

## Food with Friends – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2016

On Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, a group of volunteers conducted a programme called 'Food with Friends', which took place in Southsea, Portsmouth. The following report will describe the aims of this initiative and provide a summary for the event.

### Aims

The target audience for this event includes those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aims of this event were as follows:

- To invite those within Portsmouth who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness to share a hot high quality meal together in a community setting
- To provide a warm, friendly and welcoming environment for people in difficult situations
- To increase the awareness of local services operating in Portsmouth that provide services for those in difficult situations and to increase uptake to these services
- To facilitate networking between guests and service providers in Portsmouth

### Event Summary

Leading up to the event, volunteers visited over a dozen service providers within the city of Portsmouth (who provide service to our target audience) to distribute flyers and to encourage them to publicise this event to their service-users. We also distributed flyers directly to people who were found sleeping rough on the streets of Portsmouth, particularly around Southsea and Commercial Road.



The event was held in Friendship House in Southsea and commenced with prayers offered by Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dattoo of Wessex Jamaat and the Reverend Canon Peter Leonard of Portsmouth Cathedral. Alongside the meal provided, there were stalls run by several local organisations and charities, free haircuts available, a raffle, a photo quiz and a clothes recycling scheme. These are discussed in further detail below.

### Prayers by Sheikh and the Reverend



The first item of the event consisted of prayers offered by Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dattoo and Reverend Canon Peter Leonard, who both shared some moving thoughts on how we can together combat the problems facing our community and it is through the help of God that this may be achieved.



### Food



All of the food was served to guests individually at their tables. A starter of leek and potato soup was prepared by Sister Fatim Jaffer.

The main course was an option of meat, chicken, or vegetarian Sabzi, each served with rice. This was prepared by Rezwaan Restaurant in Fratton.

Teas, coffees, cold drinks and on-table snacks were available throughout the event and home-made cupcakes were available at the end of the event



## Stalls

Several service providers were running stalls at the event. They also gave short introductions to the fantastic services they provide and how these could help the guests. Here is a list of the various organisations in attendance:



- Society of St James – organisation that runs several key services across Portsmouth and Southampton, including hostels for the homeless, supported accommodation and drug and alcohol recovery services
- Portsmouth Foyer – an accommodation facility, run by Two Saints - a charity that provides high quality accommodation with support and resettlement services, along with training for their service users to help them break the cycle of homelessness

- All Saints Hostel – a hostel for 16-25 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Push – a peer led service user group whose core aim is to help and support those suffering from social exclusion for any cause, including homelessness, addiction and mental health conditions.

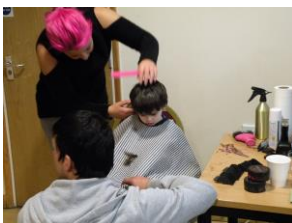


- FoodCycle – a voluntary organisation that collects remaining food from supermarkets and uses these ingredients to cook meals for the community at the John Pounds Centre on Tuesday and King's Church on Thursday, every week.
- Friends without Borders – runs the 'All Saints Drop-in' that provides advice and advocacy to clients in the community and 'Access to Justice', a project that offers legal advice.

- Early Intervention Project – a support services for men and women facing domestic abuse, honour-based violence and sexual violence.
- Portsmouth City Council Housing Options Team – a team within the council that provides advice to the homeless or those at risk of homelessness on available services.



## Haircuts



Free haircuts were available for all guests during the event. This proved to be a popular and well-received feature, with around a third of the guests receiving haircuts. These haircuts were provided courtesy of two staff from Ian Henry Barbers in Cosham, who were kept busy throughout the entire event.



## Clothes Recycling Scheme

Following a clothes drive coordinated by the Al Mahdi Youth Committee, there was a wide variety of clothing items including coats and warm winter wear available for guests to look through to select what fitted their liking. This was hugely successful and many guests were extremely pleased with the items that they were able to take away with them.



## Photo Quiz



For entertainment, we decided to test the local knowledge of our guests through a photo quiz prepared and presented by Ridhae Fatema Sheikh and Fatemah Somji. Prior to the event, they explored the city of Portsmouth and took photos of iconic landmarks but in a way that would make them slightly tricky to identify. The guests were split into teams and had their knowledge of Portsmouth put to the test as they tried to identify the various locations.

## Raffle

Each guest was given a raffle ticket upon entry, which entered them into a draw for a whole host of raffle prizes that were on offer, including meal vouchers for Rezwaan restaurant, haircut vouchers, formal shirts, gift sets and more, with the raffle draw was staggered throughout the event. The large number of prizes meant that many guests that attended left with a prize.



## The big picture

Overall, by the Grace of the Almighty, the event was hugely successful and was attended by 30-40 guests that were either homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as a further 20 volunteers and stall-holders. Feedback forms have been sent out and from the responses received thus far, we have received some very positive feedback as well as some very constructive thoughts on how we may be able to improve this event in the future.

In organising this event, we have come to realise the amount of valuable work that goes on in the city of Portsmouth with regards to helping those facing adversity. Whilst this event was a mere drop in the ocean compared to what is needed, we pray that by increasing the uptake to local services our event will make a real and lasting difference to the guests present. To conclude, I wish to share one such success story that has occurred as a result of this event.

Simon is a young person in his 20s, who has already encountered much difficulty in his lifetime. He is currently living in supported accommodation, which is keeping him from homelessness. However, he has so far resisted any further engagement with local services that could really help him build a future for himself.

The first organisation to give a brief talk on their services at the event was the organisation 'Push', who seek to support those suffering from social exclusion for whatever reason. Immediately after Freddie finished his talk on the services that Push provides, Simon stood up and went to speak to them - a conversation that shocked those who knew him and one that symbolised a turning point in his engagement with services. It was this moment that led a friend of his to say how relieved he was because he finally knew that Simon 'was going to be okay.' Simon also won a raffle prize and was very happy with the items he found using the clothing recycling scheme. I have since been informed that Simon has attended meetings with Push since the event and continues to make progress.

This is just one example of the impact that was made on Sunday. I pray that the friendships formed during the event will continue to help the attendees combat adversity into the future. And we pray that Allah provides us with the opportunity to host events such as this on a regular basis.