CARIS Islington
Churches Cold Weather Shelter

Annual Report 2009
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INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to bring you the 2009 Annual Report of the Caris Islington Cold Weather Shelter project.

We have been running shelters for over ten years now in various churches in the borough during the cold weather months. This year, once again, we were delighted to recruit Mark Brennan as Co-ordinator for the Cold Weather Shelter project.

He presided over another very successful season for the CWS, and developed further our links with Heythrop College of the University of London, Islington Council and other agencies working in this field.

Caris Islington at present runs three projects: as well as the Cold Weather Shelters in the winter, we run bereavement counselling services for both adults and children from our offices at St... bodies but also donations from individuals and churches many of whom we wish to acknowledge here in no particular order:

Church Urban Fund
Streetsmart
Morris Charitable Trust
Brands Trust
St. Mary’s Church – Upper Street
Islington Voluntary Action Council
St. Augustine’s Church – Highbury
Love Productions
All Saints’ Church – Carnegie Street
RBS Community Cashback
St. Mark’s Church – Tollington Park
The Vintners’ Company
Waitrose Community Matters
Charity Scheme

Quaker Homeless Action
Beatrice Laing Trust
The Oliver Berthwick Memorial Trust
St. Mary’s Church – Upper Holloway
Richard Cloudesley’s Charity
Pedalling for Progress
Great Portland Estates
Maunsell Family Trust
St. Jude’s Church – Highbury
The Sobell Foundation
St. Thomas the Apostle Church
– Finsbury Park
Archway Methodist Church
– Second Chance Charity Shop

We are grateful to all of them: without their help, we could not continue to help our guests and clients.

Jeanette Cragg
Chair of Trustees CARIS Islington
ABOUT ISLINGTON

The borough of Islington is considered by many to be London’s Greenwich Village – fun, feisty and decidedly bohemian. Notable individuals who have lived in the area include George Orwell, Johnny Rotten, Joe Orton, Isaac Watts, Douglas Adams, Boris Johnson and, of course, Tony Blair. A mere six miles by four, the borough is a popular arts, shopping and entertainment centre, where TV personalities, film stars, politicians, City wheeler dealers and media celebrities who could afford to live anywhere are happy to call Islington “home”. Home, then, to some of the wealthiest of this country’s population.

Less well-known is that Islington is ranked eighth (out of 354 local authorities) most deprived borough in England and fourth most deprived in London. This is according to the government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 using a variety of indicators across the seven domains of:

- Income
- Employment
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Education, Skills and Training
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Crime
- Living Environment

62% of Islington residents live in areas of the borough ranked amongst the most deprived 10% in the country. 52,467 people in Islington are income deprived (as measured by the number of people claiming means tested benefits). Islington is the 14th most income-deprived borough in London. It is also home to two of our country’s most notorious penal institutions: HMP Holloway and HMP Pentonville.

When it comes to the polarity of rich and poor in this country, the “haves and have-nots”, Islington is a prime example of a place where the two extremities of that spectrum live, literally, right next door to one another.

WHO WE ARE...

For a full History & Organizational Origin of CARIS Islington please visit the website www.carisislington.org or refer to our CARIS Islington Churches Cold Weather Shelter (CICCWS) Annual Report 2007 which can be downloaded in pdf format from the CARIS Islington website.

Christian communities have for centuries taken up the challenge of responding to the needs of the people they serve – whether social, spiritual or material. Philanthropic activity and the foundations of most modern UK charities are traceable to ordinary people putting the gospel imperative of care for our neighbour into practise. Churches opening their doors to provide winter shelter for the homeless and the excluded are in this honourable tradition. The CARIS Islington Churches Cold Weather Shelter (CICCWS) project takes the heart of its church communities to meet and respond to a very real and constant need.

CICCWS has been operating for twelve years during which time we have developed an established pool of volunteers now some 400+ strong. Our volunteers come with a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities, skills and experience together with their genuine personal care and compassion. New volunteers arrive with trepidation and benevolent curiosity prepared to face and challenge their own fears in a warm, welcoming environment of hospitality. They are open to learning and, perhaps most importantly, giving of themselves. They include doctors, housewives, househusbands, nurses, students, retirees, civil servants, ex-guests, professionals and amateurs, youths through seniors alike. They are a cross-section of the diverse communities that comprise our London borough and beyond, united every night over the cold winter months in extending time, friendship, hospitality and support to people who are homeless, vulnerable and in distress.
Our project is multi-denominational. Union Chapel is a Congregational Church. The other shelter venues are Anglican and Roman Catholic, Methodist and Baptist clergy sit on the CARIS Islington board of trustees and their churches are actively involved in supporting our work in myriad ways, some of which will be conveyed in this report.

Perhaps the most poignant expression of who we are was made by one of our guests at a Focus Group conducted by the ARCS research team from Heythrop College at The University of London on a shelter night at St Peter’s:

“I am finding it interesting that despite the difference of the churches here – being it a this or that church – actually they’re coming together as a Body, as it should be, in the Body of Christ and actually working together and establishing some sort of unity and strength in unity together to help the outside. I’m finding it really interesting that they are working together instead of going against each other”

Our project is one of a London-wide, growing network of church shelter projects. The map here indicates the 15 London borough projects that operated this year with their bed capacities. There is a new project starting-up for the 2009/2010 season in Haringey. Although all operate using much the same model, each offers its own unique brand of hospitality and support to meet local need. We invite those that fall through the gaps of statutory service provision to be our guests and take some time, through our alternative approach, to willingly negotiate and re-negotiate accessing the help and support they require towards self-stability.
In February 2008 Homeless Link (www.homeless.org.uk) the national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England, published the first Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP). It provides a picture of the extent and nature of services for single homeless people and couples without dependent children in England, and the clients that use them. It is a valuable source of information on the sector supporting homeless people, and provides a crucial understanding of a population that often falls outside the ‘statutory’ homeless statistics published by Government. It determined that the sector had an estimated annual turnover of £800 million and was growing.

Housing Justice (www.housingjustice.org.uk) is an umbrella organisation that supports night-shelters, drop-ins and hundreds of practical projects nationwide by providing advice and training for churches and other community groups who work with homeless people. They have determined that the contribution of London’s church winter shelter projects to the sector in 2009 was £1.4 million.

CICCWS offers the unique opportunity for community members to confront and engage an aspect of their communities that is typically avoided, shunned and rebuked – an aspect we fear – by coming together in an environment of genuine, simple hospitality for mutual gain. This is best exemplified in the words of one of our volunteers from another focus group conducted by the ARCS team:

I’ve only ever done the breakfast shift… I volunteer because I could. Like others, you do it once and then you want to do it again. I think apart from enjoying it, it’s a safe thing I could do… You see these Christmas Shelter appeals and you think “actually I’d love to do that but how do you do it?” It’s somehow somewhere else. But this is local in our community and it’s perfectly safe and feels really useful. Also the other real benefit for me is that I’m an older member of the church and the Church has changed a lot in recent years with a lot of young people coming in which is fantastic but

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CICCWS recruits and hires a Project Co-ordinator (PC) each year on a term contract to oversee best practise compliance, handle guest admissions, liaise with the seven Churches, organise and participate in the Management Committee and work with guests to facilitate an improvement in their circumstances toward self-sufficiency. The latter can range from simply listening, to help in identifying and prioritising needs and referring, sometimes accompanying a guest, to engage with appropriate professional agencies and support services. Wherever possible the PC works with and alongside those agencies. It is a key part of the PC’s responsibilities to establish and develop strong, reciprocal working relationships so that the full scope of support services available in the area (statutory, commercial and voluntary) are brought to bear, most appropriately and effectively, in addressing individual guests’ needs.

CICCWS & ISLINGTON COUNCIL Outreach Forum

We participate in Islington Council’s Safer Islington Partnership initiative and are members of their Outreach Forum. The Forum meets every 6 weeks at Islington Town Hall and is chaired by Community Development Manager, Chez Dhaliwal who describes the work of the forum as follows:

The Outreach Forum meets every six weeks and is attended by outreach agencies (service managers and frontline workers), the Islington Drug and Alcohol Action Team (IDAAT), the Primary Care Trust, drug and alcohol treatment agencies and representatives from other statutory and voluntary agencies. The purpose of the Forum is to discuss and plan how best to meet the needs of Islington’s Outreach Strategy.

Essential demographic profile of our guests and the referral agencies by which they have availed themselves of our service.

CICCWS Guest Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barking &amp; Dagenham</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnet</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Broom</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southwark</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tower Hamlets</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Length of Stay

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<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>5 nights</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 7 nights</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 to 14 nights</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 to 21 nights</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 nights or more</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</tbody>
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Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
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Age Range

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<tr>
<td>25 to 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>45 to 59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Stated Period Homeless

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<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Less than 1 mths</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 6 mths</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 mths to 1 Year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Year to 3 Years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 Years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>116</td>
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Benefits

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<tr>
<td>Income Support</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacity Benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incapacity Credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability Living Allowance</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never claimed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim denied</td>
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<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal to Claim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claim in progress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Guest Registration Form

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mark Brennan
Co-ordinator for the Cold Weather Shelter project

CICCWS & ISLINGTON COUNCIL Outreach Forum

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The Outreach Forum meets every six weeks and is attended by outreach agencies (service managers and frontline workers), the Islington Drug and Alcohol Action Team (IDMAT), the Primary Care Trust, drug and alcohol treatment agencies and representatives from other statutory and voluntary agencies. The purpose of the Forum is to discuss and plan how best to meet the needs of Islington’s vulnerable street population – rough sleepers, sex workers, beggars, street drinkers and the hidden homeless – through the provision of detached street-based outreach work. The IDMAT and outreach agencies work closely with local Safer Neighbourhood Teams and MAGPIS (Multi-Agency Geographical Panels for Islington) to ensure that local enforcement initiatives are accompanied by a programme of harm reduction measures. The Forum is a perfect environment in which to discuss and formulate ‘best practice’, and also provides workers with a confidential meeting space in which to discuss clients who are of particular concern i.e. ‘case conferencing’. Forum members have the opportunity to directly feed into the formulation of Islington’s Outreach Strategy.
It is, then, an orchestrated approach. The Islington Outreach Forum operates as a Multi-Agency Assessment Panel or MAAP. This is what the organisation “Shelter” (www.shelter.org.uk) has to say about MAAP’s;

Without a MAAP the network of services is often fragmented and individual services shy away from taking on the more complex cases. Where a MAAP is employed, the focus is on providing solutions to people with the most complex needs; many of whom have experienced years of homelessness. This brings an increased prospect of an end to homelessness, tenancy sustainment and even a reduction in addiction and criminal behaviour. By building relationships between agencies; increasing their understanding of each other roles; developing joint protocols (e.g. in confidentiality policies, referral routes and procedures), MAAP’s help each participating agency become more efficient. The approach also helps to identify gaps in services and can be used to influence local strategies.

Homelessness Forum
The CICCWS Project Coordinator is an executive member of the Islington Homelessness Forum. Following is what Hitesh Tailor, is the Principal Housing Policy Analyst in Islington council’s Housing & Adult Social Services Department:

“Islington Council values the working relationships with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sector. CARIS have been one such partner and have been very supportive of the work we have undertaken to develop services to people at risk of homelessness.

We wanted to build on those relationships and re-launched the Islington Homelessness Forum as a strategic forum in March 2009. Its aims are to influence and inform development of Islington policies and strategies to prevent homelessness; and to influence the provision of services for the homeless and potentially homeless in Islington.

The Forum provides an opportunity to understand the causes and consequences of homelessness for all at risk of homelessness, as well as people sleeping rough on the streets of Islington.

The Forum has already overseen the council and partners undertake a pilot project for the Government in developing a toolkit in understanding the difficulties faced by rough sleepers as they seek help with their housing situation.

The Forum meets every three months and is open to organisations involved in addressing housing need issues including agencies working with the street population, housing associations and advice agencies, and community organisations. Improved communication, understanding and cooperation are vital to helping inform the development of the next Homelessness Strategy in 2010. The Forum is intended to complement and feed into other Islington forums incl the Outreach Forum (which considers issues affecting the street population), and the Islington Housing Group (whose members include housing providers).”

The aims of the toolkit are:
- To bring statutory and voluntary services together to develop a response to rough sleeping locally
- To help partners increase their understanding of local routes into rough sleeping
- To help partners identify opportunities for early interventions
- To increase awareness of effective interventions

The toolkit is based on the following principles:
- No one should have to sleep rough in order to access services
- Voluntary and statutory services need to work together to prevent rough sleeping
- Rough sleeping should be tackled through strategic approaches, delivered locally

Much can be learnt directly from the views and experiences of those who have slept rough

CICCWS was instrumental in the Borough of Islington (the only London borough) piloting the toolkit Hitesh refers to here. The toolkit called PROMPT has been developed by Homeless Link and the CLG and, if successful, will play a significant role in the Mayor of London’s strategy to end rough-sleeping by the 2012 Olympics – go to www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1328064.pdf

Prevention Opportunities Mapping and Planning Toolkit (PROMPT)
The PROMPT is a toolkit designed to help local authorities and service providers identify opportunities for early interventions to prevent rough sleeping. The toolkit is based around local partnership, an audit of individual journeys into rough sleeping, the development of an action plan and regular analysis of progress and results. The toolkit is based on learning from the views and experiences of service users in your area in order to provide interventions that meet their needs.
ISLINGTON LIBRARIES

Islington library employees Kerrie Spelman and John Calcott are based at the Islington Central Library on Fieldway Crescent and are founders of an award-winning library project called “New Horizons”.

In a borough where educational achievement and adult literacy are low, Islington is pioneering an innovative approach to community learning and social cohesion which is having a marked impact on the lives of some of our most disadvantaged people. Launched in February 2003, five community libraries now proactively encourage reading and social interaction among residents and non-library users on our most deprived estates in a scheme believed to be the first of its kind in the UK.

The aim of the New Horizons, Estate Reading Campaign is to promote reading to the maximum number of local residents and thereby support the development of reading skills and learning. The project is specifically targeted at teenagers, reluctant readers especially men, people who do not have English as a first language and family learners.

The key objective is to get those people who have got out of the reading habit back into reading, and to provide an opportunity for those people that have never read to discover the pleasure and enjoyment of books. Whether people want to read for enjoyment, research or as an essential life skill is irrelevant, we just want to get people reading.

This project offers residents living on social housing estates and the socially excluded improved service provision, with the opportunity to acquire higher levels of reading skills and be part of local community activity. This project also aims to help foster a family reading environment with participants taking their improved skills back into their homes.

Kerrie and John extended their project to our church shelter venues in 2008. It has been a resounding success. But it is Kerrie and John’s personal commitment and dedication to their work that has infused a significantly positive impact on our shelter project culture. This is what Kerrie and John have to say about how the New Horizons project has benefited our guests:

One guest during his months stay attended an AA course after reading two books about alcoholism and commented to the library staff that the books had made him think about the state he was in and, that it could be possible to at least try and change. Two months after leaving the shelter this guest is still regularly attending AA sessions, has been placed in accommodation and continues to be dry.

One young guest aged 19 was signposted to the First Steps Centre at Central Library where he was assessed for literacy levels and subsequently placed on an appropriate ESOL course.

The majority of the guests did read from the selection of books that were available at each church. Many of these guests mentioned to the library staff that the books had helped them to relax prior to going to sleep, assisting them in getting a decent sleep.

Without doubt many of these guests prior to this project were not using libraries and for many this was down to a lack of self esteem and confidence about accessing Council buildings and having face to face contact with staff. For those guests that attended the Cold Winter Shelters programme this has changed and they feel that libraries are a place that can offer support and information and make them feel that they are part of our local community.

A number of books requested were about true life experiences of alcoholics or drug users who managed to come through the other end to enjoy a healthy and happy life, e.g. Tony Adams - Addicted.

A number of guests regularly attend Central Library to help each other on the Internet.

One member of staff recorded that in twenty five years of working for the library service, the three months of the shelter project has probably been the most rewarding and eye opening experience of their career.

The link between CARIS and Islington Library & Cultural Services was a mutually beneficial link and one that should be retained in future years.
We have listed and acknowledged the agencies we work alongside at the Islington Outreach and Homelessness Forums – predominantly statutory agencies. We would also like to acknowledge the network of Churches and voluntary agencies that offer everything from simple hospitality, drop-in centres, tea, soup, sandwiches and friendship through to professional counselling, benefits advice, re-settlement work, advocacy, rehab and mentoring. These are agencies with whom we share an informal alliance, something we like to describe as “a silent fellowship”, right through to active partnerships. All operate locally in and around the Borough of Islington. They include (in no particular order):

### CICCWS & VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

- **The Manna at St Stephen’s Church**
  www.ststephenscanonbury.co.uk/OurMission/manna.htm
- **The Cabin at St Gabriel’s Church, St John’s Villas**
- **Archway Methodist Church and their successful “Second Chance” charity shop**
  www.londonmethodist.org.uk/html/archway.html
- **Union Chapel’s “Margins” Homelessness Project**
  www.unionchapel.org.uk/pages/margins.html
- **Upper Holloway Baptist Church, Tollington Way**
- **Hope Worldwide, City Rd, Angel**
- **The Upper Holloway Fellowship of Churches**
- **St Thomas the Apostle Church, Finsbury Park**
  www.stthomasc.org/info/about.htm
- **St Augustines Church, Highbury**
  www.staugustine.org.uk/cgi-bin/staug.pl
- **Highbury Quadrant Congregational Church**
- **Cara Irish Housing, Seven Sisters Rd**
- **Gems Outreach, Newington Green**
  www.gemsmethodist.org.co.uk/
- **Quaker Homeless Action**
  www.qha.org.uk/
- **Red Cross London Refugee Unit, Angel**
  www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=89424
- **St Mary Magdalene Centre for Asylum Seekers, Holloway Rd**
  www.stmmarymagdalenecentre.org.uk/8/what-we-do/4529764529
- **St Mary’s Church, Upper St**
  www.stmaryislington.co.uk/
- **Peter’s Community Café @ St Peter De Beauvoir Church**
  www.londoncatholicworker.org/PetersCafe.html

CARIS Islington is a member of the Islington Voluntary Action Council (IVAC) and regularly uses its services and support. IVAC brings thirty-three years of expertise to its work with people who are interested in developing voluntary action whether they are from voluntary, community, commercial or statutory agencies. It is particularly concerned to meet the needs of those who are most disadvantaged and socially excluded. The mission of IVAC is to promote a thriving, effective and influential third sector that is working to enhance the quality of life and the life chances of all people in Islington. Please visit www.ivac.org.uk for more information.

We wish to bring particular attention to two projects we have started working on together with IVAC this year;

1. **PQASSO: Practical Quality Assurance Standard for Small Organisations** - aforementioned Level 1 attainment
2. **Policy and Research Project: CARIS Islington is one of a cluster of three small local charitable groups selected by IVAC’s Head of Services & Capacity Building to, whilst undergoing a bespoke 15 week training programme overseen by ARVAC (www.arvac.org.uk/docs/about.html), conduct their own community research projects. Our research is exploring the link between bereavement and homelessness. Our research report will be available in the new year 2010.**

### Homeless Link Cold Weather Shelter Report 2009

We were one of eight projects in the London network to participate in Homeless Link’s research into the use of cold weather shelters in London. The full report can be downloaded at: www.lhf.org.uk/cold-weather-shelters.aspx

**Questions answered in this research include:**

- Where do cold weather shelters fit into the wider homelessness sector?
- Who uses cold weather shelters and why?
- Why are guests using cold weather shelters?

Whilst we welcome and value the attention and apparent appreciation this report reflects for the work we do; and while we commend it in accurately and succinctly capturing our role from a statutory service provision perspective; it does not (and we would not expect it to) capture or convey the intrinsic emotional and spiritual benefits gained by everyone involved in our project – guests, volunteers, agency workers and our many visitors alike.
Shelter Stories: (all names have been changed to respect confidentiality)

Richard is a 77 year old gentleman forced (with due statutory process) to leave his lifetime home in Tower Hamlets due to the 2012 Olympic developments. Richard chose not to accept the alternative accommodation offered him by the local authority and, in defiance and under protest, took to the streets. After spending some time in a small church shelter project where he continued to stubbornly refuse the minimum provisions they facilitated, Richard accepted an invitation to be a guest of our project. It was particularly challenging for everyone to tolerate and gradually learn to Richard’s reputed angry and vindictive accounts of how he had been treated. After four weeks however, it was a fellow guest that accommodated him back to a statutory agency to accept their offer. They provided him with temporary accommodation until a place was available in a suitable supported housing project in the next east and to Richard’s appeared and currently resides.

A 67-year-old middle-aged man and career civil servant who as a result of his local church to talk with the vicar. Despite a comfortable lifestyle which included ownership of two very large properties...and abandoned his suicidal considerations. The experience had given him a whole new hopeful and optimistic perspective.

Ayman is a 33 year old gentleman from the middle-east who had been successful in securing asylum in the UK after escaping from a difficult and dangerous situation in his homeland. He ran a successful store and restaurant business in pictures, Ayman’s trust, he is regaining the independent and normal life he originally fled to this country for.

Although we believe there is a lot of work to be done yet in capturing and conveying the full value and scope of these benefits we are going to make an attempt here - starting with our “Facts & Key Indicators” report and then on to true accounts of what we refer to as “Shelter Stories”.

Facts & Key Indicators (corresponding 2008 figures in brackets)

- A total 1617 [1608] guests were given accommodation ranging from 1 night to 54 nights during the Jan to Mar cold weather period. That’s 311 people given respect from otherwise rough-sleeping on London streets.
- The overall average length of stay per guest was 11 [13] nights – guests are invited (and sign an agreement) to avail themselves of shelter accommodation for up to a 4-week period.
- We received over 602 [489] referrals on our shelter line from a total of over 72 different agencies in and around London incl our own and various other borough council housing offices, prisons, hospitals, probation service, police stations, migration charities and the Red Cross refugee unit.
- At least 21 [25] of our guests are known to have served time in prison.
- At least 20 different nationalities from across the globe were represented among our guests with the eldest aged 77...; the youngest aged 20...– nationalities represented include Afghan, Australian, British, Canadian, Egyptian, French, Iranian, Lithuanian, Nigrean, Polish, Portuguese, Romanians, Russian, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Sudanese and Zimbabwe.
- Of the 305 [113] guests of known nationality, 18 [17%] (264 [14%]) were EU10 nationals.
- 5,586 [5,697] volunteer hours were invested in offering respect, friendship, hospitality and support to people in crisis and distress – the project has a total pool of some 350-400 volunteers to draw on.
- More than 1,916 [1,970] meals were served.
- The overall average guest 15.9 [15.8] to volunteer 15.6
- The overall average guest night was practically 5:1
- Overall occupancy for the 3-month period was 119% [145%] thanks to church teams giving over and above to provide. We made beds beyond the standard 25 capacity each night.
- A special thanks to City Temple/Holborn this year for offering and providing overflow capacity and accommodating an average of more than 7 of our guests for 10 of the 13 Friday nights of the season when our usual Fri night capacity is only 12 beds.
- We provided emergency accommodation to 16 refugees and asylum seekers (22 [21]) to volunteer 15.6
- We have learned from our participation in the Islington Drug & Alcohol Action Team (IDAT) outreach forum that we are...and funded by the London Housing Foundation to identify, more clearly, where gaps in service provision exist and help us to define the most effective role for church shelter projects within the cross-sector scope of services currently available – see full report at www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1328064.pdf
- We are one of three small local charitable groups selected to...A special thanks to City Temple/Holborn this year for offering and providing overflow capacity and accommodating an average of more than 7 of our guests for 10 of the 13 Friday nights of the season when our usual Fri night capacity is only 12 beds.
- We are instrumental in the Borough of Islington (the only London borough) plotting a toolkit developed by the LUG and the Islington Voluntary Action Council (ZAC) and the Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector (ARVAC). ARVAC is the national research body to the Office of the Third Sector - www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/about_us.aspx.
- We worked with Heythrop College’s ARCS Team again this year to continue the successful work we have been doing at the college including housing and food provision during the winter months. A special thanks to City Temple/Holborn this year for offering and providing overflow capacity and accommodating an average of more than 7 of our guests for 10 of the 13 Friday nights of the season when our usual Fri night capacity is only 12 beds.
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Our Role

Homelessness is complicated – a more complex issue than most of us, perhaps, first imagine. Its impact ripples and resounds across all aspects of society. Rough-sleeping is merely one, relatively small aspect of homelessness – the “end of the line” perhaps, or the front line? An apparent contradiction. This is where CECCWS operates. Our project provides an opportunity for everyone involved: guests, volunteers, visitors and employees of the professional services we work with to meet in a common environment of safe, welcoming hospitality. It provides an opportunity for everyone to take a pause in our usual routines, relax, share, reflect and team together in that challenging place where order and chaos collide, on the threshold of contradiction. It brings the two apparently disparate ends of the social spectrum (and lots in between) together, full circle. It brings understanding and healing. It is about compassion, not pity and about mutual healing, not fixing.

The organisation “Shelter” considers that work to tackle street homelessness must be informed by the following beliefs if it is to succeed;

1. Street homelessness will only be solved if its extent and nature is properly understood
2. Most street homeless people have complex, multiple needs, therefore effective joint working between agencies is essential
3. There needs to be a transfer of the balance of power from agencies to the street homeless people they serve
4. Street homelessness will only be resolved if solutions are provided that people are willing to accept. This starts with initial engagement and moves through to long-term housing

We share these beliefs and our project is living proof that, when borne out, they yield more successful outcomes. A fundamental principle in the work of our project is that guests are treated as just that…guests (not clients)! Just as we would treat a guest into our own homes, we endeavour to treat our guests with appropriate respect and dignity in the face of their shortcomings and failings. With the encouragement and support of volunteers who (unlike their professional counterparts) have no vested interest in “successful outcomes”, guests regain a vestige of self-worth.

This is aptly evidenced in the research and work of Gerard Lemos author of the book “Steadying the Ladder: social and emotional aspirations of homeless and vulnerable people” from which comes the following extract;

Combating isolation and loneliness and building and re-building social networks should be a fundamental purpose and activity for all those involved in supporting vulnerable people, not just an add-on. Relieving isolation is not something additional that can be done once the urgent practical questions of having somewhere to live, needing detox or drug rehabilitation or leaving prison have been dealt with. On the contrary a resilient and trusting group of friends and family members at one’s side is an important bulwark against, and a method of combating, vulnerability and homelessness. Paid support staff can do a lot, but they can’t do everything. When it comes to care and support more will always be given by those attached to us emotionally than can ever be given by those attached to us professionally.

It is our project’s culture that nurtures and develops trust. Guests are more likely to divulge honest and truthful information about themselves and their situation in this environment. With accurate assessment and willing engagement of the help needed, the PC role then, and only then, is one of service support broker. We believe more appropriate and meaningful referrals are made as a result. This means more successful utilization of those professional services that are funded by our taxes. It is this combination of and working relationship between voluntary and commercial and statutory agencies, that yields the greatest results.

WHY WE DO IT...

Gerard Lemos is a partner at social researchers Lemos & Crane. He is the author of several books and reports on supporting vulnerable people including, The Communities We Have Lost and Can Regain (1997), with Michael Young: A Future Foretold: new approaches to meeting the long-term needs of single homeless people (1999); Dreams Deferred: the families and friends of homeless and vulnerable people (2002), and Military History: the experiences of people who become homeless after military service (2005), both with Stefan Durkacz.
**What Our Guests & Volunteers Tell Us...**

**Housing Justice**

The Specialist Philosophy and Theology College of the University of London

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**Voice 1:** I’ve been in London for a long time and going round the seven churches first in Camden and now Islington, I’m just discovering London, so it does help with the decision as to where I’m going to be living ... methink there are a lot of lonely people among us who are going to miss the group whenever we go in different directions.

**Richard:** I think what Anna was saying is right, you never know what will happen when you come in here. There is no hierarchy or set ... an effort to come, but it’s so nice when you come and see people eating a hot meal together and just chatting with people.

**FG Leader:** So for you it has been quite a profound experience coming to the Shelter.

**Voice 7:** Oh mate, it’s like someone has whacked me on the head with a baseball bat, as soon as I came in here. This was my first night, a Monday night, in here, on the 28th January 2008. When I rang up Mark he said, hey it’s your lucky day we’ve got a bed for you on a four week ... For me to come here now and explain there’s life after death is important for me, you know, you’ve got to make it happen.

**Jean:** I just think it makes you much more aware of what you’re doing and being in this environment and sometimes it’s an uncomfortable environment for people if they are going into work with homeless people or whatever environment in the media or whatever and I think ... It makes you look at homeless people. If you’re going on the tube or the bus, whatever, it makes me think, do I know and just say you’re good, everybody’s got reasons and enlightened reasons, there are some very frightened people and very vulnerable and it doesn’t mean you’re going to go and say, right the longer you are going to help you. It’s all done in a very sort of calm manner, notastype, not just there to help and everything. It’s ... I don’t know, it’s just made us be there and listen.

**Jenny:** They all seem to lend an ear to you and to see. Some people went in and saw people and you just accept that don’t you, don’t you?

**Voice 10:** Every Church I’ve been to has personally made me feel very welcome. It was very daunting for me first time being homeless.

**Voice 11:** There are no other words you can use. I mean, we could be called the homeless geezers! (laughing).

**Voice 10:** First time I stayed at Union Chapel I thought, right, they’ve taken me out the cold and given me a warm plate of food and I ... but Louis came up and said “Hey you don’t have to do that you’re our guest”. It was the way he said it, it was amazing.

**Nick:** You’ve got to bear in mind though that most people, if you’re on the streets you are pretty isolated most of the time, the street family is important, and I know, people have relationships with each other but essentially you’re pretty eaten up. Most people are right through and there when you go and talk in them and go down to the Salvation Army and they make you want to go again and they dehumanize you and they tell you that you’re small, which you aren’t in their eyes but because you are random. 300 bed that they have seen that week and the housing list is that much longer and it’s there are no shortage questions about housing which needs to be addressed here and we ...

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**Housing Justice is a national organisation giving voice to Christian concerns and action in the field of housing and homelessness.** Housing Justice approached ARCS with a view to ARCS helping facilitate some theological reflection on their work. The ARCS team are keen to be working with a group engaged in social justice issues in London. Specifically this included in-depth research in two parishes (one Anglican and one Catholic) cooperating in an appropriate social justice project. Alastair Murray, their London Coordinator at the time, invited CICCSW to participate and we agreed. This is our second year participating in this research. We have adopted this cyclical process as part of our own critical evaluation of our project and work. It presents a very challenging, independently facilitated self-examination of what we are doing and why we are doing it. We are our own harshest critics.
When Homeless Link conducted their research for their Cold Weather Shelter Report this year they invited guest feedback on our projects. Following is a selection of the comments that were made by our guests:

“The bottom line is that they are churches, house of god, they won’t turn people away, but we have had people defecating in the church and urinating in the hall, smoking and drug use in the church, it all impacts people and the churches can’t deal with it.”

“It is good to get myself sorted out, GP, housing, stability in my life, food, clothing, showers, and library card.”

“All the volunteers have been brilliant and without them I would be on the streets.”

“It would be helpful if the shelter was on one place, but I really have no complaints the staff have been brilliant.”

“This is my first experience of something like this and it is actually better than I thought it would be with lots of friendly faces who try and help you.”

“It is brilliant, friendly helpful staff, somewhere safe to sleep each night, a haven to start each day.”

“They try and turn a blind eye, but they need a screening process.”

“It would be good if volunteers got paid and the way we would get better services, more access to medical support on site and a telephone for referrals.”

“It would be good if we had access to a pool table to pass the time.”

“All applicants should be screened, so violent and aggressive people aren’t allowed in.”

“Such loving and caring people”

“They see some people who are unsuitable in here and I think churches will drop off if they are not allowed to. It has an impact on the volunteers. The volunteers are all excellent.”

“All the workers, volunteers here are all excellent.”

“I think the night shelters are absolutely excellent on the whole.”

“The service should be better advertised.”

“It is fantastic here, amazing volunteers, lots of emotional and practical support.”

It is a well known statistic in the homelessness sector that anywhere between 40%-50% of rough-sleepers that are found accommodation return to the streets within a year. Millions of pounds have been invested across all sectors into supported housing, floating support and tenancy sustainment. And yet, “gaps in services” is an all too common refrain to be heard in the sector.

As a society, a community of people, we have developed a multi-million pound industry around homelessness in this country. There are a plethora of wonderful agencies, big, small, professional, statutory, charitable and voluntary doing valuable work in myriad ways. You need only look through St. Mungo’s “In Reach” handbook publication www.mungos.org/in_reach and the London Housing Foundation’s “Atlas of Services” www.homelessforum.org.uk/publications_resources.aspx?id=42 to get a sense of the depth and breadth of this industry in London alone. This is our, entirely commensurate, response to the scale and complexity of the issue of homelessness. But despite our thriving homelessness industry, homelessness shows no sign of abating.

Homelessness is a ubiquitous and apparently unquenchable dilemma. Bold pronouncements have been made to put an end to rough-sleeping and “eradicate” homelessness. While this may be a worthwhile declaration to make by way of a clarion call to rally people and resources around very worthy goals in addressing a very real need and alleviating undoubtedly suffering; we believe that homelessness is not something to be eradicated. It simply exists just as “home” exists – the counter to a concept around which we structure our community of communities, our society. What we need to do is embrace it and understand it. Our project provides us all with the opportunity to do just that, together, in a common environment of hospitality and in the knowledge that growth does not reside in comfortable places.

As the twice-honoured Nobel Prize winner, Marie Curie said;

“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood.
Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”
A proposal for representatives of the network of shelter projects to make a weekend retreat, made at a winter shelter forum meeting some time ago, was realised this year. Funding was sourced from Church Urban Fund by Sally Leigh, Chair of the Shelter Forum, for 15 people to spend a weekend at Launde Abbey, Leicestershire (www.launde.org.uk) on 31 July to 2 August. The 15 people attending represented trustees, paid and volunteer shelter coordinators, other shelter volunteers and two previously homeless people.

We decided to take the opportunity to discuss the Homeless Link Cold Weather Shelter Report and its recommendations and, most importantly, reflect on our work. In order to focus and stimulate robust discussion and debate, delegates were asked to consider the church and state perspectives presented by Bishop James Langstaff, Chair of Housing Justice and Michelle Binfield, Specialist Advisor (Rough-Sleeping) to Communities and Local Government (CLG) at the 2009 Housing Justice National Conference on 18 June – www.housingjustice.org.uk/events/HJ_Conference.htm

In the words of Bishop James Langstaff:
There’s a wider setting here which takes us beyond the particular field of homelessness to the wider issue of the relationship between faith and faith communities on the one hand and, on the other, public policy and governmental initiative and funding. Government has become of late very positive in its language about working with the 3rd sector in general and the faith sector in particular. There are of course various motivations for that (including the prevention of violent extremism one), but we take it as genuine that government does indeed want to engage even to the point where some politicians see a future for faith groups as major deliverers of welfare services. Some of us in the faith sector have our doubts about that: anxieties, for example, of losing our independence, our cutting edge and becoming co-opted as a de facto arm of government.

In the words of Michelle Binfield:
Churches, faith groups and volunteers often work with great commitment to give an important helping hand to vulnerable people, which is something to celebrate. But the challenge is how to ensure that services like the Winter shelters play an effective part in a joined up strategy at the local level to sustainably end the need for people to sleep on the street. The Government’s rough sleeping strategy “No One Left Out – Communities Ending Rough Sleeping” signals our desire to work collaboratively with faith and church groups and volunteers to enable this to happen.

Consequently, at a meeting in September here in London attended by Michelle Binfield and representatives of Housing Justice, Homeless Link, St.Mungo’s, central London Outreach Teams and our network of Winter Shelter projects – an initial action plan was drafted in support of the Church Winter Shelter network and our role in a “joined up strategy”.

LAUNDE ABBEY RETREAT
Our shelters for rough sleepers are a loose group of independent projects. There is great value in this which should be protected and not be ignored. We have the ability to take new initiatives, respond to local need and tap into the skills of local volunteers.

So how do we go forward?

We decided that the way forward was to unrelentingly attempt to foster and develop appropriate relationships with rough sleepers, starting with the invitation to our shelters to share a meal with us. There was unanimity that the work we are doing speaks for itself.

Because we only operate in and around the cold weather months of the year we are often levied with criticism for letting our guests down and abandoning vulnerable people when we close each year. This led to some complex viewing and emotional anxieties to the surface and, as you can imagine, prompted some lively discourse initiated by an immediate and resounding “Yes!” from the group and followed quickly by one delegate with “...but four walls don’t make a home”.

Following are bullet point notes made from that discourse.

- Tenancy support makes a difference.
- Befriending people and acting as a surrogate family (this takes time, energy and resources).
- Group homes the answer? Building community – role of relationships are essential!
- Blue salmon tool to assess progress (www.bluesalmon.org.uk/). The person takes ownership of the process, they can do it online alone. It maps out intimate, client, distant relationships. Relationships are critical to welfare.
- We offer the invitation to be guests in the shelters. It is their choice to decide whether to come into the shelter or not. We do not assume they want to come inside. This is an important part of building our community in shelters. We do not assume people want to be helped.
- Hospitality, warmth and sustenance is what the church offers. The choice to walk away is theirs. We need to emphasise the importance of this. We are not trying to push people into pigeon holes.
- The example was given of Kaleidoscope Kingston and their drug programme. They concentrate on building community, to provide stability and maintain the prescription.
- There are problems with labelling people. The church can offer hospitality, warmth and sustenance. The choice to walk away is theirs. We try to emphasize the importance of this. We do not push people. We emphasize the importance of freedom of choice. We are not constrained by rules or governance. We welcome people if they choose to come in.

CICCWS FINANCIAL REPORT 2008–09

Income

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**Surplus for the year**

£21,168

Reserves brought forward

16,735

Reserves carried forward

£37,903

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2. Grant Everett and Steve McKeown – New Directions in Street Homelessness; A good practise guide to supporting service users with complex needs (from the Shelter organisation policy library, October 2006)

CICCWS would like to formally accredit and thank Housing Justice, Islington Council, Homeless Link and the ARCS Team at Heythrop College for their contributions to this report and their permission to print accordingly.

An electronic version of this report is available to download from the CARIS Islington website www.carisislington.org
IN CONCLUSION

The CICCWS project presents the opportunity for all its participants to make their own personal exploration into homelessness in their own pace and time and, most importantly, in an environment of simple, genuine hospitality. We invite you to join us:

- Visit one or more of our shelter venues with no obligation
- Volunteer for an evening, overnight or breakfast shift at a venue that is most convenient for you
- Donate clothes, blankets and/or toiletries for our guests
- Help us fundraise

Our project operates thanks to the CARIS Islington organisation of staff, volunteers, and trustees; the goodwill of the participating churches and clergy, the cooperation and support of the network of agencies indicated in this report; donations and grants from sympathetic and understanding individuals and trust funds. We are very grateful, and urge and encourage all ongoing support for our work. Contact us today:

CARIS Islington
Tel: 020 7281-5200 • Email: carisislington@yahoo.co.uk

Cold Weather Shelter Project
Tel: 07960 491 151 • Project Coordinator Email: ciccws@hotmail.co.uk

Gift Aid – Making your donation go further

Do you know if you are a UK tax payer, charities can reclaim tax on any donation you make?
All it requires is completing a simple declaration as shown here. So if you are thinking of making a donation to CARIS or have already done so (since April 2000) then please consider completing one of these. It means that we can reclaim 25p from the Inland Revenue for every £1 you donate.

If you have any questions or are unsure about anything please contact;

The Treasurer,
CARIS Islington,
The Annexe –
St Mellitus Church
79A Tollington Park,
London N4 3AG