



Merton Homelessness Project

CHANGING LIVES



**Merton Homeless Drop-In
Merton Winter Night Shelter
IMPACT REPORT 2024/25**

From the Streets to Stability

Do you see people struggling on the streets?

Faith in Action (FIA) offers more than just a break from the cold. At our Merton Homeless Drop-In, we provide hot meals, showers, practical support, and one-to-one help for people experiencing homelessness or living in unstable housing across Merton and neighbouring boroughs – especially those who are overlooked or hardest to reach.



From Homeless... to Trustee



Today, Martin Bushaway is one of our newest Trustees. He has a home, a job, and is a passionate advocate for better housing and social change, lobbying politicians, speaking to community groups, and inspiring others to act.

But Martin was once homeless. He relied on FIA's Winter Night Shelter during the freezing nights of a bleak December. Of that time, Martin said:

"I couldn't believe all these people were being nice to me."

With kindness and professional support, Martin turned his life around. His story shows the impact of your support: homelessness is not the end – with help, it can be the start of a new future.

Faith in Action: Where Kindness Meets Practical Help

Homelessness can feel overwhelming, but Martin's story proves change is possible. Every donation enables us to provide food, care, and stability – the foundations people need to rebuild their lives.

We can only do this thanks to the generosity of our supporters – from faith groups across Merton, and from people of no faith who simply believe in making a difference.

* 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 London

Based on the most recent reports (April 2024 - March 2025)

13,231

PEOPLE
SEEN
SLEEPING ROUGH

10%

INCREASE
COMPARED
WITH LAST YEAR

11%

INCREASE
IN FIRST TIME
ROUGH SLEEPERS

63%

INCREASE
COMPARED WITH
10 YEARS AGO

Homelessness in Merton

It is difficult to obtain statistics, but it is estimated that between April 2024 - March 2025

81

PEOPLE SEEN
SLEEPING ROUGH*

5%

INCREASE COMPARED
WITH LAST YEAR

48%

INCREASE IN FIRST TIME
ROUGH SLEEPERS
IN LAST 3 YEARS**

About Faith in Action

Our Vision

To empower and transform the lives of people in Merton and neighbouring boroughs who are experiencing homelessness, are vulnerably housed, or socially excluded.

What we do

Merton Homeless Drop-In

Because no one should face homelessness alone.

Every Wednesday and Friday, 10am–2:30pm at the Salvation Army Hall, Wimbledon:

- Rough sleepers have priority in the morning with a warm welcome, unlimited hot drinks, breakfast, and a two-course lunch
- Showers, laundry, second-hand clothes, phone charging, English classes, internet, and a postal address
- One-to-one staff support to open bank accounts, apply for photo ID, and navigate vital services

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

Our Purpose

We provide both practical and emotional support – particularly for those hardest to reach due to addiction, mental ill-health, or other challenges. We fill the gaps where services fail, reducing harm, improving wellbeing, and supporting people to set and achieve realistic goals.

Winter Night Shelter and Beyond

A roof for the coldest nights

Merton Winter Night Shelter (WNS) runs from 2 December to 10 March across 14 faith group halls. These are generously provided by organisations rooted in community values, and mostly staffed by volunteers from their congregations. Sometimes, a group can offer a venue but not volunteers – or volunteers but no venue. That's where we come in: we match them up. It's a wonderful example of collaboration across the community, ensuring no guest is turned away.

Arrival 6:30pm, supper at 8pm, stay overnight, and leave after breakfast at 8am.

The Night Shelter coordinator:

- Allocates spaces to guests able to manage communal living
- Attends venues to oversee consistency and support volunteers
- Provides each guest with a sleeping bag and rucksack, moved daily between venues
- Offers personalised support to help guests move into stable housing

Messages of Gratitude

From Our Chair Bernie McAlister

I am humbled by the resilience and dedication of our staff, supporters, volunteers and, not least, our service users. The current climate is challenging, with increasing demand and rising costs, yet FIA remains committed to delivering essential services for homeless and vulnerably housed people.

After three years of drawing on our reserves, we were able to cover our costs in 2024/25. This gives us a good foundation for 2025/26, but costs continue to rise – the Autumn budget's increase in Employers' NI alone added over £7,000 a year.

Thanks to new grants, we can be optimistic for the year ahead. I want to thank our partners – especially the faith groups, donors, funders, and volunteers – for enabling us to continue this vital work."

Grace joined us in December 2023. To say that she has made a tremendously positive impact is an understatement. She and her team are untiring in their efforts to push back the boundaries of what can be done to support our service user guests and, more importantly, to support their journey back to mainstream society.



From Our Project Manager Grace O'Neill

The word that sums up FIA is inclusivity. We welcome people often excluded from other services due to addiction, mental ill-health, or challenging behaviour, usually rooted in past trauma.

At the Drop-In, we have no expectations. We simply offer food, warmth, and respite. Over time, trust builds. When guests are ready, we step in with practical help – always walking alongside them on their journey to stability.

Please come and visit us. See the work first-hand – or even join us as a volunteer."



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

2024/25 in numbers

Merton Homeless Drop-In

This year, we faced an **eight-week relocation** while the Salvation Army Hall was refurbished. There were **maintenance issues** with our showers and **several unavoidable staff absences**. Yet despite these challenges, we continued to serve

FIA HOSTED

102

DROP-IN
SESSIONS

ON AVERAGE

57

ATTENDED
EACH SESSION

TOTAL
ATTENDANCE
5,807

FIA WELCOMED

503

SERVICE USERS TO
DROP-IN SESSIONS

FIA WELCOMED

208

FIRST TIME
SERVICE USERS



FIA PROVIDED

2,037

HOT
SHOWERS

FIA WASHED

1,211

LOADS
OF LAUNDRY



FIA GAVE

86

SLEEPING BAGS TO
ROUGH SLEEPERS

FIA MOVED

27

PEOPLE INTO SECURE
ACCOMMODATION



FIA SUPPORTED

96

TO ACCESS DRUG AND
ALCOHOL SERVICES

FIA GAVE

92

PEOPLE EMPLOYMENT
& TRAINING ADVICE
& SUPPORT

FIA SUPPORTED

179

WITH DWP
UNIVERSAL CREDIT
APPLICATIONS

FIA MADE

41

BENEFIT
APPLICATIONS

FIA OPENED

38

BANK ACCOUNTS
THROUGH HSBC

FIA ADVISED

288

WITH HOUSING
INFORMATION AND
ADVICE

FIA SUPPORTED

206

ON EU SETTLED
STATUS MATTERS

Marek's Story From Crisis to Stability



Marek lived in the UK for over ten years before his life fell apart. Ill health cost him his job, rent arrears followed, and his landlord changed the locks – leaving him unable to access his home, belongings, or ID. For two weeks, Marek slept on the streets.

When he arrived at the Drop-In, he was suffering from a hernia and had no GP. Our team acted immediately:

- Registered him with a GP for medical treatment
- Secured an **HC1 certificate** so he could obtain prescription glasses
- Negotiated with his landlord so he could collect his belongings and ID
- Supported him to apply for the benefits he was entitled to

With stability restored, FIA placed him in affordable private accommodation. Today, Marek is housed, receiving treatment, and eager to return to work as soon as his health allows.

This is what your support makes possible.

"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

FIA MADE

104

FREE LEGAL
SUPPORT
REFERRALS

FIA MADE

293

GP/MEDICAL
REFERRALS

FIA FACILITATED

20

COVID/FLU
VACCINATIONS

FIA APPLIED FOR

88

ID DOCUMENTS

2024/25 in numbers

Merton Winter Night Shelter (WNS)

1,176

BED SPACES OVER

98

NIGHTS



14

DIFFERENT FAITH
GROUPS PROVIDE
VENUES
& VOLUNTEERS

22

GUESTS RECEIVED
OVERNIGHT
ACCOMMODATION
IN A WARM,
SAFE SPACE
AND FOOD
THIS WINTER

55%

GUESTS LEFT
THE SHELTER
TO MOVE INTO SECURE
HOUSING OR RETURNED
TO FAMILY/FRIENDS

FIA COORDINATED
OPERATIONS
PROVIDING
GUESTS WITH
RUCKSACKS AND
SLEEPING BAGS

AND SUPPORTED
GUESTS WITH
HEALTH, HOUSING
AND WORK NEEDS

Jacob's Story – From Crisis to Contribution

Jacob became homeless when his landlord changed the locks. At the Drop-In, staff listened with compassion and referred him to the **Merton Winter Night Shelter**, where he found warmth, food, and support to face his alcohol addiction.

Through determination, he completed a detox programme. Stability was essential for recovery, and FIA helped him move into supported housing, working closely with local drug and alcohol services and standing by him throughout the Covid lockdown.

Now, three years later, Jacob is living independently and giving back. For the last five years, he has **volunteered at a community kitchen**, supporting others in need.

This is what happens when support, belief, and community come together.

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.

63%

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

MORE THAN
183,000

LONDONERS
ARE EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS
AND LIVING IN
TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION

Serena's Story. A Journey Towards Trust and Recovery



Serena, a European national who had lived in the UK for over a decade, fell into rough sleeping and mental ill-health. Guarded but friendly, she carried all her belongings on a damaged bicycle.

When a local repair shop deemed her bike unsafe, the owner – on hearing her story – generously sold FIA a near-identical replacement at cost. When Serena realised the bike was hers, her face lit up with joy.

Regular visits from a mental health nurse and a Council outreach worker revealed she had previously been detained under the Mental Health Act. With the right advocacy, the Council placed her in **temporary accommodation**, where she remains today. She proudly tells us she “loves” her new home and is being supported to obtain ID and claim the benefits she deserves.

Our community of support

Faith groups: our lifeblood

- Donate monthly by standing order
- Provide the nucleus of our volunteers
- Run fundraising events
- Collect clothes and food
- Host and staff the Winter Night Shelter

Grants and Donations 2024/25:

Drop-In funding

- London Borough of Merton (A10 Support & Emergency Assistance Grants)
- National Lottery (Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund)
- Nando's
- The Carole & Geoffrey Lawson Foundation
- Abundance Wimbledon
- Blyth Charity
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Merton Giving – Civic Pride

Winter Night Shelter funding

- Wimbledon Foundation
- The Rowlett Trust
- Wimbledon Offices Ltd

Schools standing with us

- All Saints C of E Primary School, Putney
- Wimbledon High School
- Wimbledon College
- Ursuline High School
- Rutlish School

Community choirs supporting us

- Wimbledon Choral Society
- Bishop Gilpin Community Choir
- Inspire Choir
- Choir and Bellow Fellows
- Colliers Wood Chorus



Volunteers: The heart of FIA

Drop-In supporters:

Christ the King • St John the Baptist • St Winefrid's • 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 • London Full Gospel Church • Wimbledon Synagogue • Dundonald Congregational Church • Christ Church • Sacred Heart • Mitcham Parish Church • Christian Science Society

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 Mary's Wimbledon • St Winefrides • Holy Trinity • St Marks Church • Lantern Methodist Church • Quaker community • Christ the King • Worcester Park Baptist Church • St Ann's Catholic Church Banstead • St James Merton • Martin Way Methodist Church • Ahmadiyya Muslim Ladies • Oasis Church

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 • Kentucky Fried Chicken • Hepatitis C Trust • VIA (alcohol and drug support) • Nelson Health Centre • NHS UCL Find & Treat • Capsticks LLP • Ross Fruits • Morden Rotary • Waitrose • St Mungo's • South London Refugee Association • SW London Law Centre • WMCA Wimbledon • EASL Mental Health Charity

45
VOLUNTEERS
IN THE DROP-IN
GIVING AROUND
9000 HOURS

450
VOLUNTEERS
IN THE WNS
CONTRIBUTING
OVER 5200 HOURS

Volunteering isn't 'one size fits all'

Volunteering at FIA isn't one-size-fits-all. At our March 2024 Open Evening, long-standing volunteers Gabriel and Nicky spoke movingly about how much supporting our guests has enriched their own lives.

Our volunteers include kitchen teams, shower and laundry operators, greeters, and those who work closely with guests. But we also need people in fundraising, admin, trusteeship, and pro bono professional services.

FIA could not operate without volunteers. However you contribute, we are deeply grateful.

Our audited accounts (available on our website) do not do justice to the work we do or the generosity of our supporters. Hence we present a notional set of accounts which endeavours to illustrate our service if all of our donations and voluntary hours are monetised.

NOTIONAL STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES. YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025					
	NOTE	FUNDS £'000	DONATIONS IN KIND £'000	TOTAL £'000	INCOME %
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Donations and events		195	0	195	37%
Donations in kind	1-3	0	228	228	44%
Grants		93	0	93	18%
Bank interest		5	0	5	1%
Total incoming resources		293	228	521	100%
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Service user support – staff and volunteer costs	3	158	53	211	
Service user support – meals	1-2	9	56	65	
Service user support – other	1	8	13	21	
Administration and other costs	3	42	35	77	
Winter Night Shelter – staff and volunteer costs	3	41	67	108	
Winter Night Shelter – other costs	2	11	4	15	
Total resources expended		269	228	497	
Net income/(expenditure)		24	–	24	

NOTES

- 1. Donated goods – Drop-In.** Donated goods are notionally valued at £1 per item.
- 2. Donated goods – WNS.** The cost of donated goods, with the Faith Groups' utility costs, is estimated at £100 per evening.
- 3. Voluntary labour.** Volunteers' labour is notionally valued at £13.85 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)

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