



Muswell Hill US' Winter Shelter

Our shul has many uses, from nursery to lectures and of course prayer, but this year, for the first time, it became a home. Through 6 weeks of the winter months, we have provided a hot meal and a bed for the night for homeless people in partnership with the Haringey charity All People All Places.

Rabbi David first approached the board with this project some years ago, and it took his ongoing enthusiasm and the addition of first Anna Lawton and then Lois Allon for the project to eventually become a reality. Fresh from chairing Limmud, Anna put enormous amounts of time into working out the logistics of the project, liaising with the charity, understanding the challenges and planning how to mitigate any risks. She worked with the United Synagogue and the CST to make sure we had thought through every detail. Once we had ironed out many of our concerns and committed to going ahead, Anna began to recruit volunteers. This proved the simplest part of the project as the community enthusiastically came forward and over 60 volunteers offered to cook, help and stay overnight in the shul.

Lois then offered to get involved and manage the food side of the operation. She worked out meal plans for each week including snacks on arrival, a three course hot dinner, breakfast and a packed lunch to take away. Under her direction delicious meals have been produced each week which the volunteers and guests eat together.

This project has helped not only our guests, but us as a community, we have created new relationships with our neighbours at Hornsey Parish Church who we have partnered with to host 6 weeks each and we have developed relationships within the community as new people have got to know each other through cooking or volunteering side by side.

The guests themselves have been incredibly respectful of the shul and thankful for the help and we've also got to know them as they return each week. It's been fascinating to hear their stories and realise how easily someone can slip through the cracks in our society and find themselves homeless. Some of the people have jobs, but still find themselves unable to pay rent through illness or low pay.

Rabbi David says about the project, 'It has been a wonderful experience watching the vision of setting up a homeless shelter in our community turn into reality, and I would like to thank our Chair Karen Ackerman and Anna Lawton who spearheaded this project, for their vision and enthusiasm. At Muswell Hill we are developing a model of community that looks to enrich its Jewish identity and look after those who are part of our community, while turning outwards to help those within our wider society who need help. Our volunteers have given up time, sometimes through the night, and have also been enriched by their conversations with those who have benefited from our Shelter. We hope that other communities will be able to learn from us and in turn be able to do their bit to help some of the growing numbers of homeless in our country'.



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It feels very in tune with our Muswell Hill ethos to help our wider community and to each offer our small part in making the lives of others a little easier.

Thanks must go to everyone who has volunteered their time or donated clothes, food or money to help the project become a reality and especially to Anna and Lois for their hard work and commitment to making Rabbi David's idea a reality.

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