

The inspiring story of  
Livability's link churches

Chigwell

# Loving & serving since 1844

Chadwell  
Heath

Dagenham

Plaistow

East Ham

of LONDON

Tower  
Hamlets

Blackfriars

Southwark  
Lambeth

Poplar

Plumstead

Stockwell

Deptford

Charlton

Greenwich  
Park

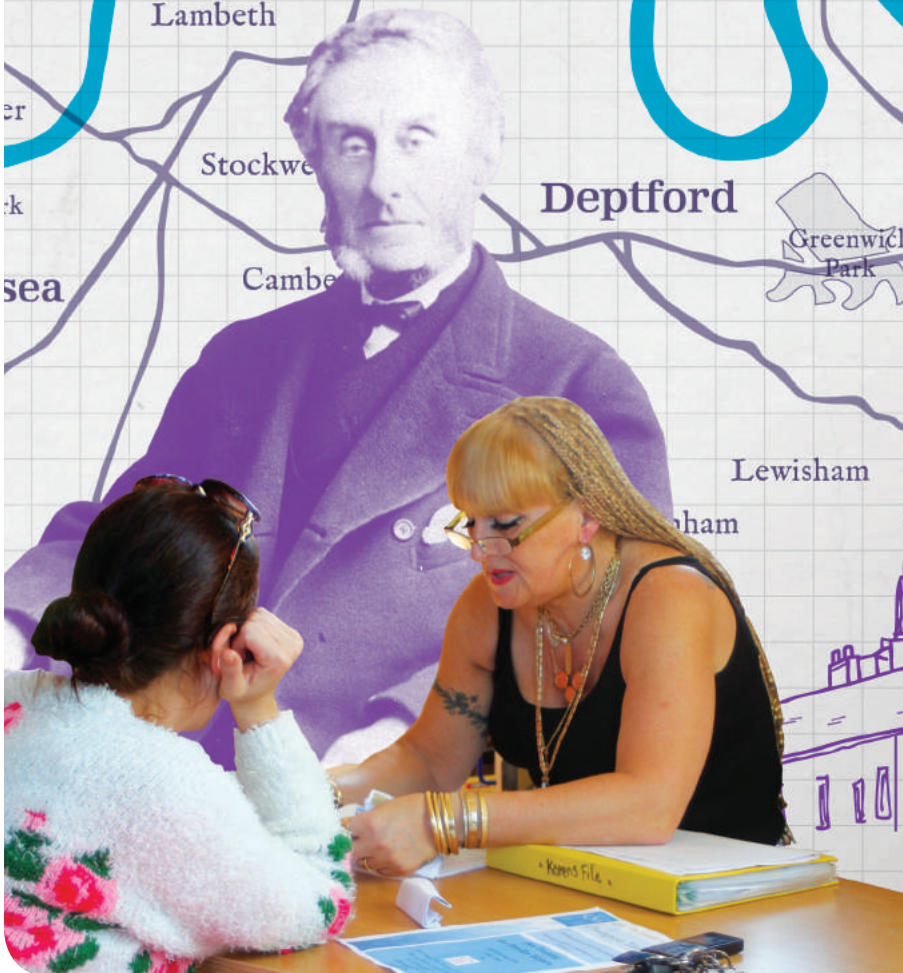
Eltham

Camden

Lewisham

Greenwich

**livability**  
Christian care in action



# Welcome to the story of Livability's link churches, then and now

**Livability, created from the merger of The Shaftesbury Society and John Grooms, has been rooted in London's communities for nearly 170 years. Lord Shaftesbury, the Victorian Christian social reformer, passionately supported mission halls which opened across the capital to respond to the direst poverty and need. He urged local Christians across the denominations to help him to 'love, serve – in Jesus' name'.**

“ Today, those mission halls live on as Livability's 'link churches'. They still work in London's most challenging neighbourhoods, marred by social exclusion, wealth inequality and significantly lower levels of health and wellbeing. Creatively and faithfully, they seek solutions by working with the often-neglected strengths of their local communities. Here we tell the story of 11 of these extraordinary churches, then and now. We celebrate the way they continue to live out Livability's vision of a transformed society, where disabled and disadvantaged people can live life to the full.

**Adam Bonner**  
Director of Community Engagement  
& Communications

Packing everything our link churches do into a few pages cannot do them justice. Please take a look at their websites, or even better, go and visit them for yourselves, to see the breadth of inspiring ways they serve their communities.

The Shaftesbury Society and John Grooms merged in 2007 to establish Livability. To keep things simple, this document will refer only to Livability throughout.



“ All that Livability does through its many activities is about restoring wholeness - physical, mental and spiritual; promoting health and well-being, and addressing injustices. We believe in offering individuals choices in their lives and creating “livable” communities. The stories told here are rich with people who do just that. This is practical Christianity that is tangible and rooted in real life experience. I am humbled that Livability's deep roots are due to the faithful work of those who have gone before, and I'm thrilled for the life that is still flowing from them today.

**Dave Webber**  
Chief Executive



“ Along with care, accommodation, education and rehabilitation for disabled people, community engagement across the UK is one of the key pillars of Livability's work - and it's something our link churches do magnificently. We are proud that these churches remain at the heart of some of London's most under-resourced neighbourhoods, tackling the issues of poverty, disability and disadvantage that Lord Shaftesbury championed in his day.

**Caroline Armitage**  
Chair of Board of Trustees

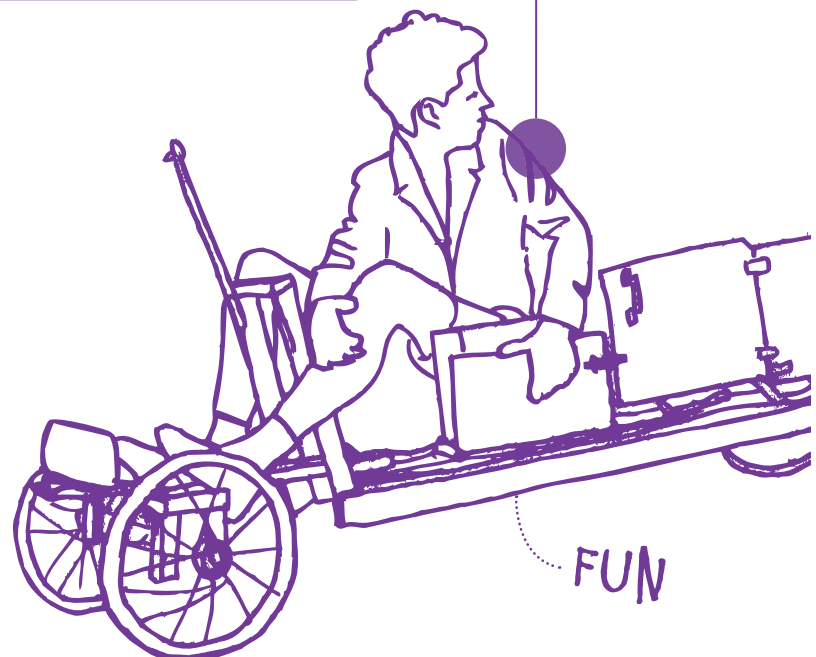
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*Hospitality*



*Community*



*FUN*



# The Shaftesbury Christian Centre Battersea

The Shaftesbury Christian Centre has been serving the people of Battersea since the late 1800s. Today's building is surrounded by 20-storey tower blocks, home to most of the church's members. True to their mission hall roots, looking beyond the doors of the church is at the heart of everything they do

## Then Support



**1893**

The parish vicar appeals to Livability for help with the 'ragged and utterly uncared for' children of Battersea. Livability's John Dyer starts a 'ragged school' in a hay loft

**1895**

The team has three mission centres in Battersea

**1897**

On top of their regular activities, the mission supplies 3,000 children with teas, 4,000 with 'Irish stew dinners' and takes 17,000 children to the seaside. People from local evangelical churches make up the mission's team of volunteers

**1940s**

After WWII, the area is cleared to build new high-rise estates. The mission moves onto the estate in 1961, and grows as a church and community centre

**1980/90s**

The church's work includes employment training, helping to found a medical practice, building sheltered accommodation, and drug rehabilitation



# Now

- The two local wards are the highest users of Wandsworth Borough's Foodbank
- High levels locally of unemployment, debt, substance abuse and high incidence of lone parenting
- Child poverty stands at 27%

## Soul food

Brian Watts, a local man and a former police officer, is the last of several generations of his family brought up in the terraced houses in Battersea that were replaced by today's tower blocks. Together with his wife Joanna, they have led 'The Shaftesbury' church for nearly 25 years.

One of their most recent community projects has been launching a Foodbank service, partnering with other churches across Wandsworth Borough. Church members are enthusiastically committed to Foodbank, with around half the congregation volunteering monthly, and nearly all members donating food items. 'I'm proud that Foodbank is meeting a local need and very proud of our teams. They have remained committed week after week, despite it being hard for people round here to stay reliable in their volunteering,' says Brian.

## Inspiration

To Brian, following in the footsteps of the mission's founders, who fed hungry Battersea people, is an inspiration and a strength: 'I feel massively connected to our history, and am very aware of the foundation they laid with prayer and through their service to this community.' He and Joanna both comment on the sobering fact that poverty has been all too present in Battersea for over a century.

Foodbank visitors, who bring a voucher issued by social services to verify their need of 'emergency food' and support, include Gary. He has been living on tea and biscuits after 'a few setbacks', including not being paid for a recent cleaning job. Louisa, who lives in one room with her husband and two children, was brought along by concerned neighbours. And Jenny, whose initial reaction to using Foodbank was: 'No way, I can't!', had been eating one meal a day - last night's supper was pasta given by a friend, with cucumber.

## Practical and profound

For Brian, the simple act of feeding people points to 'the simplicity of the Gospel', he feels. 'Through the practical offer of food, we are being "good news" to people. If we offer a cup of water to someone, we are offering it to Christ.'

Foodbank is just one expression of the church's outreach: 'At the heart of the church is the knowledge that we are called to serve the locality and we have mission attitude,' explains Brian. 'This is so ingrained in us that it informs all that we do. Sunday services often conclude with the statement "remember when you leave this building, you are entering the mission field".' Faith and action should be inseparable, Brian asserts: 'We are constantly looking for a practical outworking of our faith.'



**Christianity with its sleeves rolled up**

**Former Mayor of Wandsworth, Cllr Leslie McDonnell**



## Images:

(Top left) Serving now: the Foodbank team gets ready for visitors

(Above) Visitors can have a cuppa and a chat



**Celebrating change on a Battersea roof p13**



**Bigger picture**

Find out more about The Shaftesbury from their website.

➔ Visit: [www.theshaftesbury.org.uk](http://www.theshaftesbury.org.uk)



# Latymer Christian Centre and Fellowship

## North Kensington

**This former mission hall, home to a vibrant Christian fellowship, runs a wealth of community services. It is known and valued as a lifeline for many in North Kensington**

“ I know the Latymer Christian Fellowship for the way it reaches out to the local multi-faith, multi-cultural community. The work of the Centre contributes significantly to the health, resilience and wellbeing of local residents

Judith Blakeman, local councillor

# Then



## 1863

Latymer Road Mission opens its doors in the North Kensington slums, comparable today to a shanty town

The mission serves as a ragged school and Sunday school, and grows rapidly, running dozens of services including a girls' night school, boot-mending classes, 'cripples' parlour' for disabled people, and summer outings

## 1904

The mission joins Livability and moves to a bigger building

## 1922

Over 800 children attend the Sunday School

## 1963

The mission celebrates its centenary with over 100 members in both the Sunday School and an elderly people's club

## 1967

Slum clearance in the 1960s sees the mission fight for survival, finally moving to new premises

# Now

- **Life expectancy ten years shorter than in richer part of this Borough**
- **16% of households are overcrowded**
- **41% of residents are born outside the UK**

## Family feeling

Improving the health and wellbeing of local people is an important part of Latymer Christian Fellowship Trust's work. 'In our area, a lot of our health need is mental health,' explains Mary White, the centre's manager and church member. 'It can be difficult to sustain relationships if you have mental health issues. That's the point of the Church to me – it's a place where people who are vulnerable can be safe and experience unconditional love and acceptance.'

## Making community

'People sometimes say "it's like family here". We're not in a client/social service relationship, we're in a family/friends/neighbours relationship,' says Mary. 'I think that's the hardest thing personally. If you engage with being local and being here, then you feel the pain at some level if someone's crying

because their benefits have been cut and they haven't got any food in the house, or someone's been admitted to psychiatric hospital. It's making community where there wasn't community.'

The early mission workers' passion was 'to preach and be good news to the poor', says Latymer church leader Jackie Blanchflower. She finds reward in 'seeing God at work in people's lives – healing relationships, bringing hope instead of despair, and changing the direction of people's lives. I want to see revival break out which will transform this community.'

## In it together

Why does the church put so much effort into community work? 'Well, it's the Gospel!' says Mary. 'Satan came to kill and destroy, Jesus came so people might have life in all its fullness. Opening our building so people can experience friendship and acceptance and relationship and community is still advancing the Kingdom.' She rejects any notion of 'do-gooding' by the Centre: 'We're all in it together – the team are broken people who live locally. It's not "you've got the problems, we've got the answers".'

## Images:

(Top) Stirring it up at Latymer's healthy eating class  
(Left) Latymer offers a range of fitness activities



'And it's not a fundraiser's dream success story: for us, success might be that someone has stayed out of the mental health unit for longer than usual.'

## Our DNA

Does the Livability legacy matter to Latymer? Mary thinks it does: 'We celebrated 150 years in 2013 and that was really important and encouraging because actually, the DNA of the original Latymer Road Mission remains the same - we want to get alongside the local people and make a difference. We couldn't be here without Livability – they've enabled everything that's good here.'

“ We just love it round here – it really is a great area

Mary, centre manager

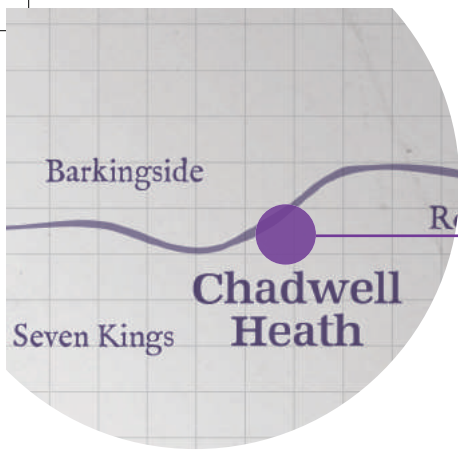


**Celebrating change** read May Queen Jeanette's story p12

## Bigger picture

Latymer's work includes dynamic youth work in partnership with the Eden Network.

➔ Visit: [www.latymer.org.uk](http://www.latymer.org.uk)



# Oasis Church Chadwell Heath

## Now

**Chadwell Heath, an important coaching stop before the railway arrived, is still home to a transient population. Oasis Church is reaching out to isolated people and helping to foster a sense of community**

### Join in

Oasis Church opens its doors wide to the people of Chadwell Heath, a culturally diverse neighbourhood where community does not happen spontaneously. Oasis' older but energetic congregation is countering isolation and fragmentation by running community services which attract over 200 people every week. Church leader Vickie Peters is delighted that around 40 church regulars, many of whom are retired, choose to serve in this way.

The Hub Café is one of Oasis' most popular fixtures, serving up drinks, snacks and a chance to make friends. A pool table and toddlers' toys are also on hand. Regular attendees represent a wide range of nationalities, including Spanish, Hungarian, Middle Eastern and people from across Africa. The Hub is one of the few local venues that provides an opportunity for cultures to mix. 'People have said that coming to The Hub has been life-changing for them because they get out the house and meet people,' says Vickie. 'When we get to know people, they know they can talk about their problems with us.'

Because Oasis is known for its care and support, people approach them for spiritual help, including prayer. 'We want to bring Jesus to people,' says Vickie. 'People are coming into the building all the time, and if they ask us questions about faith, we answer – we don't bombard them.'

## Then

### Early 1920s

Local Christians decide to build a mission hall in remembrance of those who died in WWI

1923

Chadwell Christian Mission, described as 'a fine mission hall for an earnest body of workers', is opened in Chadwell Heath



**We are a church for the community**

Joan Hollick, 84



**Celebrating change** Read Joan Hollick's story p13



**Bigger picture**

Oasis brings local people together at popular community events, works hard to include people with disabilities and helps to build a positive relationship between the community and local police.

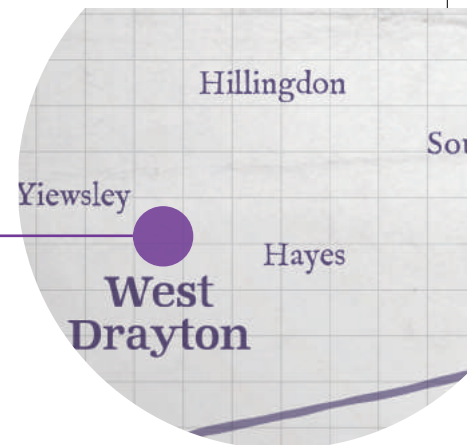
➔ Visit: [www.oasis-church.com](http://www.oasis-church.com)





# Bell Farm Christian Centre

## West Drayton



# Now

**For decades, Bell Farm Christian Centre has been a consistent presence on a troubled west London estate**



The service can respond quickly on urgent issues

### Advice worth having

Twice a week, people wait outside the Bell Farm Christian Centre for the advice service to open. This drop-in centre helps over 1,600 people each year, and is known by many local agencies to be a conduit to hard-to-reach groups such as the Traveller community. It is staffed by two paid workers plus church volunteers.

'It can be very hard to get an appointment to see someone like the Citizens' Advice Bureau,' explains advice service manager Diane Faichney. 'If the issue is really urgent, you need to see someone straight away, and we can do that.' Travellers come for help from as far away as Manchester and Ireland, says Diane: 'We're trusted by the Traveller community, so word spreads.' Nearly 40 per cent of the advice centre's clients are Travellers; the next biggest group is white British people.

The service was launched by the church in 1998 when they saw that local people had nowhere to turn in desperate situations. The church and estate were just emerging from a very dark period when the area had been blighted by gang terror. The church is now some 40-strong, nearly all of whom live nearby.

'For us, it's all in the story of the good Samaritan,' explains minister and centre director Tony Pilkington. 'If you see somebody in need, you help them. How can I walk by and ignore a serious situation in someone's life?' Tony describes cases where the centre has saved someone's life in a literal sense 'and saved others from such misery in their lives'. Some people find faith as a result of an encounter with the advice service. 'We're so privileged to work with people who are so broken, where we can be the hands and feet and lips of Jesus,' says Diane.

# Then



**1956**  
Bell Farm Christian Centre (BFCC) built by Livability on a new social housing estate near Heathrow Airport

**1990s**  
Gang violence endangers BFCC's members' lives and the church comes close to closing

**Celebrating change** read about BFCC and gang violence **p12**

### 🔍 Bigger picture

Find out more about BFCC's impact on their community.

➔ Visit: [www.bfcc.org.uk](http://www.bfcc.org.uk)



# Regenerate-RISE

## Putney

Regenerate-RISE wants to eradicate the isolation many older people experience. Hundreds in south-west London and beyond are living proof that it's working

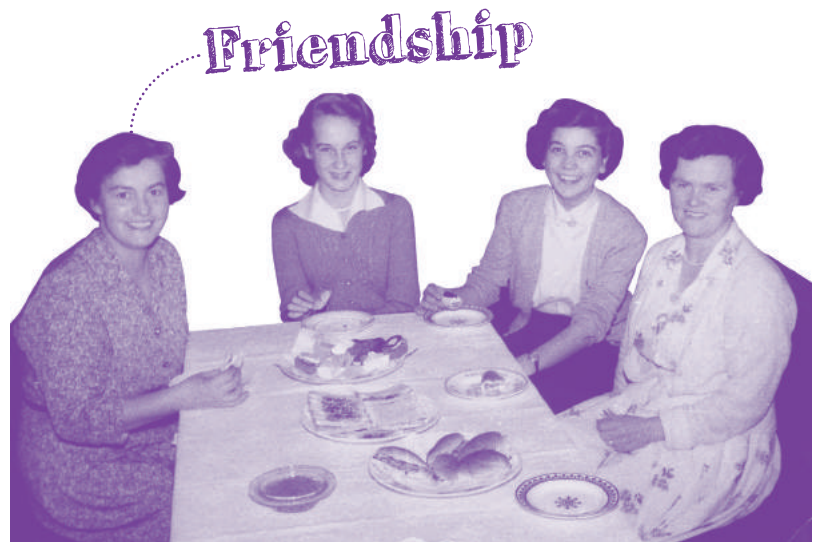
# Then

**1807**  
Seven friends raise £57 towards building Platt Chapel in Putney, opening in 1808

**1908**  
100 years later, the Platt hosts the biggest Sunday School in Wandsworth Borough

**1990s**  
The mission joins Livability, and builds a new Christian centre

**2007**  
The work continues as Regenerate-RISE (Reaching the ISolated Elderly), from Livability's Platt Christian Centre



Hope

# Now

## Glory days

The Platt Christian Centre in Putney is an oasis for elderly people in Wandsworth, south London. Open four days a week, the Platt offers a huge range of support to the over-65s through its Regenerate-RISE service. Clients are referred by GPs, social services and others, because they are isolated or in danger of being so. The average age is 85 and half need high levels of care, including many with dementia and mobility issues.

Volunteer welcomers, themselves clients at the Platt, keep an eye out for new members as people arrive. Around 70 different people a week use the centre, and hot meals, hairdressing and transport are just some of the services on offer. For the majority, especially those with mobility issues, coming to the Platt is their only opportunity to get out and meet others.

## Above and beyond

Tireless founder and chair of trustees Mo Smith and her team care for their clients well beyond the opening hours of the day service: 'We visit people at home, in hospital and in A&E departments.' An extended hospital visiting scheme is planned 'as, when we're visiting our clients, we see so many other older people completely on their own with no visitors at all,' says Mo. And a longterm

dream is to open a ten-bed 'enablement centre' at the Platt, to care for those coming out of hospital.

Working with partners, including Wandsworth Borough Council which contributes significant funding, is of huge importance to Regenerate-RISE, Mo says. A recent partnership has begun with Hillsong Church, after a church leader who lives locally called in to find out what was going on at the Platt. 'We are now one of Hillsong's local impact projects, as they have recognised that isolation is a big problem,' Mo explains. Hillsong donates gifts, money, practical help and prayer support.

## Full circle

Linking with Hillsong 'feels as if we have come full circle in our history,' says Mo. 'The Platt started out as a church in the 1800s, and has gone through cycles of its church and community work waxing and waning. Hillsong recognises that the work we do is bringing the good news of the Gospel to the lives of older people. They share with us the desire to reach older people, both to change their lives and impact them with the love of God.' Some 16 RISE clients attend Hillsong services at the Platt and at a theatre in Leatherhead, and many have come to faith since coming along to church.

- 3.8 million people aged 65+ live alone, representing 36% of Britain's population
- 70% of these are women
- Roehampton, in the Platt's catchment area, is the second-most deprived area in Wandsworth Borough, and the third-largest estate in Europe



Livability has been a longterm, fundamental partner for Regenerate-RISE. Mo, who has been involved with Livability since 1992, explains: 'Livability has enabled us to grow, to have a base that we call home and provide an environment that reflects love and compassion and ultimately the grace and love of God.'

Regenerate-RISE celebrates in style



**Livability has enabled us to grow**

**Founder Mo Smith**



**Celebrating change read**  
Michael's story p12



**Bigger picture**

Regenerate-RISE is now working in several UK cities and London centres. To find out more about their work (and Mo's MBE), visit their website.

➔ **Visit: [www.regenerate-rise.co.uk](http://www.regenerate-rise.co.uk)**

# Celebrating change

All our link churches have many more stories to tell about how individuals and communities they work with have been transformed. Here are just a few...

## Mission possible Latymer, North Kensington

**'I started at Latymer in 1948 when I was five.**

I lived in very poor conditions until I was nine and we moved to a council flat. I met my husband at the Mission when I was ten and he was 12, and I was May Queen in 1958. My two children were baptised there. Without the help and prayers of people at Latymer, I would not be where I am today or have been able to do the things I have in life.'

**Jeanette Joynson, 71**



## Chiswick Christian Centre

West Drayton

## Reclaiming the land Bell Farm, West Drayton



**Back in the 1990s, fear and intimidation dominated life on the Bell Farm estate.** A

small group of local young people terrorised residents with violence and even

death threats. The church became a key target and had to all but close after bricks were thrown through the windows during services. Over 70 windows were broken in one incident. The pastor's family home was viciously persecuted. The community banded together to fight back, and the church committed to months of daily prayer and fasting to fight the problem. Supported by the police, local councillors and many community members, ringleaders were brought to trial and evicted from the estate, and gradually peace returned. This chapter opened the church's eyes to the huge needs of the community around them, and birthed the community work they continue today.

## New start Regenerate-RISE, Putney

**Michael faced eviction from the flat he had shared with his parents, when his mother died.**

Aged 60-plus, Michael has learning disabilities and serious health issues. Regenerate-RISE helped to get Michael rehoused in suitable sheltered accommodation. He decided to attend a Hillsong service with others from Regenerate-RISE, and says it has 'turned his life around'.



## Home from home Oasis, Chadwell Heath



### Joan joined Chadwell Christian Mission in 1942, aged 12:

'The mission was opposite our house and a friend asked me along.' Chadwell Heath then 'was like living in the country, with farms and fields', remembers Joan. Her son Terry grew up in the church, where he met and married his wife. Joan helps at several groups at church every week and even takes part in a keep-fit class. Her faith makes her outward-looking, she says: 'We are a church for the community. I just love sitting and talking to people. Chadwell Heath has changed so much, but we're here for people.'

Joan Hollick, 84

## Tower Hamlets Community Church

## Tower Hamlets

## The Bear

## Deptford

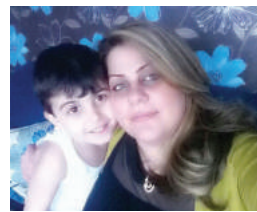
## Bloomin' beautiful The Shaftesbury, Battersea

### Doddington Estate has a secret garden – on top of one of the tower blocks.

Here The Shaftesbury has worked with others in the community to create a space bursting with fruit, flowers and vegetables. Formerly a sleazy, run-down area, the community joined forces to build the garden and train in basic horticulture. As well as growing the produce, the garden team invites local residents along to cook-outs to taste what's been produced. At Christmas, carols can be heard on the estate when The Shaftesbury organises a rooftop celebration.



## No more loneliness Highway Church, Stratford

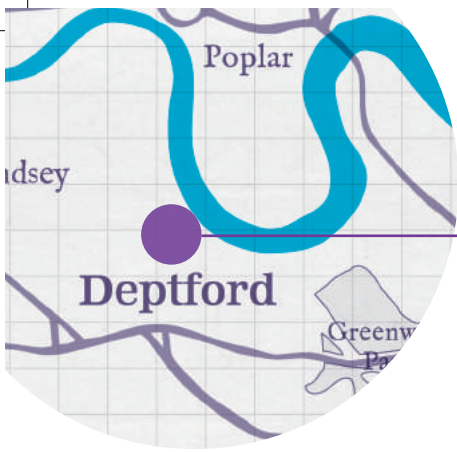


### 'I found it very hard to make friends

[in London] - it is not easy to connect with people. Because I was very alone, my neighbours Simon and Claire showed me the way

to go to church - I had not found a church before. After church they often invite me back for lunch with others and I make more friends. I have been 11 years in this country and this is the first time I have a neighbour and I am very happy.'

Sommayah, 32, who found friends at Highway Church, with her son Daniel



# The Bear Deptford

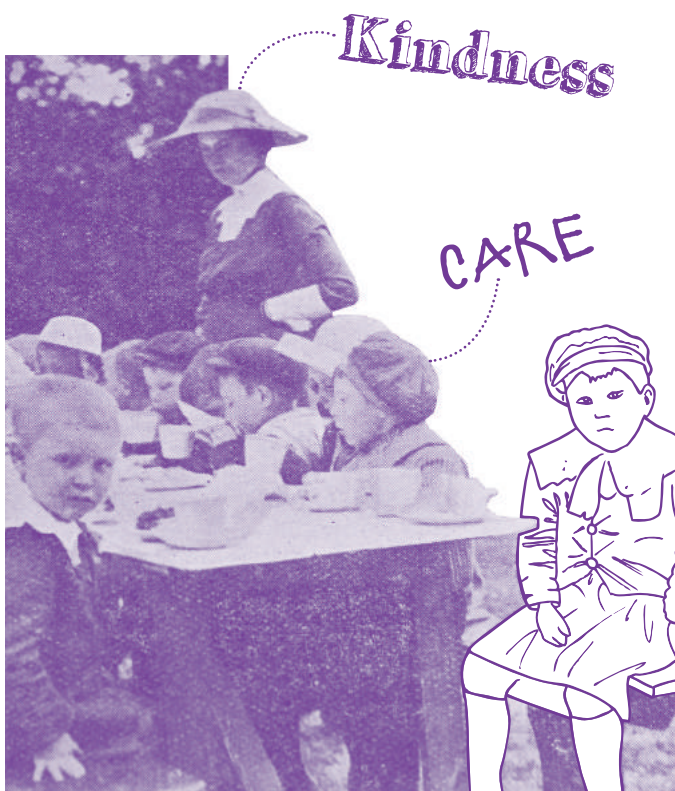
“ When our teachers visited these so-called “homes”, they often found them without doors or furniture, as these had been used for fuel

Deptford Ragged School anniversary booklet, describing ragged children’s homes, late 1800s

Deptford was a no-go area for respectable people in the nineteenth century, when a Ragged School was founded there. Today, that school lives on as The Bear Church, reaching out to the rich and poor of Deptford’s community



# Then



**1844**

Deptford Ragged School opens, one of the first in London, with Lord Shaftesbury as president of the Ragged School Union. Teachers describe the children as ‘half-starved, half-dressed and half-wild’, with some so uncared-for they do not have a name

**1846**

80 children attend the school, now also running day- and night-schools for adults

**1886**

Princess Louise, Princess of Wales, opens a new building. Open every night and most days, the Deptford Ragged and Industrial School runs a wide range of community services, with over 1,000 children in the Sunday School

**1919**

The school moves and is renamed the Princess Louise School and Institute, with 146 workers, mainly volunteers

**1950s**

After WWII, the centre’s work expands

**1981**

The centre is renamed The Shaftesbury Christian Centre

# Now

## **Dedicated to Deptford**

With a dwindling congregation, it looked as if the church which met in the Shaftesbury Christian Centre, formerly the Deptford Ragged School, might close. But in 2009, its leader George Maslin took a remarkable step. Supported by Livability, George invited a young, arty Christian fellowship, who met up the road in The Bear pub, to come and join forces with his congregation. Five years later, the church is thriving, with around 160 people meeting on a Sunday morning, and an evening service focused on homeless people and those with addictions.

Bear Cubs, the church's pre-school group, is a key part of the church's outreach. It started some 15 years ago, when church mum Emily Adlington couldn't find a group to take her own baby to. Today it opens four times a week, is crammed to capacity every time, and won two community awards in 2013 for its outstanding service.

## **Whole world in one place**

Why does a church put so much effort into a toddler group? 'For me, church is about loving one another,' says Bear Cubs co-leader Fiona Thompson. 'Lewisham Borough has a lot of young families, and Deptford is like the whole world in one place – very rich to very poor, and every single culture you can imagine. Many people, including me, are far away from



family, and, for migrant families, far from their culture. People tell us this can be the only time they get out of the house.'

## **Space to be happy**

Bear Cubs has proven to be a catalyst for longterm friendship and support. 'One Nigerian lady, with three children, has been seriously ill and was in hospital for six weeks. As a group, and with other friends too, we sorted out a rota and fed her family for three months. Her three-year-old has been very upset by her illness, and the family told us that Bear Cubs is the only part of the week when he is happy.'

As the modern embodiment of one of the first ragged schools, does The Bear's history hold any significance now? 'Yes, we value the fact that we are part of a legacy,' says Fiona. 'Since those early days, there's been a commitment to provide something for this community for a very, very long time. We want to carry on being a resource for Deptford.'



## **Images:**

(Top) Bear Cubs get busy  
(Middle) The Bear: a Christian presence in Deptford since 1844  
(Lower) Time for fun



## **🔍 Bigger picture**

Get inspired by The Bear's creative approach to faith and the community by visiting their website, where you can find out more about their faith and outreach programme. To hear stories of life in Deptford over the years, visit the Deptford Decades webpage (below).

➔ Visit: [www.thebear.tv](http://www.thebear.tv)  
[www.thebear.tv/deptford-decades](http://www.thebear.tv/deptford-decades)



# Chiswick Christian Centre

## Now

**A 19-year-old working-class man launched the work of Chiswick Christian Centre over 130 years ago. Today, this vibrant, multi-racial church continues to live out a caring and powerful Gospel message**



### Sharing life together

If you walk down Chiswick High Road on a Friday evening or Saturday morning, you

are likely to meet members of Chiswick Christian Centre (CCC) who are out to meet and pray for local people. This weekly ministry keeps the church closely in touch with the needs of their community, and informs their vibrant prayer ministry, which is at the heart of church life.

The church sits in a very diverse neighbourhood, in terms of ethnicity, wealth and need. Over 25 nationalities are represented in the church, and church leaders Phil and Caroline Whitehead feel this is a core strength. 'The diversity of our congregation helps many different sorts of people to feel comfortable and included. This includes those from other countries, those in employment and not, and those with mental health problems.'

Sharing Sunday lunch helps visitors and regulars make friends, and builds a sense of community, Phil and Caroline find. Each week, two of the midweek 'life' groups provide lunch, which is set out in the church for all to share. There is opportunity to include national dress, food and dance at many church events. Many of the congregation receive CCC's prayer texts during the week, and prayer for individuals, for the community, and for nations beyond the UK underpins church life.

CCC wants its building to be a community resource, and its many ministries include the Buzz Club for older people, which has been running in various forms since the mission's early days.

**Image:**  
CCC builds a sense of community

### **Bigger picture**

For more about this church's ministry, including healing prayer and stories changed lives, see their website.

**➔ Visit: [www.chiswick.cc](http://www.chiswick.cc)**

## Then

### Mid-1800s

Boatman Robert Smith sets up a coffee stall outside his Chiswick boatyard, in an effort to keep labouring men out of the public houses

### 1880

A ragged school is launched, with support from Livability. The mission expands, with hot lunches for elderly people, and cooking facilities available to the poor

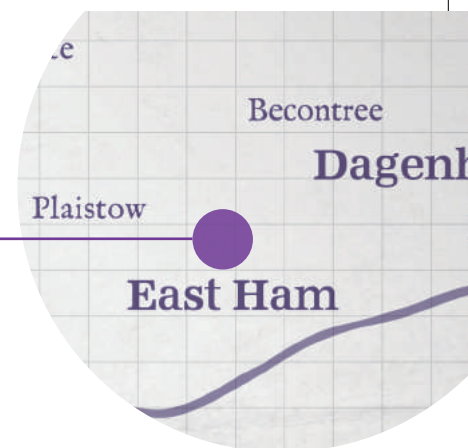
### 1980s

Livability welcomes a new church to the building - Chiswick Christian Centre



# Latimer Christian Fellowship

## East Ham



# Now

## East Enders old and new have found a sanctuary at Latimer since the 1870s



Latimer friends

# Then

## 1870s

Latimer Hall Evangelical Mission opens in East Ham

## 1911

Becomes part of the Livability family

## 1930s

'Children and cripples' taken on holidays to Livability's seaside homes

## 1940s

A WWII bomb blows the roof off, but the church remains standing

### Open to all

Latimer Christian Centre, under the shadow of West Ham United's stadium, is at the heart of a vibrant community in the East End. 'This area is home to a great mix of people – there are White British 'East Enders', second- and third-generation Asian families, and immigrants who arrived last week,' says Colin Baynes, one of four lay leaders.

Latimer's desire to include everyone is especially evident in the welcome and inclusion of people with disabilities; some 75 per cent of regular attendees have a disability of some kind. 'We conducted a survey on people's learning styles,' says Alison Orphan, one of the leadership team, who frequently preaches. 'After this, I changed my sermons because I realised that many people could not follow a long sermon or complicated ideas.'

Both Colin and his wife Carol, and co-leaders Si and Alison Orphan, have disabled children. 'In the church we have autistic children, and a child with ADHD,' says Colin. 'We

know that autistic children need regularity and routine, so we try to meet that need but still keep church fun and engaging for everybody.' The church's leaders are personally aware of the stress that living with disability creates, and want Latimer to be a place of sanctuary and healing.

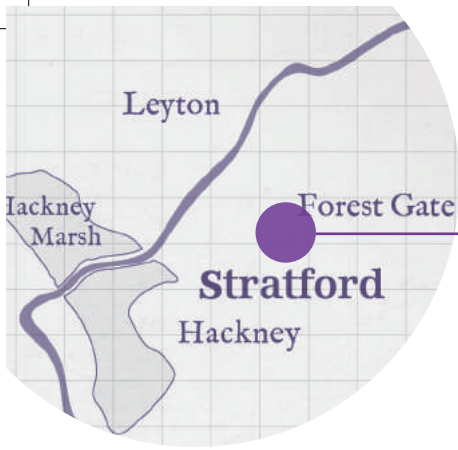
The church is surrounded by two housing estates, both of which receive people from housing waiting lists. Many move on, resulting in the highest turnover of population in London - and a challenge to creating real community. Latimer's PRIORITY Club has proved a popular meeting place where parents, mostly mums, come at Tuesday tea-time, and up to 20 children play together.

This group has created an opportunity for women to care for each other in a way that had not happened before. 'When one woman had a baby, others helped out with cooking, childcare and popped round to visit,' says Alison. She plans to introduce a monthly prayer opportunity for anyone requesting prayer.

### 🔍 Bigger picture

For more information on Latimer please visit their web link below.

➔ Visit: [tinyurl.com/latimerchurch](https://tinyurl.com/latimerchurch)



# Highway Church

## Stratford

What does loving your neighbour actually mean in 21st-century London? Highway Church is practising what it preaches and is building relationships with its strikingly diverse neighbourhood



# Then

FUN



**1934**

80 people from local churches decide to launch a new mission in Stratford

**1936**

Highway Hall Mission opens in Romford Road. Construction magnate Sir John Laing is a major donor

**1946**

Up to 600 people every night attend a four-month evangelistic mission at Highway

**1960s**

Highway's work focuses more on church work rather than outreach mission, for almost 50 years. Highway joins Livability in 1990

**2007**

A return to its emphasis on mission sees an outwardly focused and growing Highway Church. They open a state-of-the-art building, funded by a housing redevelopment led by Livability

# Now

“ We don't love our neighbours to convert them – we love them because we are converted

Simon Clinton, pastor

## Who is my neighbour?

'Newham Borough is wonderfully multi-cultural, so down our street we have people from many nations, cultures, ages and backgrounds,' says Highway pastor Simon Clinton. 'That's the thrill and the challenge – how do you connect with someone who's not got the same background as you? It's building genuine relationships, moving from stranger to acquaintance to relationship.'

Nearly all Highway Church's members live locally, and represent some 40 nations. The church has grown to 140, from 24 people only 11 years ago, and is committed to being a resource for the Stratford community. Highway has been learning the how, what and why of being good neighbours, in a city where a BBC poll revealed that three out of ten Londoners feel lonely often or all of the time.

### Card and cake

Rising to the challenge himself, Simon and his family put Christmas cards through the letterboxes in their street every year, with an invitation to an open house at their place, and an offer of home-baked cake. This welcome has resulted in former strangers approaching the Clintons for help or friendship. 'Sommayeh, an Iranian lady from a Muslim background, stopped my wife in the street to ask if we could help take her son to school

one day when she had a job interview. The reason she approached Claire was because she'd had an open house invite and thought we "must be nice people". We've got to know her, we take her son to church with us sometimes, and she's started coming as well.'

Simon sees these simple actions as central to the church's outreach because he is convinced that being a good neighbour makes for happier communities, and is all part of 'building the Kingdom of God'.

### Big lunch

An annual international Sunday is another opportunity Highway uses to bring people together. Up to 180 people come along, in national dress if they wish, and everyone's family is welcome. Reading a Bible verse in their own language, enjoying music from different traditions, and sharing a big lunch where everyone brings a favourite national dish makes for a special celebration. 'We like to pray for all nations as a church so it's a good



### Images:

(Top) Sharing Sunday morning worship

(Lower)

National dress and food make for a vibrant international lunch

time to have a special focus on this area,' says church administrator Anne Dixon. 'It's also a great way of making everyone feel welcome and part of our church family.'

### Compassion

It's easy to be and feel anonymous in a large city, but Simon says people at Highway try to emulate Jesus' example: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them", as it says in Matthew 9:36.'

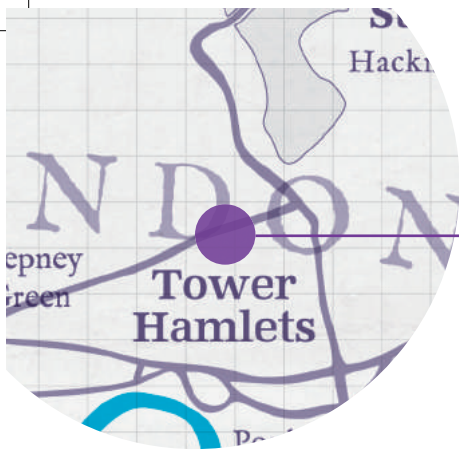


**Celebrating change** Sommayeh finds friends in a lonely city **p13**

## Bigger picture

Highway also serves Newham with Night Shelter for homeless people, and by charring Transform Newham, which brings together 250 churches.

➔ Visit: [www.highwaychurch.org.uk](http://www.highwaychurch.org.uk)



# Tower Hamlets Community Church

**Images:**

(Opposite) Courtney on Canaan's outdoor pursuits holiday  
(Below) All together now: fun and worship at THCC

**This fellowship is at the heart of one of London's most densely populated boroughs. Despite this, isolation is an issue for many - and the church takes this seriously**



# Then

**1891**

The Out and Out Mission opens in the East End, teaching literacy and Scripture

**1924**

Livability saves the mission from closure when it buys their building. The work includes a club for 'crippled' children

**1976**

The mission has a new name - Bridge House - and a new building, after East End slum clearance. This fellowship is the forerunner of Tower Hamlets Christian Centre

# Now

- **Tower Hamlets has one of the highest levels of child poverty in England**
- **44% of people live in social housing**
- **29% live in overcrowded conditions**

## **Border crossing**

'Isolation is one of the key battles that many in our area face - ironic given that Tower Hamlets has such a high population density!' says Tony Uddin, pastor of Tower Hamlets Community Church (THCC). 'This is something that we as a church take seriously. One of the most common things we hear is how people have found a home here and a sense of family.' Over 100 people meet on Sundays, and a remarkable 80 per cent helps with a wide range of community work.

## **Girls only**

Young people on local estates, especially girls, are not immune to isolation, the church finds. The church sits near the Globe Town estate, in an area of East London that has the highest concentration of children and young people in the UK. 'Youth group activities tend to be quite male-orientated, being centred around activities such as table tennis and pool,' says Fiona Harriss, co-ordinator of THCC's Canaan Project. 'When we launched activities focused on girls, we found them to be massively popular.'

Running girls-only activities unlocks cultural doors: 'There's a large Bangladeshi Muslim community here, so culturally, mixed activities are often not seen as appropriate,' Fiona explains.

A group of church volunteers, led by Fiona, runs Canaan's drop-in lunch clubs at the local secondary school, twice a week. These clubs offer a safe place within school where girls can chat, play games or paint their nails. Up to 40 attend each session. An after-school club at the local community centre offers the chance to try new things, such as cooking, self-defence and sport.

## **Widening horizons**

Talking about life issues from a young woman's perspective is also part of the programme. 'The girls come from a mixture of backgrounds, but most are Bangladeshi,' says Fiona. 'They typically have quite limited opportunities which can result in a lack of confidence and a reluctance to try new things. Canaan is a very



**I had a go and walked across a rope that was wobbly and thin and quite high up. I felt proud of myself and I'm not afraid of heights any more. It made me more confident to try other things I'm scared of**

**Courtney, 13**

positive place where they can come and engage with supportive adults.'

The name Canaan, the Biblical promised land, was chosen as a symbol of safety and abundance, explains Fiona: 'We want young people to find "life in all its fullness" from John 10:10, and we see this as a holistic thing - physical, spiritual, emotional, social and economic.'

## **Up and away**

Canaan recently took ten 11-14-year-old girls away on a two-night outdoor pursuits holiday. Many had never been away from

home before, and planning the trip meant overcoming lots of barriers, including the girls' nervousness and parents' concerns. The trip proved to be a confidence-boosting success.

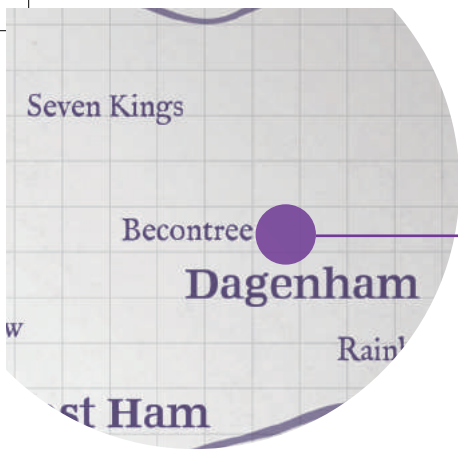
Back in Tower Hamlets, Canaan also runs lunchtime groups for vulnerable girls who have been referred by the school, and who may be struggling with issues such as self-harm. Sometimes this develops into one-to-one mentoring relationships with a Canaan volunteer. 'We respond to whatever we feel the girls need,' Fiona says.



## **Bigger picture**

Find out what else THCC offers their community including their church market stall.

➔ Visit: [www.thcc.org.uk](http://www.thcc.org.uk)



# Kingsley Hall

## Dagenham

**Image:**  
In the driving seat at Kinder Kapers

# Now

**When Dagenham's 'Homes Fit for Heroes' were built in the 1920s, Kingsley Hall became the heart of a new community. Nearly a century later, this church and community centre is looking to the future**

### Launching pad

'What was started back in the late 1920s at Kingsley Hall was really at the cutting edge, and was an absolute lifeline to people in Dagenham,' says Kingsley Hall's director Chris Kapnisis. 'I'm glad to say we still have some of those first members in the church, now in their late eighties and nineties. Together we want to rediscover the radical approach of our founders.'



Today, Kingsley Hall is still a lifeline to the community. It opens daily to provide activities and a hot lunch for up to 50 elderly people, who value the friends they meet at Kingsley throughout the week. Many also attend the Sunday fellowship. For the younger age-group in Dagenham, Kingsley's preschool group, Kinder Kapers, provides care for 50 children every day and is well regarded by parents, Ofsted and local children's services. 'Kinder Kapers has been part of Kingsley Hall for over 20 years, and is a place for families to meet new friends and receive help and advice,' says manager Sandra French.

Many local groups make use of Kingsley's spacious accommodation, including arts workshops for disabled and disaffected young people. Chris, who joined Kingsley in 2014, has big dreams for building on Kingsley's heritage of mission and community engagement: 'I feel Kingsley is pregnant with possibility, and we want to launch some great things here, bringing our church and our community engagement together. Kingsley is a genuinely friendly place. It's a joy to partner with Livability in retaining what's best about our heritage, whilst not getting stuck in the past.'

# Then

## 1929

Christian sisters Muriel and Doris Lester start a radical mission and community work in Dagenham, run from a caravan and a marquee. The Lesters, helped by Livability, buy land to build Kingsley Hall

## 1931

The large site is developed to include a chapel, nursery – opened by the Prime Minister's daughter, Ishbel Macdonald – library, Sunday School and social centre

## 1940s

Kingsley Hall acts as an air raid shelter in WWII, with 1,200 beds in the corridors. Muriel Lester campaigns for pacifism

### 🔍 Bigger picture

Keep in touch with Kingsley Hall's work and plans.

➔ Visit: [www.khccc.com](http://www.khccc.com)



Scenes from the roof garden at Battersea's Doddington estate (see p13)

**"I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places — firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again."**

Isaiah 58 v10-12  
The Message Version

### You and your community

If your church would value support or training in engaging with your community, please get in touch. We have a wide range of tools, training programmes and an experienced team committed to helping churches tackle isolation and increase wellbeing.

### Supporting Livability

If you would be interested in hearing more about supporting our work in prayer, finance or as a volunteer, we would be excited to explore partnering together.

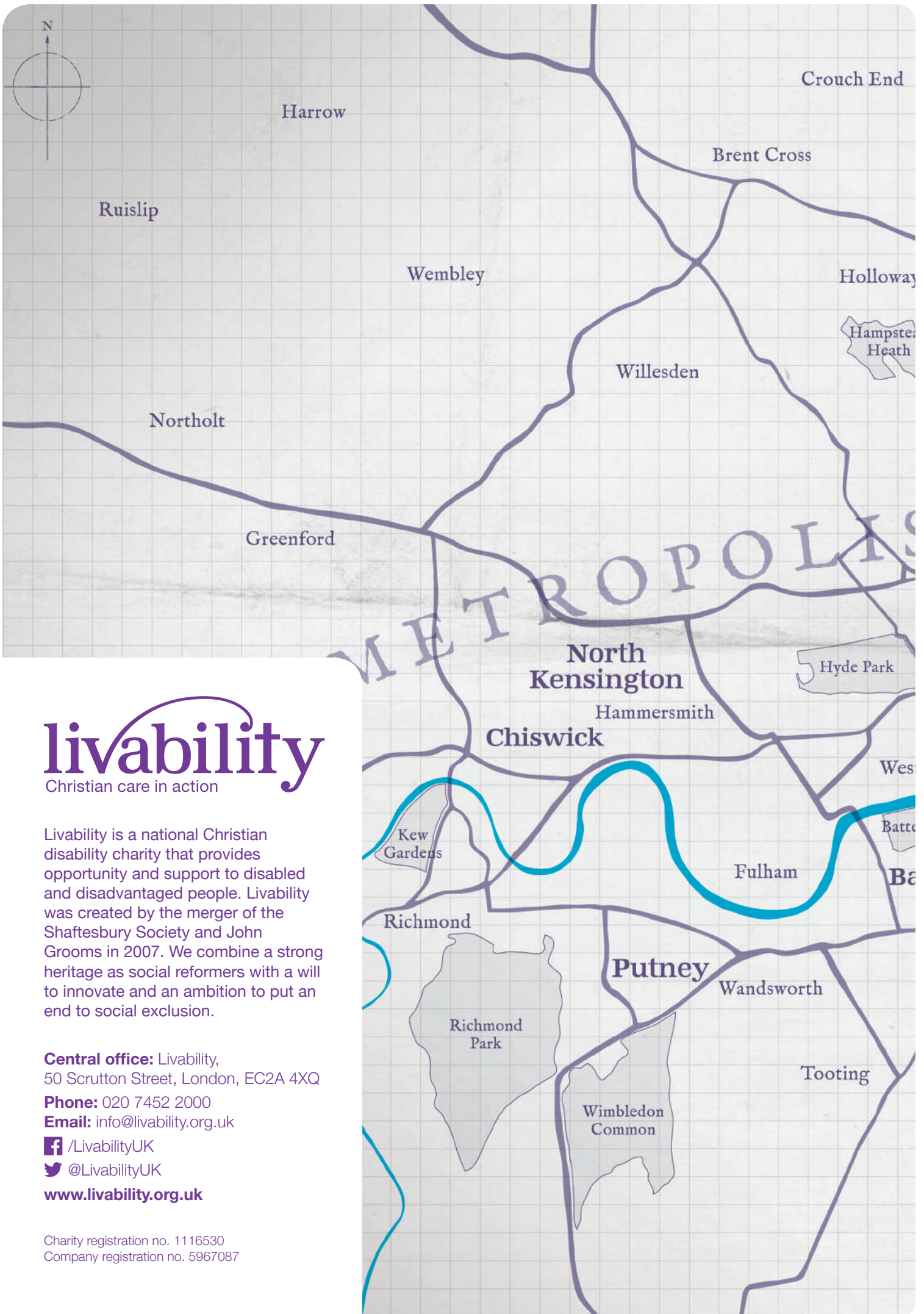
### Contact the Community Engagement team

Tel: 020 7452 2019

Email: [joinin@livability.org.uk](mailto:joinin@livability.org.uk)

[www.livability.org.uk](http://www.livability.org.uk)

In addition to the churches featured in this booklet, Livability's link churches include Harmony Hall in Walthamstow and St Paul's Place, Hammersmith.



# livability

Christian care in action

Livability is a national Christian disability charity that provides opportunity and support to disabled and disadvantaged people. Livability was created by the merger of the Shaftesbury Society and John Grooms in 2007. We combine a strong heritage as social reformers with a will to innovate and an ambition to put an end to social exclusion.

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