



HISTORY AND ORGANISATION

In the early 1980s, a Bereavement Service was formed as a deanery project by the Anglican churches in Islington, managed by the deanery [ie borough] 'Social Responsibility Committee'. This committee was overseen by a London-wide Social Responsibility Committee which changed its name to CARIS about ten years later. CARIS stands for 'Christian Action and Response in Society'. From its beginning, the Bereavement Service in Islington has offered support to bereaved people in the borough.

In the early 1990s, the London-wide CARIS decided to devolve responsibility for all its projects in all the London Boroughs to their respective management committees. The Social Responsibility Committee in Islington decided to take on the name 'CARIS' and became CARIS Islington. As CARIS Islington now assumed considerably more responsibility, it was decided to become a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. So in 1995, CARIS Islington was born. The registered office is at St Mary's Church, Ashley Road N19, and the co-ordinators of the Bereavement project work from this office.

With their new autonomy, the CARIS Islington Trustees spent some time thinking about where God was calling the charity. It was clear that there was still a need for support for bereaved people in the borough. The need for help for homeless people was also identified, and so a second project was added to CARIS' work in Islington. CARIS Islington resolved to become an ecumenical project, although most of its funding was coming from the Church of England. Anglican churches in the borough were required to donate towards Bereavement Service costs through the 'common fund' and overall, contributed about one-third of its running costs. It was agreed that the churches should not be required as well to support the Homeless Peoples' Project financially, although some of the churches were very supportive of this work as well, and contributed in addition to their 'common fund' levy for the Bereavement Service.

From the mid-1990s onwards, each of the two projects has had their own management committee which aims to watch over the day-to-day running and reports to the CARIS Board of Trustees. There have been some ups and downs in terms of financial viability and co-ordination between the projects over the past 10 years, and funding of both projects remains a key issue. The Anglican Churches have phased out the 'common fund' donations, and Islington Council in 1996 withdrew their regular funding of the Bereavement Service.

The Homeless Peoples' project is now the Cold Weather Shelter. During the winter months, the Shelter provides nightly accommodation to over 100 homeless people in total, in participating churches. The Bereavement Service offers a visiting service to any bereaved person who lives, works or worships in Islington. Around 100 people are referred each year. The Bereavement Service is piloting 'rucksack' a bereavement support service for children. The Trustees are currently focussing on maintaining and improving current sources of funding, and ensuring effective co-ordination between the projects.

CARIS still relies heavily on the generosity of local churches and for voluntary help for all aspects of its work. We welcome all who are able to help us with their time, money and prayers.