debra McCarthy - Housing Support Worker
Ali Bennett - Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Information and Advice:

Georgie Forshaw - Senior Housing Adviser
Irek Chmielewski - Housing Adviser

Board of Trustees:

Kenneth Lowes - Chair
Kerry Thomas - Vice Chair
Bob Bailey - Treasurer
Hilary Orton
Ruth Thompson
Des Kay
Adam Jenss
Aileen Almond
Cassie Hunt (to March 2018)

Other Volunteers:

Jack Bartley	Andy Kill
Ian Curry	Meghan Jenkins-Paterson
Jillian Dempsey	Chiedza Mugomba
Alvis Straupe	Tulay Ibrahim
Michelle Apostolou	
Mike Simpson	

thank you

Grants:

The Royal Borough of Kingston
The Henry Smith Charity
City of London
Kingston Nursing Association
Love Kingston
The London Community Foundation
Alfred Charitable Trust
St Paul's Community Hall Trust
Savage Trust
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Kingston First
Inner Wheel Club
Sainsbury's
Waitrose Ltd
The Holy Cross School/First Give
New Malden Farmers Market

Supporters:

Joel Community Services
Churches Together
YMCA St Paul's Group
Kingston Foodbank
New Malden Counselling Service
Kingston Voluntary Action
SPEAR
Advisers Working Together
Advice Quality Standard
South West London Law Centre
Kingston Wellbeing
Coop
Banquet Records
Eden Walk Shopping Centre
British Land Group

Winkworth Surbiton Estate Agents
Probus Club of Kingston and
New Malden
Alma Jean Henry Charitable Trust
The Elizabeth Frankland Moon &
Star Foundation
Euphonic Community Choir
St Paul's Players
Sainsbury's Eden Walk
Your Health Care Kingston
Tolworth Roundhouse
Mitsubishi Electric
Kaleidoscope

We would also like to thank our private donors, councillors, schools, community and faith groups, especially the local churches, for all their support. If you too would like to support KCAH's work, please contact us on 020 8255 7400, email camilla.w@kcah.org.uk or visit www.kcah.org.uk

Final thoughts



This year's theme of 'light' is absolutely symbolic of everything that KCAH is about. For so many of our clients who come through the KCAH door, they are in a dark place where hopelessness and despair overshadows them. Our staff work ceaselessly to try and ensure that light will prevail. Typically it is the endeavours of partnership working -a multi-agency approach - that ensures this.

This is my last annual review 'entry' as I step down as Chair of KCAH. The charity has evolved and grown, responding always to the local context of homelessness and housing crisis. I am so very proud to have been involved in KCAH from the very early days. In this 25th year of the charity, KCAH's services are needed as much as ever.

My thanks, as always, to the staff, volunteers and a team of trustees – all of whom have the passion to help some of the most vulnerable people in our society. To all KCAH's supporters – you help make KCAH the charity it is today.

Ken Lowes - Chair

Let light shine out of darkness

2 Corinthians 4:6

If you would like to fundraise, donate, support or
volunteer for KCAH and make a real difference to
people in housing need, please visit our website

www.kcah.org.uk



KCAH, St Peter's Church Hall, London Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 6QL
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Reg. Company no: 3735702
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Facebook: @kcahuk
Instagram: @kingstonkcah
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