

# ***Dover Winter Night Shelter***



***Project Report***

***2020/2021***



## **Foreword by the Dover Outreach Centre Chair of Trustee/acting Project Co-ordinator**

At the end of the 2019/20 Shelter, I commented in the report produced then as follows:

*“Given how this year has gone it would be appropriate to reflect carefully and consider whether future Winter Shelter projects should operate in a slightly different way. Very few things stay the same for a long time so there may be a need to adapt so that the future provision caters for the needs of those served in a more productive way.”*

Little did I know at that time that change was about to be thrust upon us!

The Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on all of our lives to a lesser or greater extent, a few positives but, mainly negatives and challenges wherever we look. For those in our community who found themselves homeless, there has been significant work and resources deployed to house them by Central Government, Local Authorities, agencies and charities to keep them in and safe. This has to be a positive. So, I was a little surprised to be asked by Dover District Council to run a Winter Shelter initiative.

This has been a very different shelter and I set out the detail in the report. I can say that it has been a huge success. It has worked very well, and credit needs to be given to all of those involved, if you are one of those who contributed please accept my thanks. Our guests have appreciated everything that has been done for them.

God bless you,

*Noel*

Noel Beamish  
Chair of Trustees  
Dover Outreach Centre

## Operation of the Shelter

### Co-ordinating team

This year there were 3 members of staff involved in the operation of the shelter, the Project Co-ordinator with overall responsibility and two sessional workers to oversee the delivery of food to the guests each evening.

### Dates

This year's shelter operated from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This is one month longer than our usual winter shelter period.

### Venues

Government guidelines actively discouraged accommodation of guests in church halls (dormitory style settings) so initially 10 single occupancy rooms were secured in B & B locations at Bluebells 120 Folkestone Road and The Castle Inn near St James retail park. Later into the shelter period additional funding was secured to increase the number of guests to 15. Accommodation was secured at Victory House, the First and Last, East Cliff and at a property in Lyminge owned by the proprietor of Bluebells.

### Volunteers

Volunteering opportunities this year were limited to the provision of an evening meal, which was either prepared in the homes of the volunteer or at a suitable church hall. As the operation of the shelter initiatives over the years has been led and supported by Christians and Churches, we were very keen to keep this connection. We were blessed to have the following co-ordinating meals for us:

<b>Evening</b>	<b>Meal Co-ordinator</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Sunday	Richard Moore	St Georges, Deal
Monday	Peter Wallace	One Church
Tuesday	Elizabeth Beck/Michelle Legumi	The Beacon
Wednesday	Rob Lane	Dover Baptist
Thursday	Claudine Nutley	St Paul's Catholic Church
Friday	Lyn Faber	St Peter & Paul, Charlton
Saturday	Anne Gavin	St Martins Church

### Food

We were very aware of the Covid risk, particularly to our volunteers so, evening meal providers placed individual meals in foil containers and delivered to the Outreach Centre in insulated food delivery bags each day between 18.00 and 19.00. They were then delivered to the guests at each venue as quickly as possible by our sessional workers along with breakfast bags prepared by the Outreach Centre. Menus were co-ordinated to ensure that the guests received a variety of different meals.

Donations for the breakfasts were received from Morrisons supermarket, Dover Vineyard Church and St Finbarrs in Aylesham. Thank you to them and also the Leaf Hotel at Whitfield for providing a Christmas day dinner.

## Referrals

Referrals for potential guests came through from Dover Outreach Centre (daily drop in), Dover District Council, Porchlight, Serveco, the Police and other agencies.

This year the following referrals were received/undertaken:

- 39 completed/received.
- 32 were offered a place in the shelter and stayed more than a night.
- 6 were placed on the waiting list but never found to be rough sleeping.
- 1 was refused a place as his support needs were too high.
- 2 guests were females.
- 9 of the guests were foreign nationals.
- 5 guests had No Recourse to Public Funds.

## Behaviour

All guests accepted and signed a Guest Agreement which gave details of the venue and the conditions of entry. Over the course of the Shelter no guests were banned or asked to leave but the following behavioural issues were dealt with:

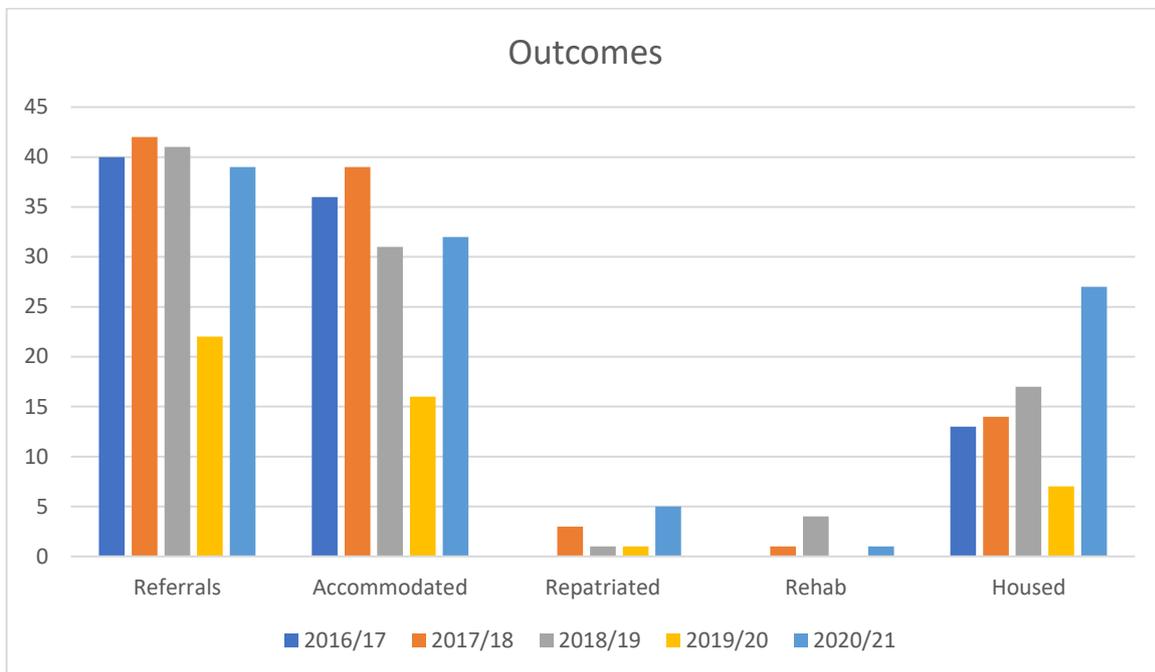
- 1 guest had a psychotic episode and damaged a TV and other items in his room.
- 2 guests were warned on a few occasions about alcohol consumption and breaking Covid rules.

## Outcomes

Following support provided through the Dover Winter Night Shelter, the Outreach Centre, Dover District Council, Porchlight, and Serveco the following outcomes have been achieved:

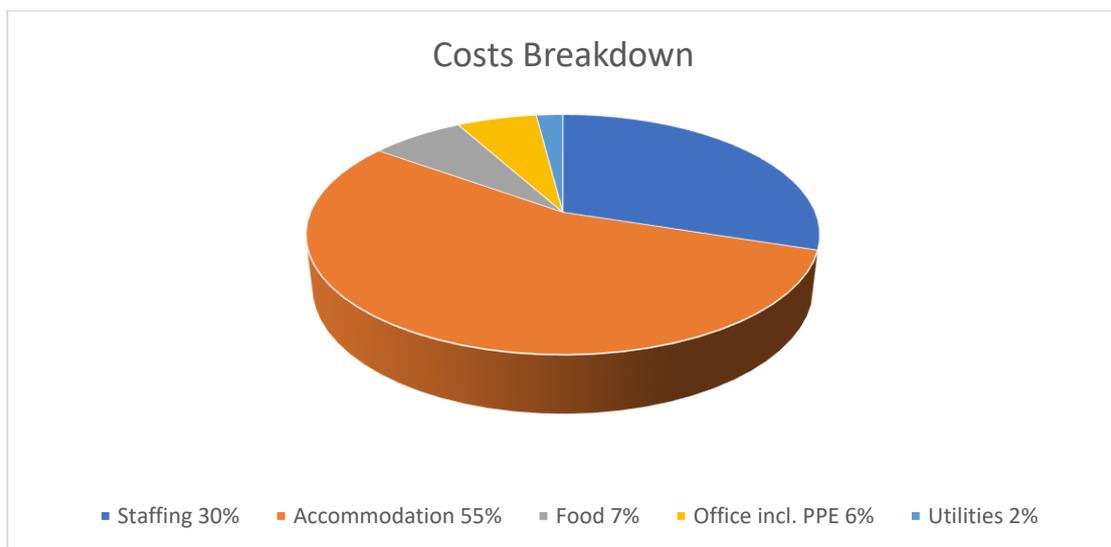
- 9 housed by Dover District Council, temporary or permanent.
- 10 housed in private rented accommodation.
- 5 returned to their home nation.
- 3 housed in Dover Outreach Centre accommodation
- 2 into suitable supported accommodation.
- 1 to rehabilitation
- 2 housed in Porchlight accommodation.

As we came to the end of the Winter Shelter this year, we saw several guests with a new determination to move forward with their lives to find housing. Work opportunities have been unsurprisingly more difficult to find. The chart below shows the comparison between outcomes over the last five years.



### **Finance**

Due to Government guidelines and restrictions this year the costs of the accommodation and some of the staffing were covered by a grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. In addition, two further grants were secured from the Winter Transformation Fund and Protect Plus. This was fortunate as we have seen a significant decrease in other sources of funding from Churches, businesses, and individuals, most likely affected by the economic uncertainty caused by Covid 19. Those with No Recourse to Public Funds were funded through charitable donations and a grant from Together 4 Dover.



### **Conclusion**

We are not sure what the future holds but I believe that the Shelter has worked extremely well this year in this format. There have been some major plus points:

**Outcomes** – this is the first year where no-one has had to go back onto the streets at the end of the shelter. This in part is due to the Government and Local Authorities not wishing to see people back on the streets due to the pandemic but also more than that our guests themselves seem more willing to move on into more settled accommodation.

**Everyone in** – being able to say yes to guests that we would normally have to say no to due to mental health issues and the risks posed to other guests, volunteers, and staff of being in dormitory style accommodation has felt so right. It is never easy to say no to a guest in real need, knowing that they will have to stay out in the cold.

**Place to stay 24/7** – the guests have all enjoyed having somewhere to stay all day, not having to pack up, leave and go out onto the streets until the next venue opens the doors for them. It must have felt as near to being a permanent home as many of them have experienced for a while. All the venues used have been quite different but right for the guests who stayed there. A big thank you to the proprietors Andy and Paul for the accommodation provided.

**Agency collaboration** – the working relationship between agencies, Dover District Council and ourselves has been much stronger this year. It felt much more as if we were one team working together for the benefit of our guests/clients. This is also the first year that we have worked with the Rainbow Centre's shelter project, given that we are so close geographically it seems so right to work together. We have learned from them and look forward to developing the relationship with their CEO Mary and her staff.

**Excellent staff** – welcoming Samm and Kaz back again to be involved this year has been a real boost. Having an understanding of the way we work means that they hit the ground running. Their hard work, kindness and compassion for our guests shone through brightly. They have done an amazing job and were key to the success of this Shelter.

Only one very minor negative and that is that volunteer opportunities were limited this year.

Finally, what we prepare for in 2021/22 will be dictated to by the state of the pandemic and Government guidance at the time. There has been much to learn from this years' shelter which I hope that we can take forward to future initiatives.

### **Feedback from Sessional Staff – Kaz and Samm**

We have felt so blessed at being a part of the DWNS again this year. What an amazing group of people we have had. Some of us have done this for years and others have come and joined us this year for the first time.

It was hard to think that we weren't all going to be able to share in the meal and social side of what the Night shelter has previously offered to the guests. We missed being alongside our volunteers.

We were able to build strong bonds with the guests as they saw us regularly. Sometimes we were the only people they had spoken to that day. As our bond grew some of the guests opened up to us. We gave out handmade bead and cross bracelets, bibles and the occasional inspirational card. We would pray for them all, when we got back to the Outreach Centre or in the car, asking God for His protection when a guest was struggling.

The hot meals and puddings were outstanding. The time and effort that went in to producing these was amazing. My favourite quote from one of the guests, as the Night shelter was coming to an end, was "We never had a bum meal!". The messages you sometimes put on the lids were

lovely. The individually wrapped knobs of butter for jacket potatoes, the bags of tortillas to go with the chilli, and the cakes you gave when it was your birthday. Just some of the extraordinary lengths you all went to to make our guests feel loved and cared for. It was all appreciated. We were often asked who had made the meal and how lovely they were.

For the guests being able to stay in the rooms has meant that they were safe and dry all day long. Last year it was heartbreaking, turfing them out on to the streets for the day. Often it was freezing cold and wet.

We were also able to help other guests staying in the venues, who weren't a part of the DWNS. We had been donated some microwave meals and milkshakes, which we dropped off to these guests. On the odd occasion we had a spare hot meal or two, which we gave to them.

Working together has helped us to grow in faith and our friendship has become much stronger.

A huge thank you to Noel for his love, support, trust and encouragement.

A special thank you to all of our volunteers, whatever role you played, you did an awesome job. We couldn't have done it without you.

### **Feedback from Guests**

*"I am very happy with everything. It has been really good and very nice".*

*"Thank you. For this time when my family let me down, you accepted me, offered me shelter and warm food with a smile and care!"*

*"The beds are very comfy and the food is nice too. It's so much nicer than sleeping on the floor. I think it has worked well for the homeless, it saved us from the cold weather this winter, and what a cold winter it was!"*

### **Feedback from volunteers**

*"Thank you to you and your team for the opportunity to assist. I think we have all been blessed ourselves in some way or another as a result of helping out and we can only hope and pray that the guests have enjoyed the food and have benefitted from the Night Shelter."*

*"This was my first year supporting the WNS. For me the experience has been very warming and satisfying to know that at least 10 people had been fed that night and had been given accommodation, in order to stay warm and dry during the winter months. This has also been a massive challenge for me to be able to cater for more than 1 month. At first you panic and feel it's all a little overwhelming but the reason to why you are doing outweighs this and soon over time you begin to relax and enjoy the experience."*