

# Acton Homeless Concern



**Advice • Support • Hope**

**A.G.M. REPORT 2017**

## **MISSION STATEMENT FOR ACTON HOMELESS CONCERN**

The Mission of Acton Homeless Concern (The Charity) is to be a living reality of God's Kingdom by respecting the dignity of the poor. The purpose of The Charity is not just to "do something for the poor", but to work in solidarity in a growing relationship which is mutually enriching.

The Charity evolved as members of the Sacred Hearts Community listened to needs expressed by the local community. This was highlighted by the many who sought food, clothing, friendship, counselling, professional advice at the church door, and who were stark reminders of the need of the church to make a practical response in the light of the Gospel.

The factors that make The Charity quite distinctive are:

- It is located at the heart of the local community
- It has been supported from the beginning by the local parish, local churches, the local community and the Local Authority and with funding from private individuals and grants from other providers.
- The buildings are conducive to developing friendships that extend onto the streets where clients continue to befriend and be befriended by those who work at The Charity.
- As well as providing basic material needs, The Charity works to change unjust structures and systems that degrade the dignity and quality of life of homeless people.
- It is a place where people feel it is all right to feel vulnerable. All are welcome.
- It is a source of networking that is accessible to the homeless where their needs are recognised and their human rights are respected.
- It acts as a political advocate for the needs of the marginalized.

Many needs are presented: lack of housing, poor accommodation, broken families, unemployment, mental illness and substance misuse etc., but The Charity is honest with itself in what it may respond to at any given time or place.

The ethos of The Charity is shaped by listening to the needy themselves, and being at the service of and in solidarity with homeless people. The spirit of The Charity is encapsulated by the following: Mission of Christ, "being sent to bring good news to the poor", befriending, empowering, transforming, social justice and truth.

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**THE TEAM**

TRUSTEES

Anne Gray	Chairperson
Simon Makepeace	Treasurer
Fr. John Leahy	Secretary and Trustee
Mary Foster	Trustee
Vivienne Duggan	Trustee
Peter Robertson	Trustee
Karen McDonagh	Trustee
Tracey Fereirra	Trustee
Maggie Hingley	Meeting Secretary

MANAGEMENT STAFF

Ian Breen	Centre Manager
Kim Keane	Administrator

EMMAUS HOUSE STAFF

Rose Mwananshiku	Senior Project Worker
Emira Hyseni	Cook

DAMIEN CENTRE STAFF

Carole Melville	Project Worker
Les McGee	Project Assistant
Nadia Afzal	Project Assistant

**REFLECTIONS FROM THE PARISH**  
**Acton Homeless Concern**

This year Acton Homeless Concern completes 28 years of service and commitment to those on the margins of our society. As you all know, what we do is so much more than serve a hot meal. It is a place of welcome, love, generosity and mercy. It's a place for lives to be transformed and relationships to be built, whether you are a client or a volunteer.

Long before Pope Francis put an emphasis on mercy in the Church, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSCC) put it into practice when they established Acton Homeless Concern. Many of the early committee members have gone to their eternal reward, including Sarah Gibbons earlier this year. Many other early volunteers and committee members like Robert Byrne and many others are still alive and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their generosity in years past.

Thankfully, and with equal dedication, many others have taken up the baton as Trustees, Volunteers and Fundraisers to steer Emmaus House and Damien Centre on a course of growth and development which is the envy of other organizations. Their dedication and loyalty deserve special mention and on behalf of everyone in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts we thank you most sincerely for all you do.

As I write this, the Church is celebrating the Transfiguration of the Lord. It is a day that invites us to look at the mystery of Jesus Christ, living among us. Each and every day, those of us fortunate enough to work with Acton Homeless Concern meet Christ in the poor and vulnerable, the lonely and depressed, the wanderer and the refugee and the many other types of 'Christ' that come through our door. As Christ was transfigured on the mountain a voice came from heaven that said: 'This is my beloved, Listen to Him'. The beloved of Christ come to us for help and support. We listen to them, nourish them, clothe them and help to prepare them in any way we can to go back into our world and take their place in it as equal citizens. In Acton Homeless Concern, we enter into what Pope Francis says is 'Jesus logic; [Jesus] who bends down to wash the feet of his Apostles'.

To everyone who has helped Acton Homeless Concern in any way, thank you for all that you do, often quietly, without fuss and unknown to most. Speaking of quietly and without fuss, we remember Fr John Leahy ssc who quietly and without any fuss contributed so much to the charity over his 11 years as parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes. The amount of work he did with the trustees under the direction of Anne Gray and with Ian, Rose and Emira and all involved with the charity is incalculable. Fr John is currently receiving treatment for Leukaemia and we send him our warmest wishes and prayers for a speedy recovery.

May the good Lord continue to bless each and every one of you.

With prayers and best wishes

**Fr Ultan Naughton ssc**  
**Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Team**

**CLIENT STORY - AS TOLD TO IAN BREEN**

I was born in Dublin in 1989. I grew up alongside three sisters and five brothers. My mother had a drink problem and my da left home when I was eleven and I never saw him again. My eldest sister bought me up as by then mammy was unable to cope anymore and sadly she died two years later from a liver complication.

When I was thirteen my eldest brother introduced me to smoking dope. It was an escape from the life I was living and I was soon taking other drugs as well. I was introduced to heroin at the age of fifteen. I became an addict and started selling for a dealer who gave me a small percentage of what I sold for myself. My addiction became so bad that I needed more and more and started burgling houses to feed my craving for the stuff.

By this time, I had left home and was living on the streets. Begging and stealing became second nature to me and I was on a crazy carousel that I could not get off. When I was low after using I would often cry so hard to myself for help, but I wouldn't approach anyone and the next day I would be looking for my next fix to get my daily high.

I met a girl who was also an addict. We became very close and depended on each other for all the wrong reasons. We wandered the streets together and were both begging and stealing from shops to satisfy our habits. One day we had a done well stealing and we sold a lot of the stuff we had thieved to a local restaurant. We bought some heroin and bottles of beer and sat near the river drinking and injecting. The next thing I remembered was waking up in hospital with a Garda looking over me wanting to ask questions.

I was told that my girlfriend was dead and it was suspected the heroin we had taken was not good quality and that I had also nearly died. That was a big turning point in my life. I agreed to see the hospital's social worker and from there I went into a rehabilitation centre for three months. I met people like myself, many had exactly or almost the same life stories.

I was twenty-four and hadn't taken drugs for six months. I wouldn't say I was clean and I still had withdrawal problems, so I went to live with my eldest sister and my brother-in-law. They were kind and sort of "got me" but with three children in a small house it was very overcrowded. I stayed for four months.

I then decided to go to London to try and get a job. I had an aunt in Hammersmith but no phone number only an address. I decided to call on her but when I reached the address I was told by a neighbour that she had moved away some five years ago to Reading and the neighbour said she left no address.

So, I was homeless once more and had nowhere to go. I started sleeping in a local park and met a Polish guy who said he got free food from a charity called Acton Homeless Concern. I went the next day and got a shower, some clean clothes and a meal. The people were nice and while I was looking for work I could keep going for what I needed.

I found a job on a construction site in Ealing but couldn't start because I hadn't got a national insurance number. The charity helped me get one and after three weeks I found another job on a building site. I was still homeless at this point and hadn't got my first wages to do anything about it. It was the onset of winter and it was getting colder. Then the charity phoned me and said that there may be a chance of obtaining a bedsit in Ealing if I could get there in one hour. I spoke to my foreman who said I could go and finally I got my place, a roof over my head and a key to a door. It was, for me, pure bliss. It's been seven years now and I have a partner and a three-year old son.

I pass the charity sometimes and think if it wasn't for the support and kindness I got from them I may have gone back to my old ways again. ***You don't know how good you are.***

**(This client wishes to remain anonymous, but his details are available)**

## What Acton Homeless Concern means to me .....



## TRUSTEES REPORT 2017

Trustees meet on the first Wednesday of every month (except August).  
Between meetings various sub-committees deal with individual areas of the charity's work and operations.

Trustees do not receive payment of any kind for work they carry out for the charity.

### **The Aims of the charity are:**

To provide basic needs services to impoverished and homeless people in London  
To contribute to raising levels of awareness to the problems of the homeless  
To increase, wherever possible, opportunities for rehabilitation and settlement  
To improve accessibility to counselling and medical services  
To enable clients to take control at levels which are acceptable to them  
To ensure equality of opportunity and to promote inclusion for clients, staff and volunteers  
To investigate and further utilise other supportive groups and share good practice  
To provide good quality services and continuing value for money to funders and benefactors

### **The Principal Objectives of the charity are:**

- Fitter, healthier clients who are better equipped to deal with the problems of their lifestyles and who recognise the benefits of self-care
- Inclusion for clients, creating improved confidence and social skills, appreciation of the benefits to be gained through contact with peers and trust in support groups and agencies
- Earlier intervention for possible long-term health problems for the benefit of both the client and the community at large
- Improved access to advice on emergency housing, drug and alcohol problems
- Greater understanding and acceptance of clients and their problems amongst the local community.

### **AT EMMAUS HOUSE WE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:**

Hot lunch at midday 5 days a week.

Distribution of clothing

Hot showers and hairdressing facilities

GP Surgery once a week, (at Brook Green Health Centre, transport arranged for clients if required)

Health checks and testing (Fortnightly Checks for HIV, Hepatitis C, Diabetes, High Blood pressure)

Exclusive Women's day once a week

Access to Optician, Dentist and Chiropodist as required

Guidance and crisis counselling including:

Advice on emergency hostel accommodation

Alcohol and drug counselling

Benefits advice and assistance

Fortnightly Legal advice clinic (advice on housing, benefits and other issues)

Assistance with hospital visits, Benefit appeals and prison visits.

Irish Support and Advice (Provided by partners)

Elderly Irish support group

**AT THE DAMIEN CENTRE**

Breakfast and tea, coffee and sandwiches throughout the day Opportunity to socialise and interact with peers, volunteers and staff

A safe environment to rest and relax throughout the day

Advice and referral to Emmaus House services when required Access to advice and counselling on an informal basis.

**In the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 the charity recorded delivery of the following services:**

Hot lunches at Emmaus House	40651 (actual meals not individual clients) – 2050 Requests (6000 items of shoes and Clothing distributed)
Household items	232 (Requested and provided)
Showers and Haircuts	1789 Doctor/Dentist/Optician/Chiropodist
Holistic Health	245 People attended for various treatments
Women’s Day	893 visits
Advice Sessions	720
Damien Centre	22495 (Breakfast, Suppers and snacks throughout the day)
Volunteer Hours	13976

*(Numbers shown are for the financial period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Reduction in some numbers are as a result of the closure of The Damien Centre for 4 weeks last Autumn for refurbishment work and also (as reported by clients) an increase in the number of Eastern European clients returning to their home countries or moving to other EU countries following the referendum in June 2016. This would now appear to be a reversing trend with many returning and numbers in the new financial year again increasing week by week.)*

3600 people were recorded as sleeping rough in London on any one night in 2016. The number is in the region of 19,000 people nationally. And these are the people who were willing to be found. A recent report by the Crisis charity estimates that: *at any one time in 2016 across Britain, there were: 9,100 rough sleepers, 68,300 households sofa surfing 19,300 households in unsuitable temporary accommodation; 37,200 households living in hostels; 26,000 households in other circumstances such as sleeping in tents, on public transport, in cars, women’s refuges, winter night shelters or living in squats* The report warns that these overall numbers are estimated to increase by 26.5% over the next 10 years and the number of households in unsuitable temporary accommodation is set to nearly double, up by 93%.

The new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 aims to improve the way that local authorities and housing agencies deal with the problem of people becoming homeless and is geared toward a policy of prevention. Whilst this first major change in housing legislation in more than 15 years is welcomed it is questionable that it can immediately deal with the problems experienced by our client group.

Acton Homeless Concern will continue to work as a responsive agency, providing services for people who already experience the effects of rough sleeping, ill health and poverty. Trustees have spent time reviewing the charity's work and its current place compared to other organisations for helping the homeless and have decided that we will continue to respond to the problem that already exists, the people knocking on our door and sleeping in our doorway. We will support all efforts by others to move towards a policy of zero homelessness of any kind, but we see our mission as being to alleviate the problem that already exists for large numbers of people.

We are grateful for our great team of staff led by our Centre Manager Ian Breen, together with Kim, Rose, Emira, Carole and new staff, Les and Nadia. We thank you all for your ongoing commitment.

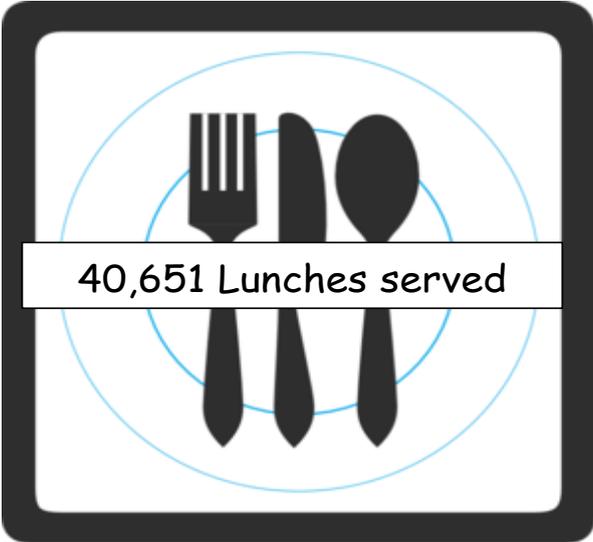
Thank you also to our volunteers. The work of the charity would not be possible without their efforts. They provided almost 14,000 hours of service last year. At living wage this contribution was worth more than £130,000 for the year. This does not include the work carried out by trustees, visiting professionals or corporate volunteers which would add an estimated £100,000 to the number.

The newly refurbished Damien Centre has been one of our biggest achievements during the year. We need to thank Simon Makepeace for his involvement in managing the work and Ian and his staff for coping so well while the centre was closed. As with all refurbishments, the project seemed to grow and grow with each scheduled piece of work revealing another problem area. It is now up and operational with improved working areas for staff and a far more pleasant environment for clients.

The more formal report included with our accounts will show a financial reserve of £180,000, equal to one full year's running cost for the charity. Trustees have wanted this level of reserve for some time, to ensure the continuity of our services for our clients and job security for our staff. The accumulation of the fund has been possible due to the continued support of a benefactor who insists he must remain anonymous but who has contributed almost the entire amount of the reserve over the past two financial periods. At a time of financial uncertainty for many small charities, we are at the very least assured of immediate security with the opportunity to research and source new avenues of funding as we move forward.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACTON HOMELESS CONCERN**

Art Work by Milly McDonagh



## **OUR THANK YOU LIST GROWS LONGER EVERY YEAR**

Councillor Dr. Patricia Walker for her amazing support during her term as Mayor of Ealing. Dr. Walker arranged a series of events that, as well as raising much needed finance, also brought the charity and its clients to the attention of local government and the wider community. We will continue to benefit from her work long into the future.

The Emigrant Support Programme of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. We are grateful to the department for its continued funding which enables us to provide support for first, second and sometimes third generation Irish people in need of help. We particularly appreciate the acceptance of the department that we care for people of all ethnicities.

We must thank, yet again, Ciaran Casey and Tommy James for another Golf Day which raised an amazing amount of money and goodwill for the charity. Despite their concerns about the change of venue for the event, this turned into the best day yet. We also thank Tommy for the financial support we have received from The Irish Vintage Club. We know that this was as a direct result of his interest in Acton Homeless Concern.

Despite his yearly protestations that “this is the last one” Jim Scully arranged yet another - Annual dance in November - Thank you Jim (and Betty).

### **For continued funding:**

The Willow Trust.  
The Batchworth Trust  
Sacred Hearts Congregation in Ealing  
The Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Acton

### **For donations of food throughout the year:**

Fare Share  
City Harvest  
The Felix Project  
Marks and Spencer PLC  
Sainsbury's PLC  
Tesco PLC  
Freshways Dairy - Acton  
Mrs. McCloud and her daughter Carmen  
Ravi for his parcels of support  
Maurice and Audrey Long for their ongoing support of our Christmas celebrations

### **Schools and Churches**

St Vincent's School, Sacred Heart High School, Mount Carmel School,  
St Augustine's Priory School, Greenside School,  
St Mary's Church, St Peter & Paul Church, Berrymead Evangelical Church, West London  
Islamic Centre, St Andrew's Reform Church, Chiswick Catholic Centre, Little Company of Mary  
Sisters,  
Saint Vincent De Paul Society – Amersham, The London Buddhist Vihara – Chiswick.

**CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS**

**We would also like to thank the many companies and corporations who have volunteered with us throughout the year.**

**Boden Y Company**

**XL Catlin**

**Barclays Bank**

**National Citizenship Service**

**The European Academy**

**Benefacto**

**Alliance Bernstein**

**AppNexus**

**Accenture**

**AECOM**

**Mace Group**

**Ashurst LLP**

**AtriumZopa**

**Liberty Specialty Markets**

**MJ Mapp**

**Marsh & McLennan**

**Christies**

**Awin**

**Department for Energy and Industrial Strategy**

**Tideway**

**Bank of Ireland**

**MacFarlanes**

**Kantar**

**Weber Shandwick**

**Columbia Threadneedle4SEGRO**

**Aimia**

SERVICES AT EMMAUS HOUSE (020 89925768)

<b>Meals</b>	Alternate Sunday/Monday, Tuesday to Friday. 11.45-2.00 pm
<b>Clothing/Sleeping Bags/Bedding</b>	Wednesday (Women and children) 12noon-2.00 pm Thursday (Men) 11.45-1.30 pm and on request in an emergency
<b>Showers</b>	Tuesday to Friday 12noon-2.00 pm Wednesday (Women only) - 12noon-2.00 pm
<b>On request Barber/Hairdresser</b>	Every Thursday 12noon-1.30 pm
<b>Chiropodist</b>	Last Friday of the month 12noon-2.00 pm
<b>Doctor/ Health Check</b>	On request
<b>Optician</b>	2nd Wednesday of the month 12noon-2.00 pm
<b>Women &amp; Children's Group</b>	Wednesday at No.3 Berrymead Gardens 12noon-2.00 pm
<b>Alcohol/Drug Counsellor</b>	Tuesday 12 noon-2.00 pm
<b>Dentist</b>	On request
<b>AA meetings</b>	Saturday (Emmaus House) 11.00 am Thursday (Emmaus House) 7.00 pm
<b>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping</b>	Advice and referral on request
<b>Irish Advocacy</b>	Every other Friday 12noon-2.00pm
<b>Holistic treatments</b>	Friday 9.00-12noon at No. 3 Berrymead Gardens

**We can also help with applications for Irish passports. Applications forms are available at Emmaus House. Contact Ian Breen on 020 89925768**

SERVICES AT THE DAMIEN CENTRE: (020 8993 6096)

<b>Breakfast</b>	Monday to Friday 9.00-12noon
<b>Light meals and refreshments</b>	Monday to Friday 2.00-6.00 pm Thursday: 2.30-6.00 pm

Art Class  
(Parish Hall St Mary's Church)  
Thursdays 2.00-5.00 pm

Computer classes  
(Parish Hall St Mary's Church)  
Tuesday 2.00-5.00 pm

Music sessions  
(Parish Hall St Mary's Church) Tuesday 2.00-5.00 pm

## Other service providers:

[www.shelter.org](http://www.shelter.org)

<https://www.crisis.org.uk>

[www.stmungosbroadway.org.uk](http://www.stmungosbroadway.org.uk)  
(Emergency hostel accommodation)

[www.homeless.org](http://www.homeless.org)  
(Advice on homelessness and links to all other services)

<https://ealing.foodbank.org.uk/>  
(Three-day emergency food supplies for people in crisis)

[www.adviceguide.org](http://www.adviceguide.org)  
(Citizens Advice online support)

[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)  
(NHS supported alcohol advice)

[www.project6.org.uk](http://www.project6.org.uk)  
(Information and advice on drug abuse)

[www.ealingrise.org.uk](http://www.ealingrise.org.uk)  
(Information and advice on alcohol and drug abuse)

[www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)  
(Advice on benefits entitlement)

[info@aisling.org.uk](mailto:info@aisling.org.uk)  
(Help with return to Ireland for elderly Irish people)

Please contact us if you need help communicating with any of these organisations

**ACTON HOMELESS CONCERN (Emmaus House and Damien Centre)  
1 Berrymead Gardens, London W3 8AA**

*Registered Charity No. 1058819. Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3252735*

CONTACT US ON

Telephone: 020 89925768

[admin@actonhomelessconcern.org](mailto:admin@actonhomelessconcern.org)

<http://actonhomelessconcern.org/>



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁLA NA HÉIREANN  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF IRELAND