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#closetohome

Act 20: Close to Home

by Hannah Whitehead

Today we're championing local causes. And if we don't do it, who will? The only people who'll raise a banner for local causes are locals, so let's be the ones who'll rise to that challenge. Imagine if people talked up your neighbourhood as a place where people are kind.

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

(Matthew 22:37–39 NIV)

Muswell Hill's a bit posh. You can get a bit caught up with the beautiful double-fronted Edwardian houses, green spaces and artisan shops, but take a closer look, and you'll see it's not all paninis and Pilates.

One day I came out of Sainsbury's and started chatting to a homeless lady outside. I'll never forget what she said to me: 'I want to go to the soup kitchen to eat, but I don't know where it is.' Later that same week, I was chatting to an elderly lady who told me that when her seniors' group didn't meet in the holidays, she only saw her daily carer, and had no one else to speak to, leaving her feeling lonely and isolated.

I realised that I could help both these ladies and connect them to our community. I now have a weekly chat on the phone with my elderly friend and I researched the soup kitchen and passed on the information to my homeless friend.

My work at St James Church Muswell Hill has shown me just how much there is on offer in our neighbourhood. Now I know about the food bank, soup kitchen, winter night shelter, community café and seniors' group, there's no stopping me.

Today, try making some connections close to home. Check out the needs in your community and try matching them up to help and support on offer. A big homeless community? Have a chat about the soup kitchen, night shelter and charities like Home Into Action. Lots of lone parents? Signpost the toddler group, Make Lunch and similar groups. You might make some new friends and you'll definitely transform your community.



Hannah works at [St James Church Muswell Hill](#) as Head of Community Ministries where she runs the winter night shelter and a community café, coordinates the soup kitchen and seniors' group, and assists people with learning disabilities and mental health.

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Choose how to complete this act...



GREEN OPTION:

Start chatting to people in your area, whether that is an isolated elderly person, your next-door neighbour or a homeless person.



YELLOW OPTION:

Take part in a volunteer day. You can look up local causes, care homes or schools.



RED OPTION:

See if you can volunteer frequently for a local cause you love.

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