**VCS Conference**

**Workshop 3: The VCS and the Faith Sector: shared values; shared outcomes**

**23 November 2017**

**Lead**: Tim Yeager (Interfaith Group), Adel Khairah (Greenwich Islamic Centre), Greenwich Winter Night Shelter (Tony Othen & Rev. Margaret Cave) and Cllr. Denise Scott-McDonald.

**Refugees Welcome Greenwich**

Tim and Adel led a presentation about Refugees Welcome Greenwich and the collaboration of faith sector organisations within Royal Greenwich

* A refugee advocacy and support project for 20 families affected by war in Syria
* Commissioned by RBG to Greenwich Islamic Centre supported by Christian church in Westcombe Park
* Day to day support provided by GIC and support from the church to recruit and train volunteers to help.
* Housed in Maryon Grove in temporary accommodation and not displacing anyone waiting for social housing.
* GIC to work with GriP and Greenwich Health Watch to provide support into employment and support obtaining healthcare for the children.

GCDA suggested that food is a good way to help facilitate social integration into the community and cited a project with the Nepalese community.

A suggestion was offered about having clear lines of responsibility. Adel advised that GIC had a Service Level Agreement with the Council within which the separation of areas of responsibility was clearly defined.

Jewish Community from Bromley offered to put the project in touch with a young refugee from the Kinder transport who might consider meeting with a group of the families involved to talk about their experience of relocation to England**. E-mails to be exchanged at the end of the session.**

**Greenwich Winter Night Shelter**

The project centred was about changing attitudes to homeless people and providing a service to those in need**. It was not about talking to people about any particular faith.**

The project was:

* Operated in the triangle area between – Kidbrook, East Greenwich and West Greenwich between 7 venues
* Each venue could take 15 guests a night and they were referred via a referral process and could only be offered to those who did not have any drug or alcohol dependency issues
* 12 residents from last year got rehoused into permanent accommodation
* The service offers a bed, an evening meal and breakfast

The project had developed since its inception, becoming a registered charity and engaging over 300 volunteers from different faiths and backgrounds.

**Comment:**

* Why does the Christian Church have to almost apologise for helping

The church does not apologise for helping but does accept that there is sometimes a certain tone in the interest of breaking down preconceptions around suspicion of ulterior motives and building trust and confidence that the church wants to work in partnership with other organisations. This relates to perceptions that the church engage to try and preach to people about Christianity.

**Comment:**

It is good that the borough is working better with the Faith sector and that this is reflected in the new strategy

Cllr Scott-McDonald acknowledged the wealth of unrecognised work supporting communities was now beginning to be seen and valued. And that RBG would continue to develop close relations within the sector.

**Comment:**

* Street pastors wanted to know how best to refer people to other homelessness projects

**Suggestion:**

* Developing links to the Council to refer cases
* Street link – smart phone app for homelessness services
* Create a portal where service provided can get more than just information but allow for organisations to talk to one another via an online forum?

**Upcoming events**

* Feed the homeless – 10th December – Woolwich Common Community Centre

**Request:**

* WSUP need temporary premises whilst new accommodation is being made ready – this would be for 3 months