

The Help We Need

Volunteers

Because our philosophy is “a lot of people doing a little bit each”, and because of the mobility of people in central London, we always need volunteers. Each individual is only on duty once a month, for a duty period of no more than 5 hours. If people apply as “general” volunteers, that allows us to assign them to the area of greatest need. However, if they have specific intentions, they can choose from:

- **Sandwich Making:** Takes place from 6.00 to 9.00 p.m. on Friday evening.
- **Tea Run:** Operates from 4.30 to 8.30 a.m. on Saturday morning.
- **Day Centre:** On duty from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. on Saturday morning.
- **Social Evenings:** Happen from 5.30 to 9.30 p.m. on Saturday evening.
- **Visiting Scheme:** We meet our contacts from 7.00 to 9.00 pm every other Monday. We only accept volunteers with experience in homelessness and/or mentoring and/or counselling.
- **Daytime Volunteers:** Accompany our contacts to meetings with banks, social security offices, housing associations, solicitors, courts, etc., on an *ad hoc* basis.

To volunteer, please contact Philip Long by email - philip.long@aslan.org.uk - or by mail c/o All Souls Church, 2 All Souls Place, London W1B 3DA

Donors

We run on very tight budgets, and gifts are always gratefully received. Regular giving through the Gift Aid scheme is particularly helpful.

For details of giving or regular giving, please contact John Williams by email - john.williams@aslan.org.uk - or telephone (020-8523-3349)

Prayer Supporters

We are sustained by people who come to our monthly prayer meetings and/or receive our prayer letters. Also, Prayer Partners are a vital part of the Visiting Teams.

For information on supporting us in prayer, please contact Katie Huggins by email – katie.huggins@aslan.org.uk - or telephone (020-7624-6406)

All Souls Local Action Network (ASLAN) has charitable status under the auspices of the PCC of All Souls Church



All Souls Local Action Network

HELPING LONDON'S HOMELESS BY OFFERING

- **Food and Clothing**
- **Friendship and Advice**
- **Hope for the Future**

*Our Mission Statement:
To manifest God's love to homeless people
through our actions*

The ASLAN Story

One cold Saturday morning before dawn in 1988, eight young people set out in a borrowed minibus to deliver hot tea and sandwiches to the hundreds of homeless people “sleeping rough” in the streets and parks of London’s West End. Individually and collectively, they had felt the call to reach out to these despised and neglected individuals with a little warmth and kindness, and the message of hope in Jesus. Setting the pattern for future ASLAN initiatives, a lot of research, discussion and prayer had preceded that first tea run. They had found a big gap in provision for the homeless on weekend mornings, and learned that “rough sleepers” were most likely to suffer – even die – from hypothermia in the pre-dawn hours.

Those eight young people never suspected that sixteen years later their numbers would have swelled to some 250 volunteers, drawn from many London churches and denominations in addition to their home church of All Souls, Langham Place. Nor that the work would embrace helping The Passage Day Centre in Victoria to stay open on Saturday mornings, putting on social evenings every Saturday night at the All Souls Clubhouse, and acting as advocates and mentors to many rehoused people struggling to cope with the intricacies of “normal” life.

They would, however, have expected us to maintain a record of perfect reliability – never missing a single tea run in sixteen years, whatever the weather, whatever the obstacles. And they would have expected us to continue their example of pioneering initiatives, firmly grounded on the bedrock of careful research and expectant prayer. Our partnership with The Passage Day Centre was to set the pattern for other day centres (previously closed at weekends) opening with the help of volunteers. Our social evenings were the first homeless events in London to be by written invitation, and to treat people as honoured guests and treasured individuals. Our mentoring scheme is one of the longest-running and most stable in London, and one of the few to be open to the street homeless, “hidden homeless”, and recently housed alike. Our emerging work in advocacy and “moral support” is meeting a need which has been acknowledged by many authorities, but met by few other groups.

Over the years, we have had the delight of seeing many of our “clients” rehoused, and worked with them through the pleasure and the pain of adjusting to “normal” life. Also, as the balance of London’s homeless has shifted away from the street homeless to the hidden homeless (in hostels and other temporary accommodation, in squats, and on the floors or in the spare bedrooms of friends and relatives), so too the balance of our work has shifted towards these other groups.

We continually strive to increase the quality and the scope of our work, with God’s help, and by His grace.

The Story Continues

We have never sought growth for growth’s sake, but have always responded when God has presented us with a need, and called us to meet it.

The opening of our first office has been prompted by the need to provide a single contact point for our clients, volunteers, donors, payer supporters, and partner organisations. By the need to provide a Freephone helpline for our clients, responding to their calls for help and advice. By the need to provide better information and guidance for our volunteers. And last, but by no means least, by the need to remove some of the administrative burden from our senior volunteer leaders, freeing them up to concentrate on frontline work and on strategy and growth.

A pressing need has also grown out of our Social Evenings, which have become victims of their own success. Many more people now want to be invited than we can accommodate without losing that personal touch and homely feel which makes these events so special. We therefore want to expand the Social Evenings into other London venues, ideally in partnership with local churches and Christian organisations.

Our Visiting Scheme, too, is unable to keep up with demand. The scheme is hugely labour-intensive, as each client we accept into the scheme is supported by two frontline mentors, who are in turn supported by a prayer partner who prays at home. We need to recruit many more people with experience of homelessness or mentoring/counselling, and to empower other churches in the London area to start similar schemes, by supporting them with our experience and advice.

Growing out of the Visiting Scheme has emerged a need to provide advocacy and moral support for individuals wrestling with bureaucracy or sinking deeper and deeper into crisis through their inability to cope with difficult situations or complex negotiations. Such matters can be stressful for the strongest of us, but if you are elderly, or frail, or have your judgement impaired by drink and/or mental illness, or have been damaged by dark events in your past (sometimes all five!), then you simply cannot cope. Finding daytime volunteers with the necessary self-control and negotiating skills will not be easy, but we simply have to try.

We have never resorted to emotional blackmail in order to elicit support, but if this exciting story is to continue to unfold, we do need support from many people in many different ways. If you would like to support us with your prayers, or your time, or your money, do read on overleaf and contact us for a response form, if you have not already been given one. Be assured that every hour you can spare or every pound you can give will be put to good use providing a little happiness and a message of hope to some of the most unloved and unwanted people in our society.