

Dover Winter Night Shelter



Project Report 2018/19



Foreword by the Dover Outreach Centre Trustee

It is my privilege to introduce this report to you again this year. It is incredible to think that we have just finished our third Winter Night Shelter period. Seeing the guests, who were by and large a pleasure to care for, enjoy a safe, warm and peaceful place to stay is a joy and for those who have decided to move forward with their lives, it is really very rewarding.

We have been blessed this year in having Glenn return to take on the role of coordinator in his own right and that we have had the resources to add a part-time assistant in Paul. They have worked incredibly well together and have made my role in directing them very easy. A big thank you to both of you and very well done.

Along with Glenn and Paul the shelter would not have been able to operate without all of our fantastic volunteers. Many of you have come back for the second and third time which shows amazing commitment and care for those who we are trying to help move forward. I trust that you all enjoyed the experience this year and hope that you will continue to volunteer with us in the future.

We were also blessed to have seven different venues this year which helped to spread the load. All of these were warm and welcoming places, so thank you to all the churches and their leaders for making these spaces available to us.

Finally, a thank you to all of those individuals, Churches, businesses and organisations that gave sufficient funding to enable the project to go ahead. It surprises me, but perhaps shouldn't, that we always seem to get the right amount, not too much and not too little funding for this project. We thank God for this and believe it is He who provides for all our needs.

Thank you and God Bless you

Noel Beamish
Chair of Trustees

An Overview from the Coordinator team - Glenn Mayo & Paul Bothamley

The 2018/19 shelter project ran again for the duration of December, January and February. This year we were blessed with the use of 7 different church halls over the 7 nights of the week. The Charlton Church being a welcomed addition to the existing pool of venues, namely:

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

We were employed as Coordinator and Assistant for the project from mid-November to early March. Paul, employed on a part time basis, was new to the management side of the project, having volunteered during last year's shelter, mostly on the overnight shift at St. Paul's. I was Noel Beamish's assistant last year and so was familiar with the operation.

As in 2017/18, there were six churches coordinators who, alongside us, worked to make the whole project a very successful one in terms of running volunteer rotas and arranging the meals for their specific night. The time and effort which they put into the project has been priceless, and we thank them immensely for it. It made our job just that little bit easier.

This year, the Dover Outreach Centre in part has exceeded the success percentage of the forward progression of guests and this is testament to the way the shelter has run. There was a much more relaxed atmosphere and calmness among the guests, which we feel was the result of correct adherence to the admittance criteria and referral process.

A huge thank you goes to all of our committed volunteers, and a special shout out must be directed to those who covered the night shifts, especially as these are the most difficult to fill and to those chefs/cooks who tirelessly committed themselves to the project.

Preliminary requirements

In terms of the number of guests we could accommodate, we followed on from 2017/18 and catered for 15 people. This was based on the smallest venue at our disposal and our maximum number of guests on any one night was 15.

The appropriate insurance, health and safety and fire risk assessments were implemented according to the fire service requirements.

Volunteer/Training

By word of mouth, and The Dover Outreach Centre's recruitment drive, we conducted three induction training days during November and had a diverse and varied group of volunteers attend.

It was encouraging to see that the majority of those who volunteered for last year's project were back for more. We welcomed an array of skill sets offered by these volunteers and were confident that they would fulfil all the requirements needed to operate the night shelter.

The training consisted of a brief overview of the homelessness problem in the United Kingdom and then focused on the more practical aspects of the role. A volunteer handbook containing our policies and volunteer agreements were handed to each volunteer. The signed agreements were then collected throughout the duration of the project and kept on file.

We had a total of 130 people sign up as volunteers for the Winter Night Shelter, including church leaders who wanted to give their time to participate on various shifts. This was an increase of two, compared to last year's volunteer numbers, however five of those did not manage to do a shift.

Our wonderful volunteers covered a total of 5,100 hours of service, serving 1,477 hot evening meals, and 889 basic breakfasts (cereals and toast) and we served about 5,412 cups of tea and coffee. (Figures based on an average of 6 hot drinks per person per shelter, for 3 months).

Church Coordinators/ Venues

Each coordinator was informed of the number of guests that we would be expecting to use the shelter for that night. This was done either by telephone call, text message or email. They then would arrange for the volunteers on their rota to be briefed and duties assigned for that night.

The coordinators each controlled their own budget for all catering supplies for the duration of the shelter. The costs associated with each venue were covered by the churches involved, personal donation or with assistance from the overall budget for the project controlled by Dover Outreach Centre. A huge thank you to those who donated to the different church budgets.

Each venue had their own cooking facilities and a hot meal, with dessert, was provided every night. Dietary requirements were noted and had been conveyed to the respective chefs through the coordinators. Some chefs chose to cook away from the venue and bring the food in. A simple breakfast was specified to be supplied in the morning, but some venues chose to cook a hot breakfast every now and then.

We would like to thank the following people for so graciously allowing us to use their facilities and for being such an integral part of the project. We would also like to thank the members of each church for embracing the project.

Peter Wallace - The Ark
Deacon Michelle Legumi - The Beacon
Rob Lane + Dave Nicholl - Dover Baptist Church
Claudine Nutley - St Paul's Church
Anne Gavin - St Martin's Church
Janet Marks - St Mary's Church

Shift/ Duty Slots

Each venue operated to a three-shift timeframe throughout the night. These were split into the evening times of 18.00-22:00; overnight duty of 22:00-06:00; and then the morning shift of 06:00-08:30.

As with previous years, the overnight slot was the most difficult to fill. Most of the volunteers who did the night duty last year, did the same this year. An amazing job done by all. We were particularly grateful to those volunteers who also took up the challenge and branched out from their regular churches, doing shifts at other venues.

Logistics and Storage

Each guest was supplied with two pillows, two pillow cases, one 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. The introduction and use, this year, of the light-weight screens for the women's sleeping area was very well received. So too was the Suggestion Box, which was used throughout the three months. All the above were then stored in the Dover Outreach Enterprise van during the day and transported to each venue every evening.

Our Guests

All guests wishing to access the Winter Night Shelter could do so on a referral basis only, either through a self-referral, an outside agency such as Porchlight, Forward Trust, Community Safety Unit Police or Dover District Council.

Each referral was carried out in a face-to-face meeting and generally took place at the Dover Outreach Centre. Information supplied by the potential guest was then verified initially, which could include background checks, health checks and relevant information from the Dover CSP. Safeguarding is on the top of the Dover Outreach Centre's priority list and a risk assessment was carried out on each referred person prior to a decision being made as to whether to offer a place or not.

- 41 people completed a referral for the Night Shelter, and we accepted 32 as guests.
- 9 were declined a place for various reasons, which were established during our checks and risk assessments.
- 1 did not use the shelter even after being offered a place.
- 31 guests chose to use the shelter for one night or more.
- 8 of these were females.

- The age range of female guests was 24- 74 years, and the age range for male guests was from 21 – 61 years. Three of the guests were foreign nationals. • 902 bed spaces occupied during the period of the Winter Night Shelter.

Code of Conduct

Under the Housing Justice Model, a shelter code of conduct was explained to and signed up to by all guests across the venues in the form of our Guest Agreement. If guests did not adhere to this, they were initially given a verbal warning.

The incident would be discussed between the coordinators and noted. If after one warning they breached the code of conduct again, the coordinators held a review of the guest's place in the shelter.

If guests broke the rules deliberately, which put them and/or others at risk, they were asked to leave without warning. This would include drinking alcohol or taking drugs on the premises, or concealing sharps.

- 3 guests were refused entry on a night and turned away from the shelter for either being too drunk or for anti-social behaviour. These guests were given sleeping bags and blankets on the night and told they would be allowed in the following evening depending on their sobriety and behaviour.
- 1 guest was banned for one week after having three separate warnings and did not return to the shelter.
- 1 guest was banned for three days after having three separate warnings and returned to the shelter. • 1 guest was banned indefinitely for very violent behaviour and abusive language.

On no occasion during the three-month period, was it necessary to contact any of the emergency services; i.e. Police, Ambulance or Fire Service.

Guest Outcomes

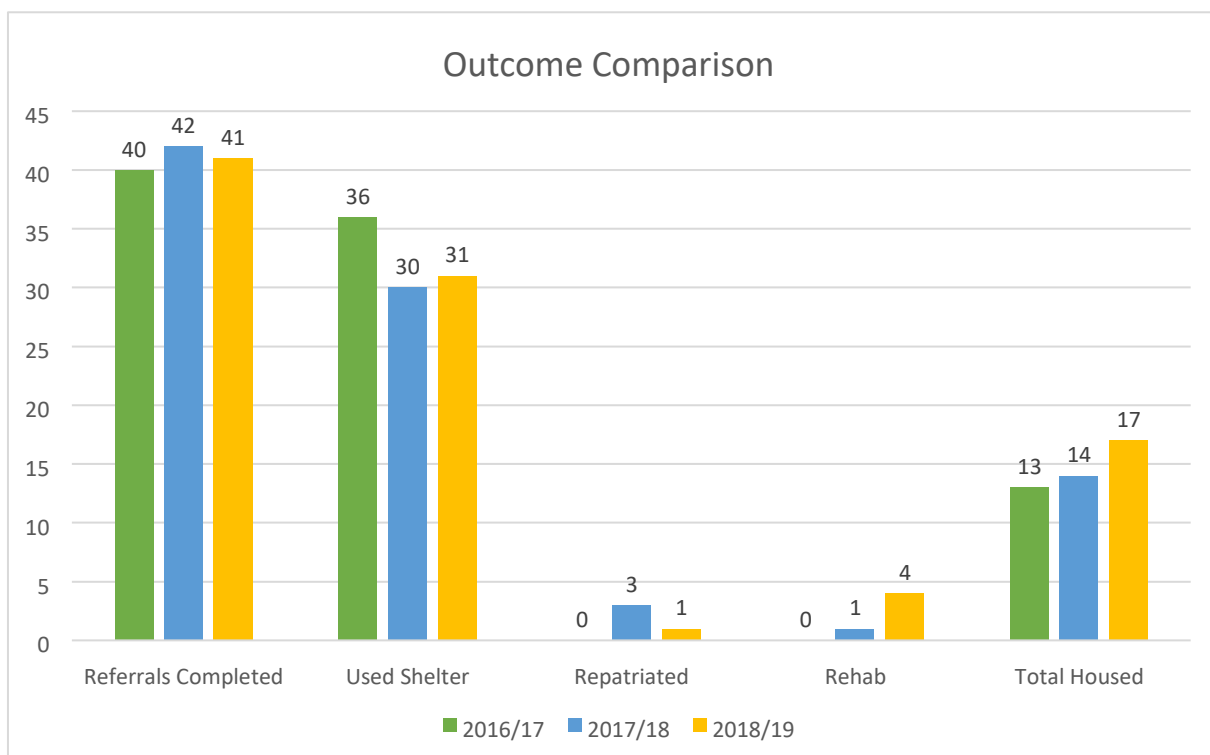
Of our 31 guests, 8 remain under the care of, and receiving assistance from, the Dover Outreach Centre, and other partner agencies.

Following support provided through the Dover Winter Night Shelter and the Dover Outreach Centre, we are delighted and encouraged that 17 people are now in accommodation. Of these:

- 4 agreed to enter residential rehabilitation programmes.
- 12 have been housed either through Dover Outreach Centre, Dover District Council, Porchlight or Emmaus.
- 1 was repatriated to his home nation.
- 2 have found employment

Therefore 55% of our guests progressively ‘moved on’ having benefited from using the shelter and receiving help from the DOC and their partner agencies.

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 three years.



Vee Bentley, Manager of DOC

It seems that each Winter Night Shelter brings changes to the lives of those accommodated. The calm atmosphere, the restful place to sleep, following on from a nice meal, and added to the love shown by the volunteers at each church venue, promotes a sense of peace. It is this which helps the homeless men and women think of a different future to the one they had previously foreseen. As they begin to concentrate on positive changes, people are able to ‘dream bigger’ and embrace ideas they would otherwise not have considered. We ask our volunteers to do the hardest thing – to not offer advice or try to persuade someone into an idea for their future, but to allow people the dignity of making their own decisions in their own time. We ask them to show love and a comfortable, homely atmosphere to people who perhaps never had a real home, or whose life has been wrecked by trauma or loss. Our volunteers have clearly responded and done this extremely well because we have seen the results in the Outreach Centre. There has been a calmer, more congenial atmosphere in the Day Centre during the Winter Night Shelter period, and there are less people in the Centre following the

closure of the shelters, because so many have moved on into a new phase of their lives which does not involve sleeping rough any longer.

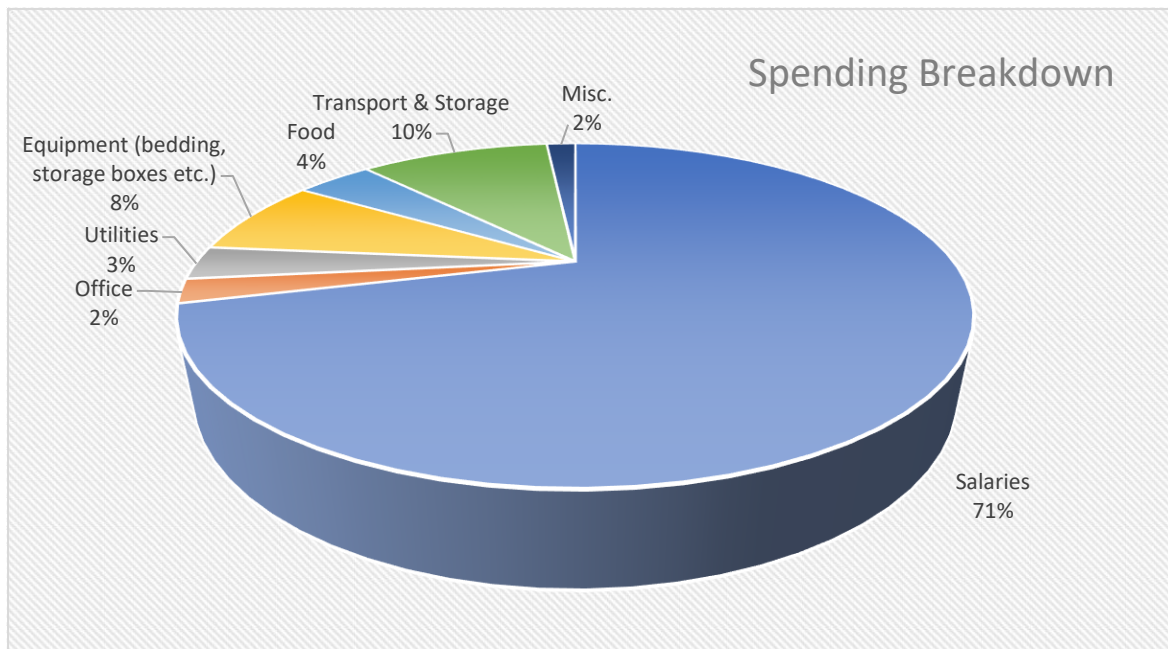
The volunteers who return year on year to support this work will see the results of their care by the faces they no longer see, belonging to people who are absent from the Night Shelters and who are no longer in need of their help. Thank you to all of those who gave up their time to volunteer, you have done an amazing job!

Wider Community Benefits

While our focus during the period of the shelter has been exclusively on the welfare of the guests, we are mindful that it has had a positive social and financial benefit for the wider community. It has provided a positive and enriching experience for our volunteers and others engaged with the initiative. It has reduced the risks and tensions associated with rough sleeping within the town (for instance, rough sleepers can often fall prey to anti-social behaviour). For Dover District Council, who operate a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), meaning that during periods of sub-zero temperatures the Council will seek accommodation for the homeless (in bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels) the operation of the shelter provides an alternative and a 'reduced cost' means of looking after some of the most vulnerable people within our Community. Perhaps most importantly, it offers those that have lost hope in themselves and/or others, a knowledge that they are valued and loved and that with encouragement and support there is a way back to living a purposeful life, reconnected with, and in time contributing to, our Community/Society.

Finance

The breakdown of costs associated with this year's Night Shelter are shown in the chart below. The most notable additional funding this year was provided by a contribution of £10,000 from Dover District Council. It is worth noting that if we were to include the true value of volunteer time, venues and food, the overall cost would more than treble from £30,000 to nearer £100,000, so again we thank all those who have so generously given of their resources, time and energy.



Conclusion

As our third year of operation has now ended, we are very encouraged by the positive outcomes we have seen for our guests. The relationships that have been built between guests has been very encouraging and has fulfilled our initial desires to build positive relationships which can then be transferred beyond the winter night shelter environment.

It is also clear that many volunteers feel the experience has been very enjoyable and some even go as far as to say they have also been on a personal journey having learned as much about themselves as they have the guests.

Having 17 of our guests housed has once again exceeded our expectations and we are delighted that we have participated in giving them the tools they needed to help them move forward in their lives in a positive way.

Again, we would like to thank all those involved in making Dover Winter Shelter the success it has been this year, and we look forward to furthering this success next year.

Feedback from volunteers

SC from The Ark wrote, "I really enjoyed the opportunity to be of service. I loved talking and listening to our guest's stories and lives. I learnt to feed 'the 5000' without too much stress and it allowed me to feel gratitude for what I have been blessed with."

AW+TW from the Dover Baptist wrote, "Smooth running and calm environment. Fellowship between guests and staff – mutual respect. Any occasional issues dealt with appropriately."

MR from St. Mary's wrote, "It was a privilege to be involved. It's good to be on with a regular team, mainly, and get to know others. Co-ordination of beds and belongings to venues worked well. Meals and set up all routine established and maintained. Co-ordinators, volunteers and guests all pleasant"

AG+MG from St. Martin's wrote, "It was a pleasure to be part of the Winter Night Shelter and hopefully make a difference somewhere!"

Feedback from Guests

Finally, we thought it appropriate that the last words should come from some of our guests – real people dealing with real issues but grateful for what they had received through the Winter Night Shelter.

From the Suggestion Box we have AS write, "Just to say a big thank you."

MA wrote, "Thank you All @ The Beacon so much. Beautiful treatment. Thank you. It goes a long way!"

CF+SJ wrote, "We would like to thank you the volunteers for all the help that you have given us. We cannot be more grateful. All our best regards."

"Thank you to the staff for your kindness. It will not be forgotten."

"Thank you for your kind service as always + the great meal for us all. Thank you. Super team- much appreciated of you."

"Thank you all at the Baptist's for looking after us so well + for giving us your time to feed + comfort us."

