

## **Decision of the Board of Trustees of Kingsgate Community Association to enter liquidation.**

The Board of Trustees of the Kingsgate Community Association met today (Tuesday Sep 8th) in order to assess and make a decision about the future of the Association. It is with deep regret that despite the best efforts on our part, and on the part of Camden Council, we have decided to liquidate the Association with immediate effect. This means that the Association will no longer deliver community activities at Kingsgate Community Centre and that the nursery will not reopen.

### **The decision making process:**

This was a really difficult decision for the Association's board to make. It was taken after a week's consultation with the staff of the Association in which they were invited to enter into dialogue with the members of the board about thinking through how we could address the critical operational and financial situation that the impact of COVID-19 has caused.

At the meeting today the board had a long and extensive discussion which took into account the issues that staff had raised over the past week as well as:

- the trading position of the Association in relation to the on-going critical impact of COVID-19
- the overall financial position of the Association caused by the impact of COVID-19
- the obligations of the Association to its staff and users to ensure that COVID-19 risk is minimised and safety ensured
- the safeguarding and health and safety considerations in relation to the children who attend pre-school on the Association's site
- the prospect of making the Association's building COVID-19 safe in a constrained, Victorian building, with only one point of access and few toilets for multiple users
- the responsibilities that the Association has to its staff to make sure that if liquidation happened there were sufficient assets left to maximise the prospect of proper redundancy packages
- the responsibilities of the Association in relation to its provision of pre-school care and education and the impact that the loss of this would have on those in the local community

After assessing the position we sadly felt that the inherited operational and financial model of the charity is no longer sustainable. This arises because this inherited model relies too heavily on the income that is derived from the letting out of space in the Community Centre. The impact of the loss of this revenue during lockdown has been critical. This coupled with the fact that in the foreseeable future, due to the public health considerations, and the nature of building, we feel we would be unable to

return to the needed level of income in order to be viable, has led us to this difficult decision today.

### **The impact on the local community:**

We are particularly aware that the Kingsgate Community Centre has been at the centre of the local Kingsgate community, and the Kilburn and West Hampstead communities beyond the immediate vicinity, for well over 100 years. It has been a place which has provided opportunities and resources for some of the most deprived low income communities in Camden and beyond in the London Borough of Brent. It has been a location where the wonderfully mixed communities that have developed in our local area, because of waves of enriching migration from other parts of the world, have had a meeting space, a place of encounter and cultural exchange.

Further we deeply regret that the impact of this decision to close the Association and the Centre will have significant impact on the immediate pre-school care and education of many children in the local area. It is deeply regrettable that the future of that provision is also dependent on the financial viability of the charity as a whole and cannot be run, at this time, as a separate entity in itself. We are deeply grateful that Camden Council will be giving advice to parents and carers on access to alternative provision and we direct people to their children's services to seek this advice.

### **The impact on the staff of the centre:**

We also deeply regret that the decision to close the Association and the Centre, at this time, will mean that there will be redundancies that will be borne by some of the most wonderfully dedicated and conscientious staff that any community centre is served by. We have been privileged as the interim board of trustees to work in a setting in which we feel people have a deep sense beyond mere contractual employment, a real sense of community and of the positive impact of all that we have historically provided has given, not just to them, but to the wellbeing of many in our local community. They are a truly dedicated, excellent, professional and gifted team of people and we wish them well for their future and their efforts to seek alternative employment.

As a board we would also like to express particular thanks to Marie Griffin in her time as the Manager of the Kingsgate Centre. We have found Marie to possess levels of compassionate professionalism which are exemplary for someone working in the charitable and voluntary sector. Her particular combination of personality, gifts, experience and skills have been invaluable in the extremely complex and precarious context of that she inherited when she came into her present role. She has been amazing in helping to bring some structure to the organisation and helped to solidify the trust in the operations of the centre with local residents whilst still as pursuing financial goals and sustainability. We also wish her well for her future.

## **Into the future:**

We are confident that the end of the life of the Kingsgate Community Association and Centre will not be the end of community provision in the local area. Camden, as a council are highly regarded for their commitment to local people, on the ground, in the borough. We have no doubt that after a community audit is carried out and assessment of the building and what the future community provision might hold, that alternative ways of providing many of the services of the Association and Centre will be found. We wish the Council well in this process of co-creation with the local community.