



**Together
we will end
homelessness**

Croydon Skylight Newsletter

February 2024

A note from our Director

It has been a really busy but exciting last 6 months at Crisis Skylight Croydon. Not only were Crisis and Crisis Skylight Croydon named as the Charity Partner & Project Delivery Partner for 'Croydon Stands Tall' by the Croydon Business Improvement District (Croydon BID), Croydon was passed the torch as the next Borough of Culture 2023!

Myself and my trusted skylight team, including our fantastic members and volunteers, geared up to deliver an amazing interactive public facing community art and fundraising project, that not only raised awareness of homelessness but also highlighted the work Crisis Skylight Croydon does to end homelessness in the community.

All of us at the Skylight are extremely grateful for the support we have received throughout this entire project and for the lives you have changed and transformed. You have all helped in continuing the fight to end homelessness in Croydon.

We have been doing a lot of work building partnerships with local Croydon schools and youth groups as well as contributing to the central work being done across Crisis with Corporate Partnerships with companies including Virgin Media 02 and the Lloyds Banking Group. Our Crisis Skylight LGBTQ+ group have been doing great work out in the community raising awareness of homelessness and finding creative and innovative ways to bring visibility to LGBTQ+ homelessness.

We have also seen a rise in young fundraisers getting involved in our mission to end homelessness. A big shout out to Zac and Rhea our newest Crisis Skylight Fundraising Ambassadors, the wonderful donations from Sylvie, the school children from the North London Collegiate School and the Croydon branches of the Girl Guides Association.

I couldn't end this note without thanking the wonderful Skylight members who have shared their work, stories and achievements with us over the last 6 months and to my fantastic CSC team of staff and member and community volunteers who continue to help us shape, co-create and deliver a service that meets the needs of our members and supports them to end their homelessness sustainably.

Christine Eyers

Director of Crisis Skylight, Croydon



Croydon Stands Tall

The wonderful art trail that lit up the streets of Croydon came to its end. It's been quite the journey with input and dedication from so many people but we'll do our best to summarise it in a few words!

With 26 sponsors, the giraffe trail reached 96.4 million people across the UK and internationally with 45 different pieces of coverage across different media platforms.

35,000 trail maps were given out, there were 84,000 scans of the app, 2,000 photos uploaded on to the app gallery and 60,000 miles were walked by people on the trail, our volunteers being part of that number!

Our Crisis Skylight windows have been filled with dozens of miniature giraffes, all decorated by our members, colleagues and local community groups and there were several events running throughout the trail, all raising money for Crisis, including a giraffe painting competition for children (and adults!) in the Centrale shopping centre.



The weekend of the 11th and 12th of November saw the trail coming to its end with a special farewell event, in which members of the public could come along and see all the giraffes under one roof.





The farewell event was followed by an auction like no other in which all 30 of the 8' tall giraffes and 2 of the smaller giraffes were auctioned off to the highest bidder. The night was full of surprises and fun, with Bargain Hunt's Charles Hanson fulfilling the role of auctioneer. One of our member volunteers also gave a truly inspiring speech about their experiences of homelessness and how Crisis has supported them on their journey out of it.

The top selling giraffe was the beautiful floral and gold (and glow in the dark!) giraffe called Fleur, selling for £7,500!

We are delighted to share that the auction event raised an amazing £58,000 for the Croydon Skylight which brought the total raised over the last few months to £58,875.59. A fantastic achievement!

The giraffes were loved by all, but we must give a special mention to Aasiri Wickremage, the artist for 'Tropics in Colour' – Acaia Georgie, who stood outside our building looking so vibrant and uplifting.

All the money raised will go directly in to helping people out of homelessness in Croydon whether that is buying someone a bed or washing machine for their first home, paying for travel to a job interview or GP appointment, buying materials to support our arts classes or simply maintaining our ability to offer teas, coffees, showers and laundry facilities to our members.

We are so grateful to everyone involved in this mammoth project from our wonderful volunteers and members, colleagues across Crisis, local partners, local businesses and the local community for everything they have done to get to this point. Thank you!



Crisis Skylight Croydon

- In the first 6 months of our financial year (from June 2023 onwards); 397 people approached us for support. Out of these, 303 members were allocated a lead worker with the rest being signposted to other services and will be allocated lead workers if appropriate.
- We supported 4 members into employment and 1 member started volunteering.
- We prevented homelessness for 4 members and improved the housing situation for 62 of our members.
- We helped secure stable housing for 33 of our members.

Desert Island Discs and The Brit School



Between January and July, we were delighted to be back working in partnership with the Brit school's Applied Theatre and Community course on our 'Desert Island Discs' collaboration.

The project gave members an opportunity to talk about their favourite three songs and what the songs meant to them. Their words were recorded in a series of chats at the Skylight, and a resource pack accompanied the audio. This was then used as devising stimulus material to create an original musical theatre and poetry performance piece by the young artists from the Brit school who shared their work at the Skylight in July 2023.

It was memorable and beautiful for us all. Special thanks to Carl, (Strengths and Assets coach), who worked with our Arts for Wellbeing Co-Ordinator, Denise, alongside our members on this project and produced all the audio for it.

Launch of the Virgin O2 Partnership

Crisis has partnered with Virgin Media O2 who will be providing smart phones, SIM cards and digital inclusion training to Skylight members. The partnership launched on 30 November, and will work towards making members more digitally included. A positive partnership for change!



Painted by a member

Notes from Out in Crisis

Out in Crisis is a group of members and volunteers who aim to improve services, raise visibility and ensure support for LGBT+ people who are homeless. This year, the group has been exceptionally busy!

We started the year by designing a newsletter with articles written and illustrated by volunteers that was in both print and online.

In February we celebrated LGBT+ history month by delivering online training on migrant LGBT homelessness to Crisis staff. We ran two sessions, attended by people from all over Crisis. The feedback was excellent and as a result it has been added to our all staff learning platform.

In April we marked lesbian visibility week, decorating the skylight with lesbian flags and celebrating famous lesbians - both celebrities and those who have changed the world. We also designed badges for members to take as well as having a lesbian visibility 'tea and chat' session.

In June and July, we prepared for and took part in Croydon Pridefest and UK Black Pride, talking to people on our Crisis stall about how Crisis supports LGBT+ people who are homeless as well as taking part in the parade.

Most recently, we have been working on a comic/graphic novel about an ex member's experience of being homeless. We are currently liaising with the stories and media team to have it developed into a comic that will be available in Crisis shops and online.



Last but not least, some positive news to share! One of our member volunteers from the group finally got their refugee status this year! All the members that are part of the group say that being part of it helped them gain this status by helping them to provide evidence of their sexuality, offering valuable support and being given an opportunity to meet with other LGBT+ people in a safe environment.

Lloyd's Partnership

This year Crisis has partnered with the Lloyd's Banking Group which aims to promote financial inclusion to those facing homelessness, raise awareness about financial exclusion and its impact on vulnerable individuals. Jana Ernest, one of our Operations Managers in Croydon, has taken the lead on this and delivered train the trainer sessions in collaboration with the Lloyd's Academy for our coaches across all Skylights.

One of the focuses of the partnership has been on members accessing bank accounts. The partnership is likely to lead to more informed and effective strategies to address identified barriers and improve access to banking services for vulnerable individuals.

Continued communication and collaboration between Jana and other teams across Crisis, as well as with Lloyds Bank, will be essential for driving the success of this financial inclusion workstream.

In one of the most exciting projects of the partnership, Lloyds Banking Group will support our work with Homes for Good, Scotland's award-winning first social enterprise lettings agency, to set up the first Great Britain-wide not-for-profit lettings agency.

The agency, which will begin operating in London later this year, will make renting easier and more affordable for people who would otherwise be homeless by matching and supporting tenants and landlords and avoiding poor and exclusionary practices.

Prospective tenants won't be asked to provide rent in advance, meet strict reference requirements or provide guarantors, and all profits will be reinvested in to supporting people experiencing homelessness to find good quality, affordable homes.

Thank you to all our donors

It has been an amazing year for donations, and we would like to say a huge thank you to all of you for your wonderful support in all its forms. We have had so many different organisations and individuals fundraising and donating from schools to churches, businesses and members of the public. We are very lucky to have you all, thank you. We thought we would share a selection of our youngest donors!

Rhea



We received a wonderful donation of £100 from 8-year-old Rhea who made all sorts of jewellery and accessories, and then sold them to people on her street. She is already busy making and planning for her next fundraiser!

The Girl Guides Association

The Girl Guides Association did an amazing amount of fundraising for us and then spent hours making up these fabulous gift bags for members full of Christmas treats and toiletries. Special mention to Valerie who has been co-ordinating everything and bringing us numerous extra donations. Thank you!



Zac

Our Crisis Croydon Fundraising Ambassador Zac (now 8) has been raising money for us at Christmas time since he was 4. This year he raised an amazing £1000, some of which went towards purchasing all sorts of items for our members such as tracksuit bottoms, t-shirts, hats, hoodies, toiletries and some lovely Christmas treats. Zac has donated the remaining funds to us in Croydon. Here he is dropping off his donations at the Skylight!



Sylvie



Sylvie wanted to donate her special Frozen blanket in order to help keep someone warm over the Christmas period. Thank you!

North London Collegiate School

Children from the reception class at the North London Collegiate School made these beautiful Christmas cards with hand written messages in for our members. They chose to make cards for the homeless instead of their families and have been learning about the impact of homelessness on people.



Thank you to all of you who have given your time and energy to Crisis, we have been overwhelmed with your generosity and community spirit. There have been dozens of individuals giving to us but here is a handful of some of the companies, schools, churches and charities who have helped us over the last year.

- *Superdrug
- *John Frieda
- *Croydon College
- *Sainsbury's George Street
- *Rotary club of Sanderstead and Selsden
- *AIG

- *Pneuma Christian Centre
- *GWD Contractors
- *Reed
- *Inner Wheel Club of Purley
- *Civil Service Pensioner's Alliance & District Group
- *Riddlesdown Collegiate
- *Croydon South Trefoil Guild

Updates from the Skylight's Eco Working Group

The Eco Working group is made up of staff and volunteers who come together to discuss and put in to practise the best ways to make the Skylight more sustainable. Here are some of our initiatives and successes over the last year or so!

- We have introduced soft plastic recycling. This has greatly decreased the amount of rubbish going to landfill and is an amazing achievement.
- We celebrated Recycling Week with a garland of tips and ideas on how to be greener and Laura, our ESOL tutor, ran sessions for members on recycling and its importance in her ESOL class.
- We created a new 'pledgehog' called Penelope for this year, and asked staff to write what they would do to become more sustainable. We have just voted for and announced the winning pledge which came from one of our volunteers - Sue, who pledged to not buy any new clothes in 2024! Sue admitted it will be quite a challenge for a shopaholic! Sue won a lovely wooden chopping board made by our technical skills tutor from reclaimed wood.
- We celebrated 2nd Hand September by asking staff to send pictures of what they had bought that was second hand. We had a wonderful array of items from clothing to crockery, children's toys to bikes.
- We share monthly seasonal recipes
- We choose and share initiatives from an eco calendar each month to promote within the team. This year we have promoted National Tree week, seed gathering season, National Allotment Week, Buy Nothing Day, World Bee Day, No Mow May, Earth Day...to name but a few!

This year we have started to think about getting involved with litter picking in Croydon, and thinking how we can get more members involved in things like recycling and being more eco-friendly.



Matrix Accreditation

We have been successful in achieving matrix accreditation for another 3 years!

The 'Matrix Standard' is an international standard for information, advice, and guidance (IAG) services, owned by the Department for Education. It ensures the high quality delivery of IAG. It is relevant to all sectors and is a means of demonstrating quality. A large pool of staff, volunteers, partners and members were interviewed across the whole organisation as part of the accreditation.

Areas of good practice that were highlighted included:

- Evidence-based work showing the impact of what we do
- Person-centred approaches in service delivery
- Members spoke of how Crisis are their organisation of choice in supporting them out of homelessness.
- Partners spoke highly of us – look to us as leaders in the sector
- Wellbeing and support for staff was good especially peer support
- Staff go above and beyond to make sure members secure their goals

Oratorio of Hope



The show 'Oratorio of Hope' at Fairfield Halls, Croydon, was part of the London Borough of Culture celebrations, and featured our Croydon Skylight Singers! Members worked with musician and composer Sarah Freestone, the London Mozart Players and Crisis Tutor, Mo Ford to write an original song, focusing on our shared experiences of life's journey and the need for listening, empathy and love. Along with Denise, our arts for wellbeing co-ordinator, the London Mozart Players, two local primary schools and the Croydon Voices Community Choir, the song was performed to launch Croydon's London Borough of Culture year in April 2023.

The Oratorio was inspired by 'For Us and We', an original poem by Shaniqua Benjamin (Croydon's poet laureate and former poetry tutor at the Skylight!), which celebrates the diverse communities of Croydon and shares stories of hope for the future.

Update from Crisis at Christmas

This Christmas we worked with over 6,600 people facing homelessness through our day centres and hotels in London, and Crisis Skylights across Britain.

This was made possible by our supporters, partners, and an incredible team of over 3,590 volunteers, who came together to provide a lifeline to those facing homelessness over the festive period.

This year the demand for our services was extremely high. This is against a context of rising homelessness, with over 250,000 households in Britain experiencing the worst forms of homelessness, including spending night after night on friends' and families' sofas, stuck in unsuitable temporary accommodation like nightly paid B&B's, or sleeping on the streets.



In London, we provided hotel accommodation for 578 people who would otherwise have been sleeping rough. Working with our partners in the sector, we extended provision in one of our hotels until mid-January and provided rooms for 196 people over four weeks. This gave vital extra time for people who would otherwise be sleeping rough to get dedicated advice and support during one of the coldest months.

Our day centres in London provided 2,648 people with warmth, food, advice and dedicated support to help them on their journeys out of homelessness. This included 149 eye care appointments, 107 GP & nurse appointments and 107 podiatry appointments.

Across the rest of Britain, our regional Skylight teams provided 907 meals whether that be in person, meals delivered or food vouchers, 740 people attended an activity or wellbeing session and 1166 festive hampers were delivered.

Filming at the Skylight!

The Croydon Skylight and staff members were chosen to be part of a brand shoot to collect imagery of our services to support all Crisis's comms work – from printed materials such as leaflets and banners, to digital assets for use on social media, the website and emails, as well as videos that we create. Our comms help us raise vital awareness and funds, campaign for social change and deliver our services for members through branded materials that provide information, guidance and support. It was really great to be chosen and be part of something a bit different!



Welcome to

Since our last newsletter we have welcomed Marta and Robyn to our Engagement and Assessment Team, George, our new lead worker for Intensive Case Management and Marie, our new Health and Wellbeing Co-Ordinator. We are currently recruiting for a new Operations Manager - Learning, an Art tutor and Digital Skills tutor.

Human Trafficking Foundation

Earlier this year, we welcomed two representatives from the Human Trafficking Foundation to our team meeting and we invited volunteers to join us too.



The session introduced a different perspective to how we approach our understanding of exploitation through experience.

One of the delegates who spoke to us, Aisosa Henkoma, who has experience of child criminal exploitation, gave us insight into his own experience. The work he is doing to make positive change in the areas around gangs and county lines is amazing. He commented that "County lines is something people quickly whack labels onto. Rarely do people take the time to listen and unpick what has actually happened."

The informal format worked well in terms of drawing out the complexities and more subtle issues of exploitation that are often not apparent or disclosed to professionals when working with victims/survivors. Through the incorporation of real-life experiences into the learning process, this session will be invaluable in enhancing comprehension, foster positive attitudes, and to help improve the services our staff offer to potential victims.

Farewell to

Tarron, our maternity cover Learning Manager, Jess our Learning Manager, John, our Technical Skills Tutor, Mo our singing tutor, Laura, lead worker for Intensive Case Management, Jo, our Health & Wellbeing Co-Ordinator, Juline, our Digital Skills tutor and Johnny our maternity cover Admin & Facilities Assistant.

They will be missed by staff and our members and we wish them all the best for the future.

Spotlight on our members

A message from a member written to their leadworker

"Again thank you and Crisis for the much needed support in my greatest hours of need. I am struggling to find the words that adequately express my gratitude to you and the other members of Crisis that are providing such important and vital services for people like myself who have had the misfortune of experiencing not having a home or sometimes just a place to sleep.

I am now an advocate for Crisis and other similar organisations that provide these much needed services and hope one day I can help at least one person sleeping rough.

I never thought this could have happened to me but more importantly I am glad that there are people out there who are willing to empathise and lend a helping hand.

Thank you and the members of your team from the depths of my heart."

We would love to share this wonderful poem, written by one of our members

Hi,

Today is of most imperative of all other day, to my surprise there is an offer that blow my mind out of place!

I have a chance to be out of the cold. In December for a very long time.

God bless all the people that involved in this kindness, that make this happen to me.

No two day are the same. As long as you have life, anything can happen to you,

With God all thing possible under the sun.

Life is one big road with a lot of sign,

You have to make your mind up to face reality all the time.

Love always. Jah.

By NAH

Showcasing a selection of artwork by members

