



Churches Together in King's Lynn newsletter November 2022.

Access Migrant Support charity wins a prestigious award:

Philip Walker, who is the CEO of the Access Migrant Support charity in Lynn, philip@accessmigrantsupport.org.uk gave a very interesting talk to the executive committee about the work of the Access Migrant Support charity in King's Lynn, <https://www.accessmigrantsupport.org.uk/>

Philip reminded the group that Access was born in the year 2000 as the King's Lynn Asylum and Refugee Service, (KLARS), which was started by Churches Together in King's Lynn. In the current economic climate Philip said that many organisations are having a hard time. Philip was appointed as CEO in April 2022 and he leads a charity which is giving support, health information and guidance to migrants locally. These are people who are facing a crisis of identity in a strange country. During Covid no face-to-face meetings were possible and Brexit has also complicated the work. Migrant communities are now maturing.

Philip previously worked in Bradford where he was dealing with clients who suffered a lot of mental health issues which required interaction, listening, wellbeing and problem prevention. The stresses of life for these people leads to poverty and domestic abuse.

Access have just won the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System (ICS) Health Inequalities Challenge Prize 2022. The clients of the Access charity want face to face meetings with supporters as this is good for their mental health and reduces their feelings of isolation. Pop-up meetings around the area work well but they are costly. Access is now using virtual focus groups and they came up with the idea of providing YouTube videos to educate migrants about how to use the government and community systems in the UK. For example, how to register with a GP. These videos can be made in different languages with English subtitles and could be seen by potential immigrants in their home countries before they travel, for example, in Ukraine. To date, the project has funding for another year and the long-term plan would be to get a commercial sponsor involved, like one of the windfarm companies. Philip is keen to partner with churches.

Olivia O'Neill oliviakingslynn@gmail.com spoke about **Celebrate King's Lynn** which is a free annual family fun day first held on the Walks in Lynn in June 2016

and supported by all the churches. As well as giving God's Love to the people of the town the event serves to bring churches to work together.

Olivia previously worked with a committee, but the other members have now left the area so she is now running the event on her own with support from family, friends and churches. Because of the Jubilee celebrations this year the timing of the event was moved to July from the usual time of June, the start of the King's Lynn Festival. Next year the event will be returned to June, bearing in mind that the date of the Coronation should be avoided.

The event usually costs about £5000 to put on. Olivia said that booking the Walks is free.

Olivia was very impressed by the passion play staged in Norwich by the Celebrate team there, however the event cost £38,000 to put on. Olivia has been approached by the Passion Play Trust and would like to consider staging a play in 2024 in King's Lynn.

Please put an entry into your church newsletter so that any members of your church who would like to volunteer to help Olivia can contact her.

CAP King's Lynn Debt Centre: Laura Joslin, laurajoslin@capuk.org the debt coach, writes: After six and a half years of faithfully serving the King's Lynn Debt Centre as a manager, Emily Hart has been promoted to Area Manager for the East of England (North). Since her departure, the trustees have approved a candidate for her replacement, and the interview for this post will be in January. We are looking forward to welcoming our new team leader following the Debt Centre Management training early in the new year. We have also had two new volunteers join us in October, and we will be running volunteer training in November and January.

Since September, we have had a steady flow of referrals, and the source of these referrals has been mostly word of mouth. It has been a great encouragement to know that clients have shared their positive experiences with the CAP service. As a Debt Coach, I currently have a caseload of 15 households at various stages on their journey out of debt. The main challenge for our clients is trying to live on unsustainable budgets. In many cases, even if the client becomes debt free, they are likely to fall back into debt. Some clients are also struggling without essential items such as cookers, fridges, and freezers.

With Christmas approaching, the King's Centre church has launched an appeal for donations of Christmas hampers. These will be distributed to CAP clients and collected by other charities on Monday 12th of December. The Minister is also running a scheme to provide Christmas trees for those in need.

We really value prayer support for our service and would welcome anyone who would like to join us. As of this month, the prayer meeting will be held once a month on Tuesdays at the King's Centre. The meeting will run from 11-00-12-00 and the doors will be open at 10-45.

Helen Gilbert, King's Lynn Foodbank Project Manager helen@kingslynn.foodbank.org.uk Tel: 07582558143 writes: Thank you to all the churches who have so generously supported the Foodbank this Harvest through food and financial donations and also through prayer support. I can't begin to tell you how much it means to have this support holding us up during what is likely

to be our busiest winter ever, especially as we know that so many people in our churches will be feeling the pinch of rising energy and food prices themselves. As the demand is increasing, we will be opening for more hours during the week. From next week we will be opening on a Wednesday, as we did pre-pandemic, so that we can spread the demand over more days and ease the load on our volunteers. We are hoping that this will be a short-term measure, but we will review it in the coming weeks.

We've had a bit of a change around in the Foodbank this week - although we don't have the space to welcome people into the building for coffee as we did pre-pandemic, we have switched things around to try to ensure that particularly during the winter months, people won't need to queue outside in the cold. Whilst it is still not the ideal that we hope for, it is a more dignified experience for those coming to the Foodbank. We continue to search for new premises which will allow easier access to the building (we currently have steps which make it difficult or impossible for those with buggies or those with disabilities), and to enable us to engage in longer conversations with people and signpost them to help with the cause of their crisis. This will mean that they will need to come to the Foodbank less frequently, if at all. Please continue to pray that we will find somewhere suitable soon. This is one step of many that will enable us to move towards a time when there is no need for a Foodbank in King's Lynn. Thank you once again for your ongoing support. May God Bless you throughout the coming season as we focus on the Light coming into the world.

The Night Shelter nightshelter.steering@gmail.com At the AGM of the Night Shelter on 18th October 2022, **Lucy McKitterick**, the co-ordinator, said that the Night Shelter has been open for 12 nights so far this “season”, with 10 guests welcomed to stay. 15 others have been referred to us or come as self-referrals, and a further 20 people have been seen at the door and given other help and support. In other words, we have been open less than two weeks and have already supported 45 people in need of help, and have had nearly three times as many requests as we have rooms (8) to give.

First and foremost, the Night Shelter was set up to help save lives on the streets in King's Lynn and West Norfolk: to stop people dying sleeping rough. The first step is always shelter and safety, food and sleep, physical and mental health, GP registration ... and from there we move on to conversations about alcohol and drugs, immigration status, benefits, debts, housing, maintaining a tenancy.

But none of the work we do, bringing guests in, helping them find a home, seeing them moved safely on, is any good at all if a person doesn't believe they are worth it. We saw a guest this summer, homeless and in and out of prison for the best part of ten years, asked to leave the Night Shelter on at least two occasions for bringing in drugs, settle into a home of his own. It's a beautiful home, it has a front garden, a back garden, a sitting room, it is cleaner than mine. He cooks proper meals and plants vegetables and has started volunteering at the Night Shelter. To me it seems like a miracle. But that isn't important: what has made the difference, and what all of us at the Night Shelter tried to foster, is that our former guest believes it is possible and that he himself is worth the work involved.

The Night Shelter is open for nine months this year, as we were in 2021-22; we hope to close for the summer for the last time in 2023. In other words, by this time next year, funding permitting, we hope to be open all year round.

The Night Shelter has submitted a planning application to extend St John's House in the coming year with an additional 4 rooms, giving us a total of 12 and designed to be cost effective to run as staffing levels won't need to increase as a result. We hope to submit a bid for the capital stream of the Government's Homelessness Transformation Fund early in 2023.

I'm very grateful to everyone who has been a part of our work in the last year: to Julian Hallett, who took on the role of Chair of Trustees for a year with great sensitivity, perception and kindness; to our 14 staff, our volunteers, our partner agencies – especially Shelter, who run a monthly housing surgery at the Night Shelter, CGL, the Purfleet Trust, Norfolk County Council People from Abroad team, Norfolk Police, Probation services, and colleagues at the Borough Council who help us with Housing Benefit claims or take our calls “out of hours” - we never know how many homeless families they may also be struggling to help when a call comes through for someone on the doorstep here. I'm very grateful also to the many people who have helped us with food donations, or money – both individuals and organisations, from local primary schools asking us to come and talk in assembly and collecting food donations, to the grant making organisations whose generosity pays wages and bills.

Open the Book. Revd Heather Berry says that the Open the Book team has now started visiting schools again but needs more helpers; training will be given. If you wish to volunteer, please email Heather revberry2019@gmail.com

Andrew Frere-Smith andrew.frere-smith@dioceseofnorwich.org is appealing for volunteers to support the new **Food Hub project** which will allow people who are struggling financially to buy food at a reduced price. Please include the project in your newsletters so that churchgoers who wish to can volunteer. Thank you.

