



## Elizabeth Fry has featured on the £5 note since 2002, but who was she?

Elizabeth Gurney was born in Norwich, England in 1780 to a well off Quaker (Society of Friends) family. In 1800 she married Joseph Fry who was also a Quaker. In 1813 Elizabeth made her first visit to Newgate prison where she observed women and children in horrible conditions. Elizabeth began working for reform, campaigning for segregation of the sexes, female matrons for female prisoners, education and employment (often knitting and sewing) and religious instruction.

In 1817 Elizabeth Fry began the Association for the Improvement of Female Prisoners and along with a group of 12 other women they lobbied authorities including parliament. In the 1820s she inspected prison conditions, advocated reform and established further groups to campaign for reform. In 1823 prison reform legislation was finally introduced in Parliament.

Whilst Elizabeth Fry is most well known for her prison reform activities, she was also involved in investigating and proposing reforms in mental asylums. For more than twenty-five years she visited every convict ship leaving for Australia and promoted reform of the convict ship system. She worked to improve nursing standards and established a nursing school which influenced her distant relative, Florence Nightingale. She worked for the education of working women, for better housing for the poor and was responsible for the establishment of soup kitchens.

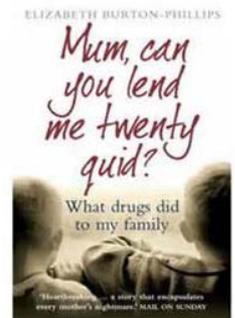
Elizabeth Fry died in 1845. Wishing to commemorate her work the Lord Mayor of London convened a meeting at which it was decided to found an institute for ex-prisoners in her memory – the Elizabeth Fry Refuge. In 1924 it was reconstituted as a charitable organisation and became a hostel for girls on Probation which in 1949 was officially approved by the Home Office. It moved to Reading and 1962 where the work continues in her memory. The £5 note featuring Elizabeth Fry's image is soon to be discontinued.

## Soundproofing Project

We are enormously grateful to Reading Borough Council who provided us with a grant of nearly £5,000 to enable us to soundproof the offices at the Approved Premises. We had wanted to do this work for some time due to the noise intrusion from the upstairs bedrooms and to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The work was completed in February and has been a great success, eliminating any noise travelling between bedrooms and offices and also improving the look of the office.

## Author's visit

We were delighted to welcome Elizabeth Burton-Phillips, author of "Mum, can you lend me twenty quid?" to the Approved Premises in March. Elizabeth spoke to residents about her life since her twin sons became involved in substance misuse resulting in one them losing their life to a heroin overdose in 2004. Following her experience Elizabeth started the Charity Drugfam which provides support to the families affected by addiction. This was an incredibly powerful session which many residents were able to relate to both as mothers and children.



## Meet Christine – Substance Misuse Worker



I joined the team as Substance Misuse Worker in October 2015. The post has been funded for three years by the Pilgrim Trust. Prior to this I had worked at the Approved Premises as a member of the relief panel for a number of years. I applied for the role of Substance Misuse Worker as I'd always enjoyed working with the residents and I felt this would be the next step for me to help the women at Elizabeth Fry to turn their lives around.

There is no such thing as an average day at Elizabeth Fry! On a Monday I deliver the group work programme, which I tailor to meet the needs of the current resident group. Sometimes this will involve focusing on issues closely related to drugs or alcohol, but at other times the group may be more focused on employment or I will run an Open Group, providing residents with a chance to talk about any issues they are having in the Approved Premises – I have learnt that with 22 women living together it is vital that residents have space to talk about how they are feeling. The rest of my week is spent seeing residents for

one to one meetings and working with them to develop and implement a plan to address their substance misuse issues. As part of my role I refer residents to outside agencies such as local drug agencies or Berkshire Women's Aid. I also signpost them to local AA and NA meetings and we have recently set up our own in house meeting for residents who have issues with alcohol.

Elizabeth Fry is a small, supportive team and there is flexibility in my role to be responsive to the needs of the resident group. Whilst some residents can be challenging at times, I try to find out what is going on for them in their lives and this helps me to understand why they are behaving in a certain way. I love my job as it involves working with people and no two days are the same.

## Journeys and Stories

Elizabeth Fry and Thames Valley Partnership have been working together over a number of years to provide creative activity for residents at the Approved Premises. The artwork currently displayed on the walls at Elizabeth Fry is the outcome of a 2 year project, Women at the HeArt, and has led to funding from Arts Council England to support our current project: Journeys and Stories. These sessions were led by experienced artists Christine Wilkinson and Carla Conte and culminated in two public exhibitions at Reading Museum and MERL (Museum of English Rural Life).

Journeys and Stories used the skills of professional visual artists and museum curators to enable residents and staff at the hostel to tell their stories through creative activity. Sound artist Linda Mason recorded some of the women's stories so that the spoken word was included in the exhibitions, enabling residents' voices to be truly heard by visitors to the museum.

A selection of activities that the women participated in were: working with wood, printing, painting, collage, book making, using textiles and sewing, painting on acetate and making images of themselves. They also visited Reading Museum where they were taken round by 3 different curators to look at the various collections.

The Exhibition at Reading Museum launched on April 5th and will be open to the public until July 2016. After this, selected pieces will be on display at the newly refurbished MERL.

Staff in the hostel also benefitted from the project: Alison Leverett-Morris led 6 Action Learning Set sessions with staff as part of their professional development. This is a unique approach to staff training and encompasses a creative approach alongside listening skills and supports the role of key workers at the hostel.

Journeys and Stories was funded by Arts Council England and managed by Thames Valley Partnership.

## High Sheriffs Visit

We were privileged to be visited by the High Sheriffs of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire in April. Victoria Fishburn and Milly Soames met with Mary Phillips, Chair of Trustees, Andrew Storch, Vice Chair and Fiona Humphreys, CEO to find out more about the work of the Charity and our plans for the future. They were given a guided tour by a current resident which also provided an opportunity for them to hear about her journey to become a resident of the Approved Premises, her experience of life at Elizabeth Fry and her hopes and plans for the future.



Victoria Fishburn



Milly Soames

## Swimathon fundraiser

Well done to staff and Trustees (as well as their nominated family and friends) who completed a Swimathon at Reading Central Swimming Pool on 16 April to raise money for Elizabeth Fry Charity.

The event was organised by the Reading and Earley Lions Club.

Teams of up to six people swam for an hour and were sponsored by the number of lengths swum. Half of the money raised

by each team went to the Lions and half to the teams nominated Charity – definitely something to make a splash about!



## How you can support Elizabeth Fry Charity

If you would like to support the work of Elizabeth Fry Charity please make a donation by sending either cash or a cheque to the Approved Premises or via our Localgiving page at <https://localgiving.com/charity.elizabethfrycharity>. Don't forget to Gift Aid it!

£5 would pay for prizes for an evening activity

£10 would fund a basic food parcel for a resident moving on.

£30 would pay for a resident to attend a session with our Counsellor

£35 would pay for a bedding set for a resident moving on.

£42 would fund a session with a Citizens Advice Bureau Advisor at the Approved Premises and follow up work.

Elizabeth Fry Charity is registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 8606716.  
Registered charity no. 1152840.

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