



FAITH IN ACTION
helping with homelessness

Merton Homelessness Project

CHANGING LIVES



**Merton Homeless Drop-In
Merton Winter Night Shelter
IMPACT REPORT 2023/24**

Faith in Action provides respite from the street, food, showers, support, information and help for anyone experiencing homelessness or who are vulnerably housed in Merton and its neighbouring boroughs, particularly those who are hard to reach.



Homelessness in London

Based on the most recent reports (April 2023 - March 2024)

11,993

PEOPLE SEEN
SLEEPING ROUGH

21%

INCREASE COMPARED
WITH LAST YEAR

25%

INCREASE IN FIRST TIME
ROUGH SLEEPERS

Martin Bushaway is one of our newest Trustees



Martin has a job, a home. He is a passionate advocate for better housing and social change, locally and nationally. He lobbies politicians and councillors and speaks inspiringly to groups throughout Merton.

Martin was once a service user. He came to us when he was homeless and used the Winter Night Shelter during the freezing cold nights of a bleak December. What Martin said is so telling:

“ I couldn’t believe all these people were being nice to me.”

Martin had experienced many difficulties in his life and not a lot of help.

The kindness and professional support he received from our staff and volunteers was instrumental in him being empowered to turn his life around.

It’s easy to feel helpless about homelessness.

Read on to find out how, with your help, Faith in Action can change lives.

* FIA believes (and LBM acknowledges) that this is almost certainly understated. The real number is believed to be at least double this

** Based on the stats for Outer London boroughs combined

Homelessness in Merton

It is difficult to obtain statistics, but it is estimated that between April 2023 - March 2024

77

PEOPLE SEEN
SLEEPING ROUGH*

22%

INCREASE COMPARED
WITH LAST YEAR

140%

INCREASE IN FIRST TIME
ROUGH SLEEPERS**

2023/24 in numbers

Merton Homeless Drop-In

FIA HOSTED

103

DROP-IN
SESSIONS

ON AVERAGE

52

ATTENDED
EACH SESSION

**TOTAL
ATTENDANCE**

5,386

FIA WELCOMED

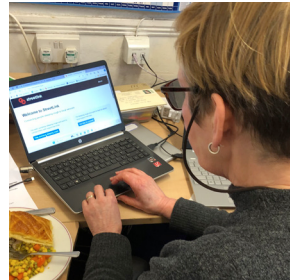
564

SERVICE USERS TO
DROP-IN SESSIONS

FIA WELCOMED

154

FIRST TIME
SERVICE USERS



FIA PROVIDED

2,230

HOT
SHOWERS

FIA WASHED

1,316

LOADS
OF LAUNDRY

FIA GAVE

82

SLEEPING BAGS TO
ROUGH SLEEPERS

FIA MOVED

32

PEOPLE INTO SECURE
ACCOMMODATION



FIA SUPPORTED
105
TO ACCESS DRUG AND
ALCOHOL SERVICES

FIA GAVE
88
PEOPLE EMPLOYMENT
& TRAINING ADVICE
& SUPPORT

FIA SUPPORTED
296
WITH DWP
UNIVERSAL CREDIT
APPLICATIONS

FIA MADE
61
BENEFIT
APPLICATIONS

FIA OPENED
35
BANK ACCOUNTS
THROUGH HSBC

FIA ADVISED
236
WITH HOUSING
INFORMATION AND
ADVICE

FIA SUPPORTED
194
ON EU SETTLED
STATUS MATTERS

MAREK had lived in the UK for over ten years. He came to the Drop-In after sleeping on the street for two weeks.

Due to ill-health **Marek** had lost his job and was unable to pay his rent. His landlord changed the locks and refused to let him re-enter his home to collect his belongings, essential documents and paperwork.

Marek came to the Drop-In physically unwell, suffering from a hernia and he had no GP. He was welcomed and assessed and one of our project workers supported him to register with a local surgery where he received medical attention. The project worker applied and got an HC1 certificate for him which enabled him to get the prescription glasses he needed.

He also negotiated with Marek's landlord and made arrangements for him to collect his belongings. With his identification documents retrieved, Marek was supported to apply for the benefits he was entitled to. With this in place, FIA was able to place him in affordable accommodation with a private landlord.

Marek is now taking care of himself and his physical health issues are being treated. He is keen to return to work as soon as his health has improved.

FIA MADE
10
FREE LEGAL
SUPPORT
REFERRALS

FIA MADE
157
GP/MEDICAL
REFERRALS

FIA FACILITATED
39
COVID/FLU
VACCINATIONS

FIA SUPPORTED
296
WITH DWP
UNIVERSAL CREDIT
APPLICATIONS

FIA APPLIED FOR
85
ID DOCUMENTS

"I've learned that people will forget what you have said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

MAYA ANGELOU.
Memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist

2023/24 in numbers

Merton Winter Night Shelter (WNS)

98

NIGHTS

12

PLACES PER NIGHT



14

DIFFERENT FAITH
GROUPS PROVIDE
VENUES
& VOLUNTEERS

21

GUESTS RECEIVED
A WARM,
SAFE SPACE
AND FOOD
THIS WINTER

3

GUESTS ARE
RECONCILED WITH
FAMILY, OR STAYING
WITH FRIENDS

2

GUESTS ARE
HOUSED

FIA PROVIDED
GUESTS WITH

**OYSTER CARDS,
MOBILE PHONES
AND CLOTHING**

AND SUPPORTED
GUESTS WITH

**HEALTH,
HOUSING AND
WORK NEEDS**

**JACOB's landlord
changed the lock on
his room and he had
nowhere to go.**



The Drop-In staff listened to **Jacob's** story and immediately referred him to the Merton Winter Night Shelter. Here he found a safe place to stay during the night, with food and support in tackling his alcohol problem. He successfully completed detoxification from his addiction but needed stability to aid his recovery. The staff at the Drop-in helped Jacob move to a supported housing scheme. They worked jointly with a local drug and alcohol service to support Jacob throughout the Covid lockdown. Three years later, Jacob is living independently and has been volunteering in a local community kitchen for the last five years.

Part of a bigger picture

Why are we needed?

Rough sleeping

Has risen every year for the last ten years and continues to grow. London is the epicentre of a national crisis.

58%

MORE ROUGH SLEEPERS
IN LONDON THAN THERE
WERE IN 2013/14.

MORE THAN

183,000

LONDONERS ARE EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS AND LIVING IN
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

THE MAYOR'S SPRING TRANSITION FUND

ENABLED US TO
EXTEND THE WNS
WHILST WE CONTINUED
TO WORK WITH OUR
GUESTS TO FIND
PERMANENT
ACCOMMODATION.
FUNDING TO HOUSE
SERVICE-USERS IS
INCREASINGLY
CHALLENGING

SERENA relies on her bike to transport her belongings from place to place, but it became seriously damaged...



Serena is a European national who has been living and working in the UK for over ten years. When she reappeared at the Drop-In it was clear that she was suffering mental ill-health and was sleeping rough. She was friendly but extremely guarded.

Serena started attending regularly and slowly we began to build trust between us. One defining moment happened when the bicycle she used to transport her belongings was damaged. She was taken to a local bicycle repair shop where her bike was duly condemned as unsafe. But on learning her situation the shop owner very generously produced an almost identical bike and sold it to us at cost. It took a while for her to understand that it was now hers but when she did, her face lit up with delight.

The mental health nurse who, along with the Council outreach worker, regularly attends FIA confirmed that she had been detained under the Mental Health Act in the past. The council worker was able to accept this and immediately placed her in temporary accommodation where she remains today. When she pops back to see us she tells us that she 'loves' her accommodation. She is being supported to apply for identification documents and to claim the benefits she may be entitled to.

About Faith in Action

Our Vision

To empower and be instrumental in transforming the lives of people in London Borough of Merton and the neighbouring boroughs who are experiencing homelessness, are vulnerably housed or socially excluded from the community.

Our Purpose

To provide support, information and help for anyone experiencing homelessness, is vulnerably housed or socially excluded from the community. We particularly focus on those who are 'hard to reach' because of addiction issues, mental ill-health, challenging behaviours or other difficulties.

We also provide support where there appears to be a gap in service provision or where they are not able to access the services due to their situation.

We aim to reduce the risk of harm to our service user guests and improve their well-being. We encourage them to set realistic goals to break the cycle and we then support them to achieve those goals.

Faith in Action is open to all and is committed to helping service users to:

- **Secure accommodation**
- **Gain employment**
- **Access benefits**
- **Overcome whatever
is holding them back**



**Faith in Action
is committed
to finding
partners
who will
support us
to achieve
outcomes for
our service
users that they
so badly need.**

What we do

Homeless Drop-In

Every Wednesday and Friday between 10am to 2:30pm at the Salvation Army Hall, 109 Kingston Road, Wimbledon SW19 1LT.

Rough sleepers have priority during the morning where they receive a friendly welcome with a smile. There is access to unlimited hot drinks, breakfast and a nutritious freshly-cooked two course lunch. There are shower and laundry services, second-hand clothes, a postal address (many use this as their contact address), phone charging, English classes and internet access.

Our staff work individually with service users, helping in a variety of ways – opening bank HSBC accounts using their No Fixed Abode service and applying for citizen cards for photo ID.

Winter Night Shelter

This takes place in various faith group halls, generally run by volunteers from the same organisation. In several cases, faith groups were able to offer their venue or a volunteer team but not both, so we marry up the two.

This is yet another example of the wonderful collaboration between our various partners.

Who are we?

Bernie McAlister Chair of Trustees

Reflecting on the past year at FIA, I am humbled by the resilience and dedication displayed by our staff team, supporters, volunteers and not least our service users and guests. The current environment is challenging for charities, but despite facing increasing demands and financial constraints, FIA remains committed to providing essential services for homeless and vulnerably-housed people.

This could only be achieved in 2023/24 by further draining our now seriously-depleted reserves. We are working hard to increase our income to cover the additional costs and demands.

2023 was a particularly challenging year, with two changes of Project Manager. Grace joined in December and has quickly settled in and made a tremendously positive impact. She and her team continue to push the boundaries of what can be done to support our service users and, more importantly, to support their journey back to mainstream society.

The Merton Winter Night Shelter operated for fourteen weeks through the coldest period of the year, and achieved some success in finding permanent accommodation for its guests. However, the environment in which we operate has been noticeably more challenging than previously.

As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to our success over the past year. Your continued support, particularly our donors and volunteers, enables us to continue our vital work, offering respite and tangible help to many vulnerable people.

Thank you.



Grace O'Neill Project Manager

FIA does some truly amazing work with some incredibly complex and challenging people – our service users. However, we can improve.

We want the residents of Merton and our neighbouring boroughs to know who we are, so anyone needing our support can find us. A prime objective this year is to raise our profile. We are always looking for more volunteers, donations and innovative ways of working.

My background is in working with people suffering from addictions, experiencing homelessness and adult safeguarding. Having previously worked for statutory services and the NHS I was delighted to take up the post of Project Manager for the Drop-In in December last year. The transition from statutory services to a charitable organisation was dramatic, but pleasant, although not without its own challenges. I soon realised what a fantastic team I had to work with – volunteers, staff, trustees and supporters, all with an incredible amount of experience, knowledge, skills and goodwill.

If you'd like to know more about us, come to the Drop-In, and see for yourself the work we do and find out how you can get involved.

We are hoping for the day when services like ours are no longer needed but until then we are going to keep trying to alleviate some of the problems faced by people experiencing homelessness and fighting for more support for them.

Thank you!

Faith Groups

FIA is very dependent on, and massively grateful for, the support it receives from the various faith groups in Merton.

They contribute in a number of ways:

- Members of their congregations donate monthly by standing order
- They provide the nucleus of our volunteers
- They run fundraising events
- They collect clothes and food
- They manage the Winter Night Shelter

Community support

We are part of the community and are grateful for support from community organisations and businesses.

In 2023/24 Drop-In received financial grants from:

- **London Borough of Merton.** A10 Support Grant and Emergency Assistance Grant
- **National Lottery.** Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund Grant
- **The Lawson Foundation.**

In 2023/24 Winter Night Shelter received financial grants from:

- **Wimbledon Foundation**
- **National Lottery.** Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund Grant
- **Mayor of London.** Spring Transition Fund
- **The Rowlett Trust**
- **Wimbledon Offices Ltd**
- **Abundance Wimbledon**

Corporate donors

We would also like to acknowledge our corporate donors in 2023/24, notably Savills Estate Agents.



Volunteers

In 2023/24 we estimate:

40 volunteers in the Homeless Drop-In contributed around 9,000 hrs.

360 volunteers in the Winter Night Shelter contributed around 5,200 hrs

Drop-In supporters:

Christ the King ▲ St John the Baptist ▲ Martin Way Methodists ▲ St John the Divine ▲ Holy Trinity ▲ St Mary's, Merton Park ▲ St Mary's, Wimbledon ▲ Trinity URC ▲ Seventh Day Adventist Church ▲ St John Fisher RC ▲ Salvation Army ▲ Living Water Parish ▲ Vision of Love charity

Winter Night Shelter supporters:

Salvation Army ▲ Sacred Heart ▲ St John the Baptist ▲ Trinity URC ▲ Seventh Day Adventist Church ▲ Wimbledon Synagogue ▲ Everyday Church ▲ Wimbledon Mosque ▲ Shree Ganapathy Hindu Temple ▲ St Marys Church ▲ St Winefrides Church ▲ Holy Trinity ▲ St Marks Church ▲ Lantern Methodist Church ▲ Raynes Park, Wimbledon, Korean, Morden, Sutton and Mitcham Salvation Army ▲ Quaker community ▲ Christ the King ▲ Worcester Park Baptist Church ▲ St Ann's Catholic Church in Banstead

Our partners

Don's Local Action Group ▲ Wimbledon Guild ▲ SPEAR London ▲ Thames Reach ▲ "Universal Credit" Landlords ▲ London Borough of Merton Housing Team ▲ Department for Work and Pensions ▲ Streetlink ▲ South Western Railway ▲ Nandos ▲ Kentucky Fried Chicken ▲ Hepatitis C Trust ▲ VIA (alcohol and drug support) ▲ Nelson Health Centre ▲ NHS UCL Find & Treat



Volunteering isn't 'one size fits all'

At our Open Evening in March 2024, long-standing volunteers Gabriel and Nicky spoke movingly about their experiences in working with our service users, and the extent to which it had enriched their own lives.

Our volunteers include: kitchen teams; shower and laundry operators; 'front-of-house' meeters and greeters and those who work with service users together with our staff.

But we also need volunteers for: fundraising, administration, trustees and to provide much-needed professional services, free of charge.

FIA could not operate without volunteers. However you contribute, we are hugely grateful. We need your help!

40
VOLUNTEERS
IN THE DROP-IN

360
VOLUNTEERS
IN THE WINTER
NIGHT SHELTER

NOTIONAL STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES. YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	NOTE	FUNDS £'000	DONATIONS IN KIND £'000	TOTAL £'000	INCOME %
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Donations and events		132	0	132	28%
Donations in kind	1-4	0	218	218	46%
Grants		122	0	122	26%
Bank interest		4	0	4	1%
Total incoming resources		258	218	476	100.0%
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Service user support - staff and volunteer costs	2	152	49	201	
Service user support - meals	1-2	0	54	54	
Service user support - other	1	44	13	57	
Administration and other costs	2,4	10	33	44	
Winter Night Shelter - staff and volunteer costs	4	42	63	105	
Winter Night Shelter - other costs	3	43	5	48	
Total resources expended		291	218	509	
Net income/(expenditure)		(33)	()	(33)	

NOTES

1. Donated goods - Drop-In. Donated goods are notionally valued at £1 per item.

2. Voluntary labour - Drop-In. Volunteers' labour is notionally valued at £13.15 per hour (based on London Living Wage).

3. Donated goods - WNS. The cost of donated goods, with the Faith Groups' utility costs, is estimated at £100 per evening.

4. Voluntary labour - WNS. Volunteers' labour is notionally valued at £13.15 per hour (based on the London Living Wage).



**If you would like to change
a life for a homeless person
like Marek, Jacob or Serena,
you can make a donation
to Faith in Action
to support our work.**

Make a donation

Faith in Action Merton Homelessness Project
HSBC. Account No: 71819429. Sort Code: 40 02 26

Just visit our website:

www.mertonfaithinaction.org

or our JustGiving page

www.justgiving.com/faithinaction

or scan the qr code

to take you to Faith in Action's website



We need your help!

[Facebook.com/mertondropin](https://www.facebook.com/mertondropin)

[Instagram.com/mertonhomelessdropin](https://www.instagram.com/mertonhomelessdropin)

Faith in Action Merton Homelessness Project,
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Wimbledon London SW19 4EF

Registered Charity No. 1101165

Company No. 04352872 (England and Wales)

Faith in Action Merton Homelessness Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee