

Dover Winter Night Shelter



Project Report

2019/2020



Foreword by the Dover Outreach Centre Trustee/acting co-ordinator

It has been my pleasure and privilege to be involved in the Shelter again this year in a slightly more hands on way again. I was joined by James, Samm and Kaz, so that the load of co-ordinating was shared between us. They each brought something different in terms of skills and approach and have been a pleasure to manage and work with. They share their reflections later in this report, but I am grateful for and thank them for their support.

All Winter Night Shelters up and down this Country could not do so without volunteers. Whether you volunteered for the first time or the second, third or fourth time, thank you so much for your amazing commitment, your love and care to some of the most vulnerable in our Community is amazing and it really helps to create that safe, warm and secure atmosphere which encourages our guests to move forward.

The guests, who are the most important part of the Shelter, came with the usual variety of backgrounds, issues and problems. In general, the Shelter was peaceful with most guests complying with the basic rules. Unfortunately, three guests were asked to leave because of the negative effect their behaviour was having on other guests. This was not a nice thing to have to do.

You will see later in the report that we welcomed less guests to the Shelter this year. I believe the main reason for this is the additional government funding given to Local Authorities to place rough sleepers and homeless people into temporary accommodation. Whilst on the face of it this sounds positive, time will tell. However, the outcomes for those that came to the shelter are mostly positive and need to be celebrated.

Finally, a huge thank you to all individuals, churches, businesses and organisations that have supported the Shelter in some way this year, no matter how great or small. Without your support we could not operate in the way we do. May God bless you for your kindness and generosity.

Thank you

Noel

Noel Beamish
Chair of Trustees

Reflections by the co-ordinating team

James

At the start of Winter night shelter I was concerned about only having just 4-5 guests, I was thinking surely we could come up with an easier winter accommodation system to run if these are the only guests in, however, more guests did come, so it did feel like we were serving the purpose. I found it easier to interact with the guests in the first few weeks by playing board games, laughing and joking etc., but I struggled to maintain this throughout the season, probably due to my energy levels depleting throughout the season and the guests were becoming used to doing their own thing.

Working with the other Church co-ordinators and volunteers was both a pleasant and interesting experience. It was great to work with new people and to hear their views. For the guests I think we were successful, we saw evidence of the guests who would normally keep their distance, start to become more engaged with us, towards the end. There were difficult and unpleasant times within the WNS period, but those times didn't kill me, and my character is now much stronger as a result.

Kaz

To me, being a part of the Winter Night Shelter, gave me such a great sense of worth and gratitude, to be amongst such kindness and compassion. After being a volunteer in Peterborough Shelter to Assistant co-ordinator in Dover. I feel like I have had an intense course on God and Christianity.

Seven beautiful Churches of volunteers. I learned so much from everyone. I felt purpose and belonging. How it's supposed to feel walking with Jesus. Amazing experience, very proud to have been a part of it all. I met some amazing people, volunteers and guests. Some nights were tiring, and boundaries were pushed, but we kept a good strong team.

Samm

I have felt extremely blessed, being part of this years' Winter Night Shelter. It has been a pleasure working alongside a great team of co-ordinators, venue hosts and volunteers. The role has been challenging and a steep learning curve for me. I have learned and grown so much.

The positives for me were seeing guests growing in confidence and self-esteem. For me the lows were some of the guest's behaviour, towards each other and the volunteers. It was one of the hardest decisions the co-ordinators had to make, when excluding a few of the guests.

Some of our guests struggled remembering which venue they were supposed to be at and may have missed out on a warm bed and food for the night. Also, I found each venue ran slightly differently this year. Maybe it would be better for guests to have the same rules at each venue.

Operation of the Shelter

Co-ordinating team

This year there were four people involved in the coordination of the shelter, the co-ordinator with overall responsibility and three assistants to ensure the smooth running of the shelter by having the correct level of cover and resources at each venue every night.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the absolute essential ingredients to any successful shelter. Many volunteers returned again having been involved in one or more previous shelters and there were also new volunteers this year which was also encouraging. The ages of the volunteers ranged from early twenties to mid-eighties and from all walks of life, people of faith and none, a truly diverse mix of people all with a heart to make a difference for the guests that they served.

Group training was carried out over 4 sessions in November, with further smaller sessions for those unavailable, arranged and delivered up to the middle of December. In total 115 volunteers attended a training session.

Volunteers covered three different shifts, evening 18.00 to 22.00, night 22.00 to 6.00 and morning 6.00 to 8.00. In general, a good level of cover was available for all shifts. Evenings were the most popular and Nights the least. Drop-off in volunteers in the New Year was not such an issue as it has been in previous years.

The volunteers covered a total of 4,542 hours of service, serving 594 hot evening meals, and 554 basic breakfasts (cereals and toast) and served about 3564 cups of tea and coffee. (Figures based on an average of 6 hot drinks per person per venue, for 3 months).

Venues

The 2019/20 shelter project ran again for the duration of December, January and February at the following venues:

St. Mary's – Sunday
The Ark/One Church- Monday
The Beacon – Tuesday
Dover Baptist – Wednesday
St. Paul's - Thursday
Charlton Church - Friday
St. Martin's – Saturday

All venues were well equipped with good quality modern facilities and were able to accommodate up to 15 guest spaces each evening. The guests preferred the locations closest to the town centre but this in no way reflected the quality of the venues or the volunteers serving, simply the walking distances involved!

Church Hosts

The Shelter was fortunate to have good Church Hosts again this year. Details as follows:

Janet Marks - St Mary's Church
Peter Wallace - The Ark/One Church
Deacon Michelle Legumi - The Beacon
Rob Lane + Dave Nicholl - Dover Baptist Church
Claudine Nutley - St Paul's Church
Co-ordinating team - St Peter & St Pauls Charlton Church
Anne Gavin - St Martin's Church

Each of them having experience of previous shelter initiatives made life easy and a huge difference. The one exception being Charlton where the co-ordinating team stepped in as there was no Church representative able to take on the role.

There was a different level of support offered to the Hosts where some managed their own rotas of volunteers and meal provision whilst the co-ordinating team lead this in some venues.

Equipment, Storage and Transport

All guests were supplied with pillows, pillowcases, sleeping bag and a blanket. These were placed into a large robust laundry-style bag and named accordingly. Camp beds were also



allocated to the guests who wanted one, however some chose to use a foam mattress instead. Light-weight screens were used to section off the women's sleeping area.

During the shelter period many of the guest's large bags became fuller and heavier as they used them to store other personal items and clothes.

Fortunately, nothing of any consequence was lost or misplaced from them.

All the equipment was stored in the Dover Outreach Enterprise van during the day and transported to each venue every evening.

Guests

Referrals

Potential guests for the shelter not accessing the daily drop in were directed to the Dover Outreach Centre by Dover District Council, Porchlight, Emmaus, Police and concerned members of the community. Those who made it to the Centre were taken through a referral process which is primarily a risk assessment to establish whether they were suitable candidates to invite into the shelter. The safeguarding of those guests in the shelter and the volunteers is paramount. The decision not to offer a potential guest a place at the shelter was not taken lightly. In an ideal world everyone needing shelter would be accommodated.

This year the following referrals were undertaken

- 22 people completed a referral
- 19 were offered a place in the shelter
- 3 were not offered a place for reasons which were established during the referral process
- 3 did not use the shelter even after being offered a place.
- 2 guests were females.
- 6 of the guests were foreign nationals.
- 594 bed spaces occupied during the period of the Winter Night Shelter.

Behaviour

All guests that were accepted signed a Guest Agreement which gave details of the venues, times and the conditions of entry to the shelter. Most conditions relating to behaviour revolve around respect for the staff, volunteers, other guests and the venues used. These include no abusive or aggressive behaviour and of course no alcohol, drugs, weapons to be brought to the Shelter. Over the course of the Shelter the following behavioural issues were dealt with

- 1 guest was refused entry on one night for being too drunk
- 2 guests were banned for 3 nights after having several warnings about their general behaviour and lack of respect for guests and volunteers, after a week of being allowed to return to the shelter the same behaviour resurfaced, and they were permanently banned.
- 1 guest was banned for 2 nights after having several warnings about their general behaviour and lack of respect for guests and volunteers. Upon return to the shelter his behaviour was exemplary.
- 1 guest was banned indefinitely for threatening and aggressive behaviour towards Night-shift volunteers.

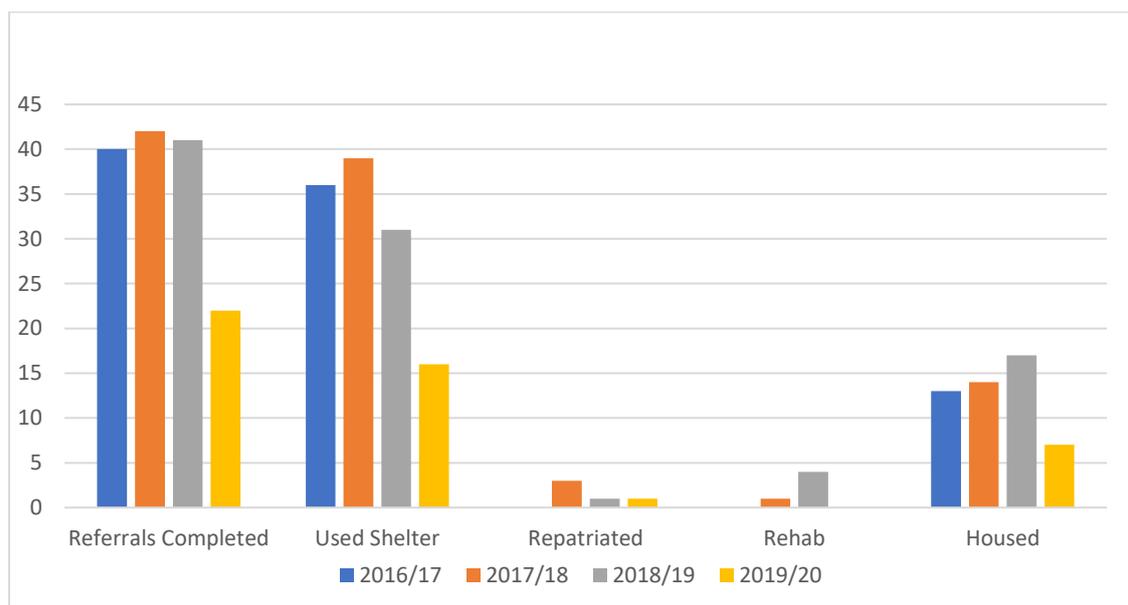
All incidents involving guest behaviour were dealt with by the co-ordinating team and there were no occasions when the emergency services had to be called.

Outcomes

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

- 7 people were housed; either through Dover Outreach Centre (5), Dover District Council (1), or Porchlight (1).
- 1 returned to his home nation.
- 1 person is now working and 4 are actively looking for work

Once again as we were nearing 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 and work. The chart below shows the comparison between outcomes over the last four years.



The vital connection with Dover Outreach Centre – Vee Bentley

For the Outreach Centre itself, most of the work begins in earnest after the Winter Night Shelter enters its last few weeks. The reason for this is that, having had the rest, food and homely atmosphere people need in order to function effectively (and think clearly) the homeless guests are able to spend their time thinking of moving on into an easier, more pleasurable lifestyle. We house more people, help more people find jobs, see more people go into rehab for addiction treatment or reconnect with family, during this period than at any other time of year. Do not take my word for it – have a look at Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (easily ‘Googled’) and you will see that this process happens because ‘home and love’ are offered in a peaceful setting. It is for this reason we always ask our volunteers not to discuss ‘moving on’ with the homeless guests, allow it to happen without that ‘push’ and stress, which discussion creates. Showing love and offering a peaceful caring environment is not something we can do during the day at the Centre, but it is something we see the effects of after the Winter Night Shelter volunteers have worked their magic.

Wider Community Involvement

It is clear that no one organisation can operate a successful Winter Night Shelter on their own and this year our Community has been more heavily involved than in previous years. Whilst not everyone can commit to be a volunteer there are other ways to help. As there was more resource in the co-ordinating team this year, they set out to offer the opportunity for others to be involved in some way, and this is what they were able to achieve.

Food

The following businesses kindly offered to provide food and supplies for the some of the evening meals and breakfasts

- Nando's
- Peri Peri Chicken
- Vanes
- Castle Street Fish and Chip Shop
- St Margaret's Village Shop
- Morrisons
- Streetz2streetz mobile Fish and Chip shop
- Priority Freight
- Sandwich Technology School
- Barclays bank

Not only was the food provided excellent, its provision gave some of the hosts a break from cooking. It also provided a wider variety of food for the guests which they really appreciated and enjoyed.

Equipment

Donations of new equipment received as follows:

- Vodafone – two mobile phones
- Renewal Church, Whitfield – new sleeping bags

Fundraising

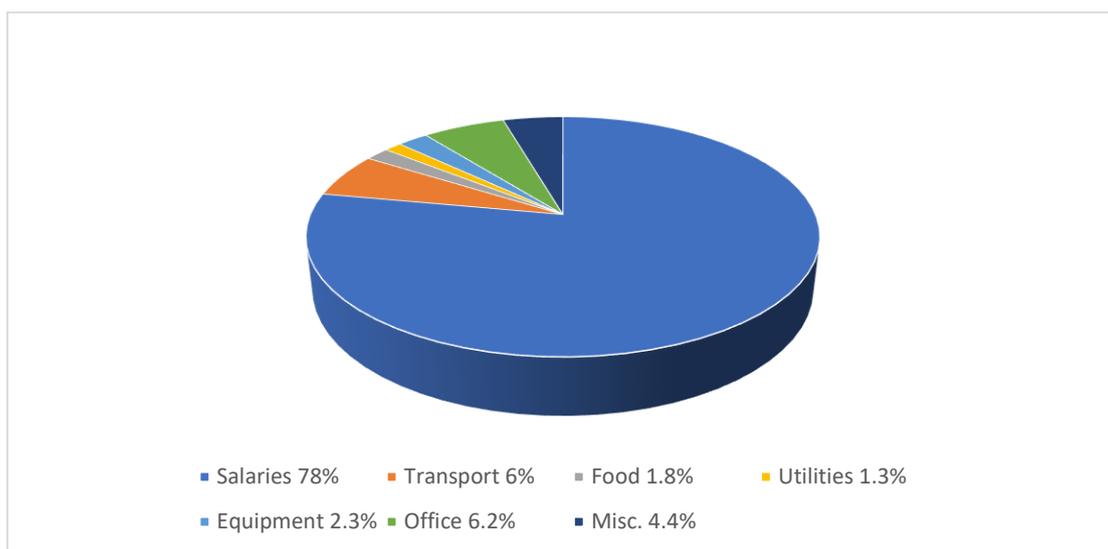
The following organisations kindly organised fundraising events specifically for the Shelter:

- Pharos Choir – concert at the Beacon
- Maddie4Music – concert at St Edmund's Chapel
- Christians Together in Dover – collection from carols at the Cruise Terminal
- Dover Choral Society – carol singing at Marks & Spencer
- St James Retail Park – Christmas present wrapping service
- St George's Church, Deal – Carol singing
- The Chance Inn, Guston – collection from regulars
- The Living Well Church – Coffee morning

The funds raised from these events came to over £2000 which is an amazing effort. Over and above the value of the money raised, the benefit of raising awareness of the Shelter was equally as significant.

Finance

The breakdown of costs associated with this year's Night Shelter are shown in the chart below in percentages. Donation came from a number of sources which included, the Local Authority, local Church/Christian groups and organisations, charities, schools, businesses, and private individuals, they are not listed as there is always a danger that one or more may inadvertently not be mentioned. All costs of the Shelter were met with a small surplus remaining to carry forward to the next shelter project.



Conclusion

The fourth shelter project that has been organised and operated by Dover Outreach Centre has been the quietest by some distance. There are external factors which have impacted why this is the case, the main one of these being government funding to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness both locally and nationally. Putting rough sleepers into accommodation temporary or otherwise is only one part of the jigsaw. Meaningful support, help with addictions, opportunities for employment, rebuilding of relationships and more will be needed to bring hope, sustainability and resilience to some of the most broken in this Community.

Despite being much quieter this year, there are still many positives to take from this project. Firstly, that approximately 50% of guest have found permanent accommodation (similar percentage to previous years) and of those who haven't yet secured accommodation, a few are actively looking for ways to move forward which also include work. Secondly, volunteer numbers and engagement have been at very similar levels again, with their care and support for the guests being unwavering, kind, thoughtful, sacrificial, generous and completely amazing.

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.

Feedback from Guests

RF wrote, "Very lovely people, trying their best to make a difference. Nice places to stay, for people that would be otherwise outside. Plus, good food to help hungry people recover."

AH wrote, "The staff could not have been more welcoming. There was obviously a drill for how each venue run. The staff were well versed in this and it always ran like clockwork. The food was always good and generous. Saying Grace always reminded me to be thankful and to not take it for granted."

KK wrote, "I am grateful to everyone for the help they have given me. Especially to some people but I do not want to exchange names. I met a lot of people who lifted me up with their behaviour, gave me hope, and were with me, thank you."

Feedback from volunteers

CF wrote, "There were not as many guests as last year and not so many volunteers. However, it meant everyone felt useful and had things to do. We had some good conversations with other volunteers and some of the guests. All the evenings at the Ark I was part of were quiet and calm and I very much enjoyed being part of the team. It was great to meet people from other Churches. I did not realise before that people would volunteer who were not part of a Church, but I do like that. And although there didn't seem to be so many people volunteering for cooking, dinner always appeared one way or another."

RS wrote, "I have been pleased to help and am in full admiration for the staff and volunteers that I have met."

SH wrote, "I felt very welcomed by the friendly staff – James, Kaz, Samm and Noel – and by most of the guests. Volunteering was rewarding and everything I'd hoped it would be. It was well-organised and relaxed environment. Volunteers worked well together and there was genuine respect for various faiths and walks of life among each other, as well as compassion and respect for the guests."

HD wrote, "It was a pleasure and privilege to work with a team of likeminded people who are committed to helping the homeless in Dover."

MF wrote, "It was a good experience again, this year less people strangely. All the people working together nicely, without stress and giving the right atmosphere to the guests."

