**Faiths Together in Croydon Event 6th December 2012**

**Supporting Vulnerable People over Christmas and New Year**

Yesterday’s Faith Together in Croydon event was held to

1. showcase the winners of the FTIC Photo 2012 Competition;
2. highlight key achievements of the year; and
3. discuss support for vulnerable people over Christmas and New Year

More than 30 people from a range of faith, voluntary and community groups came together to hear from organisations in Croydon supporting more vulnerable people over Christmas and New Year: hearing from Nightwatch, Samaritans, Croydon Churches Floating Shelter and the Croydon Food bank; as well as presentations from those offering other support.

Well attended by the local community, it was an excellent, informative and congenial opportunity for people and organisations to network, particularly for those working on food poverty in Croydon.

One participant from an Islamic faith group said: “excellent meeting, GREAT effort and good attendance… so much that is being done by the few that I was not aware of which thus helped me to think and contemplate on the plight of others ...”

Another voluntary organisation supporting vulnerable people said “we all need to interact even more with each other so that we can all help the MANY who need and can do with our joint support and efforts to move them forward”

The meeting was highly successful and people left enthused about the range of projects working hard to support vulnerable people, regardless of age, gender or circumstances.

Many thought about volunteering where they had not done so before and others were prepared to give towards these organisations. One example of the spirit of collaboration engendered at the meeting was the Croydon Mosque offering “twelve large FRESH turkeys to organisations supporting vulnerable people on the 23rd December 2012”.

Our main desire here is to encourage more people across Croydon to volunteer with their time, support the charities listed with their money, and to consider those in need across Croydon over this time - often very hard for those without friends, support or homes.

Faiths Together in Croydon looks forward to more effective communication and collaboration to help the borough, as a whole, make a much larger impact on the wider community. As a network, it wants to raise the profile of these valued organisations in Croydon so that people can use and / support these services

**Additional Notes**

Faiths Together in Croydon (FTIC) celebrates interfaith activities – bringing faiths together in Croydon to co-operate, work together, build common ground, and much more. See <http://www.faithstogetherincroydon.org.uk>

The FTIC Photo Competition was run as part of Interfaith Week (18-27 November 2012) to capture the many celebrations, marriages, meals and worship that happen in Croydon across all faith communities. Winners will be published in the annual interfaith online calendar. Winning categories included: celebrations e.g. worship, marriages, births; sharing e.g. food, meals, gifts, peace; interfaith e.g. joint events, friends from different faiths, shared buildings; and faith at play or work (paid or unpaid) e.g. volunteer mosque, praying at work. One winner for each category was chosen, including one special picture. Photos are available in high resolution for the FTIC 2012 Faith Photo Competition and the FTIC 6th December 2012 Event.

Key achievements of the FTIC during 2012 include discussions on burials, interfaith walks and DVD, Big Lunch in the Park June 2012, and various meetings building understanding between different faiths.

The organisations speaking all use volunteer support to deliver their essential services:

a. Samaritans operate with trained volunteers who offer their time in shifts. Each independent branch works hard to get public donations. Samaritans listen to people 24/7 over the entire year, with a special ‘non-brick’ centre during the Christmas period

b. Nightwatch only runs due to committed volunteers who deliver an excellent service throughout the year. They spend much time collecting donations of food, money and resources to ensure they can support those in need. Nightwatch volunteers sit alongside each homeless person coming to their centre to receive practical and emotional support

c. Croydon Churches Floating Shelter volunteers come from local churches across Croydon. Motivated by a desire to serve those in need, this idea came from the Churches Together in Coulsden network. Croydon Churches Floating Shelter operates as a network of churches across Croydon. Each church takes turns in running a night shelter, including food and emotional support, from November to March each year

d. The Croydon Food Bank is seeking volunteers. Started from the Croydon Food Network and supported by the local authority, it is keen to harness the strong interest in organisations working together to support vulnerable people. The Croydon Food Bank has listened to organisations and worked out that one of the key needs is food – it is working hard to deliver supplies to local groups – they have gained support from Ikea and others

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