



Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter Report 2009-2010



For Jeff and Zoe

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2 New International Version

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Introductory sections by Capt Matt Clifton Salvation Army Folkestone Corps

HOW THE VISION BEGAN

I remember him in the rain. Knee-high in rotting cardboard, broken toys and mouldy food, he was getting busy with bin liners in the backyard of our charity shop in Folkestone. Making an ugly place, if not beautiful, at least presentable.

My first thought was: "Jeff, you don't have to do this. We pay you nothing; you owe us nothing." But he did it anyway. He was doing the same with his life: clearing out the rubbish. He said little about the past, but we could tell it wasn't pretty. Now in Folkestone, alcoholic and homeless, the buried beauty in his life was breaking out.

The Salvation Army's community team bent over backwards to help him leave the streets. Indifferent to reward or recognition, that's how they always work. But help didn't always come easy to Jeff, at times too disorganised to seek it or too dignified to accept it. Then, on a quiet and cold February morning, Jeff died sleeping rough. Suddenly and senselessly, that fragile beauty was buried again.

We struggled, cried and prayed. As tributes came thick and fast at his funeral, we knew that somehow God would do something. He would act as he always acted, in the vivid words of Isaiah, to bring 'beauty from ashes.'

Folkestone boasts a wide array of faith-based and secular organisations working hard to serve homeless people. Even as the true scale of homelessness has been predictably downplayed, veterans of homelessness work in Folkestone have long known that a hostel or similar facility would make their vital work so much more effective. It would meet the basic need for shelter and offer an environment for rebuilding broken lives. Sadly, attempts to make such an ambitious plan happen have repeatedly floundered.

The difficult winter of 2008-09 culminating in Jeff's death generated a new determination not to let another winter go by without offering shelter. In considering the challenge of doing something, we were painfully aware that our church buildings, built for worship and welcoming the stranger, invariably present locked doors overnight. If someone freezes on our streets while Christians sleep in warm and safe homes,

this fact alone is scandalous. We were also conscious of our strong tradition of churches working in unity to bring compassionate care, already expressed through the Rainbow Centre and its various ministries. All of this meant that a project in Croydon using church buildings and volunteers to offer shelter arrested our attention. We invited the Director of Croydon Churches Winter Shelter to visit Folkestone and take us through Croydon's project in detail. Croydon's seven-year-old initiative seemed an ideal solution that could be deployed rapidly, offering not only shelter but also hospitality and supportive relationships. It was clearly also a wonderfully enriching experience for volunteers. Croydon's model became the basis for ours, using seven church buildings with evening and overnight teams, and offering an evening meal and fourteen beds for guests.

Churches were unanimously warm towards the idea. Some felt unable to offer their building, but wanted to offer volunteers. Some, not having much prior experience of the acute needs associated with homelessness, were understandably nervous. This would be a big step of faith into the unknown. But the compulsion to act compassionately secured the commitment of enough churches to make the project viable.

Other models of church-based winter shelters were researched. Among them was a project in Nottingham, co-ordinated by Richard Fitzgerald from the Trinity Benefice, who would become our Lead Project Manager. We also drew from a London-based project to form a structure built around two salaried Project Managers, each working full-time to ensure managerial presence on each day the shelter would be open.

The project was lent further momentum by the new Folkestone Homelessness Forum, founded by Councillor Lynne Beaumont, a passionate advocate for the homeless. This body, led by Shepway District Council, brings together every organisation with an interest in Folkestone's homeless. The Forum proved foundational to the robust multi-agency strategy advanced by our Project Managers to achieve the exceptional outcomes for guests detailed later in this report. The Forum also helped secure funding under very tight timescales. We acknowledge Shepway District Council, through its Housing



Department, as the first and largest funder. Generosity from several other bodies followed swiftly, as listed in the financial report. They all deserve our deepest thanks.

With churches committed and funding in place, we knew, with great excitement in our hearts, that the vision was about to be realised. We were on the crest of a powerful wave already advancing through a wide range of existing Christian ministries. That wave gathered speed and size through the winter months. We witnessed a huge coalition of compassion rescuing and caring for people at their time of most acute need.

Salary funding led to a tremendous enhancement of the original adopted model. Given the very brief recruitment phase and fixed-term contracts, we could not have expected the high calibre of applicants for Project Management roles. Richard Fitzgerald as Lead Project Manager came with prior experience of church-based shelters. Jon Limebury as Associate Project Manager came to us from the Scrine Foundation, whose night shelter in Canterbury had recently closed. Both worked astonishingly hard to achieve transformational changes in the lives of guests. They were assisted throughout by Hayley Mulcahy of The Salvation Army, whose support was pivotal to the project's impact. I thank from the heart everyone who has worked hard to change lives through the Shelter. In so doing, I feel it appropriate to record special appreciation to Richard, Jon and Hayley for their amazing work.

We understand what has happened as God working through us. This project is 'beauty' in the 'ashes' of Jeff dying without a home of his own. We have been swept up in God's redemptive action on earth and seen one man's buried beauty breaking out once again.

AIMS AND ETHOS

Three primary aims were agreed by the Steering Group and presented to churches:

- 1. To provide an evening and night shelter for homeless people in Folkestone using church buildings and members through the coldest period of the winter 2009-2010.**

This aim was the essence of the project in Croydon, which we sought to adapt to our context, proposing the period 7th December to 28th February for shelter opening. In opting for twelve weeks, we aimed to balance the anticipated stamina of volunteers with forecast weather conditions and the increased vulnerability of people over the Christmas and New Year period.

What could not be foreseen was that the winter would become one of the most severe in living memory. Between Christmas and the New Year, and in the worst weather conditions, the Salvation Army Centre operated as a day shelter, complementing the daytime opening of the Rainbow Centre and Millfield Road drop-in. By integrating daytime opening with churches hosting the Shelter in the evenings and overnight, 24-hour care was provided at a critical time.

- 2. To engage church members with some of the most vulnerable people in Folkestone without discrimination, expressing Christian compassion in building supportive relationships.**

Loneliness is the central affliction for many homeless people. Mother Teresa, no stranger to ravaged bodies, called loneliness the 'worst of diseases'. Homelessness often arises from the absence of the supportive friendships that we all depend on for stability and personal growth. Churches - as open, therapeutic communities - are uniquely positioned to respond to this deepest of needs. Within carefully set boundaries, the project's structure was designed to bring strong, stable volunteers into relational contact with guests, encouraging relationships to continue beyond the time the Shelter closed.

Our goal is to be as inclusive as possible, considering exclusion only if a potential guest presents a risk to other guests and/or volunteers. The openly Christian ethos of the project never implies discrimination on the basis of religion or the imposing of beliefs on others. To do so would, in fact, violate the ethos of the New Testament, which is predicated on human equality, freedom and dignity. We adopted the Faithworks Charter*, three of whose principles apply here:

We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.

2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.

3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.

* www.faithworks.info/charter

3. To help homeless people move on to appropriate accommodation, resisting dependency on the shelter.

While very rudimentary in accommodation, the warm, hospitable atmosphere of the shelter can make it a very attractive place to stay! This can generate a disincentive for guests to work towards gaining their own home. When added to mental health problems, learning needs, low self-esteem and the personal traumas that often cause homelessness, guests would very easily become dependent on the supportive environment of the Shelter. For this reason, our Project Managers were tasked with resisting dependency, creating incentives for guests to engage with the process of securing accommodation. Sometimes this meant confining stays to a limited number of nights. Knowing the project would come to an end on 28th February proved a strong incentive in itself; most positive outcomes for guests were achieved towards the end of, or shortly after, the Shelter closed. At the same time,

churches continue to offer the invitation into community life shaped for rebuilding damaged lives. Guests, having experienced the unconditional love of church communities, knew the end of the Shelter would not mean the end of new friendships.

Christian ethics for responding to homelessness and other acute human needs are rooted in the clear teachings of the Old and New Testaments. The prophet Isaiah confronted the ageless human tendency to locate virtue in rituals and disciplines dislocated from compassion. What value can there be in fasting, he asked, when the poor are exploited or neglected? He spoke for God as he asked:

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

Isaiah 58:6-7
New International Version

This ethos is foundational to existing ecumenical work in the Rainbow Centre and to the mission of many of our churches. Local Christians immersed in such teachings knew, apprehensive, as some were, that they could not turn away. The strongest call to reach out to the most excluded and broken among us is heard as Jesus situates his life in theirs:

The King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see

you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Matthew 25:34-40
New International Version

When volunteers came face to face with guests, they understood this as an encounter with Christ himself. Thus were guests welcomed and honoured. With such an investment of dignity, our hope and prayer was that buried beauty would break out. We were not disappointed.

GOVERNANCE

The existing Christian ministries and new Homelessness Forum in Folkestone proved an excellent basis for establishing a Steering Group for the project. The Steering Group meets informally and regularly for decision-making, with an appropriate selection of its members involved in recruitment. It does not have constitutional powers. Representation from both public and third sectors is deliberate, with the intention of guarding against the adversarial methods sometimes deployed by agencies advocating for homeless people. Statutory bodies will always need to be challenged about their obligations, but we believe this should be done in a productive atmosphere of relationship and mutual understanding.

At the time of reporting, the Steering Group is comprised of:

Captain Matt Clifton, The Salvation Army (Director)

Councillor Lynne Beaumont

Richard Fitzgerald, Trinity Benefice (Lead Project Manager)

Beverley Jackson, Housing Options Manager for Shepway District Council

Jon Limebury (co-opted through employment as Associate Project Manager)

Hayley Mulcahy, Community Care Ministries at The Salvation Army

Colin Taylor, Director of the Rainbow Centre

We record here our deep appreciation to Tony Barr, Community Care Manager for The Salvation Army in Folkestone, who helped shape the project in its early stages but was unable to continue due to long-term

illness. He was a Steering Group member. The hallmarks of Tony's kind-heartedness remain visible in all we are doing.

The Salvation Army, as well as providing funding and one of the seven venues, was well placed to offer the infrastructure necessary for accounting, recruitment, line management, office space, administrative facilities and policy formation. With breakfast served each morning at The Salvation Army, guests were on-site to meet Project Managers, visiting agencies and volunteers. This arrangement, though demanding on local Salvation Army resources, proved a huge logistical advantage in achieving outcomes for guests. Our goal has been to establish the project as both Salvation Army-led and thoroughly ecumenical.

Captain Matt Clifton



Establishing the need

The Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter (FCWS) opened for the first time in December 2009, following an identification of need. Prior to the shelter's operation a number of individuals from interested parties, including church, council and agency backgrounds from Folkestone and the surrounding area, had come together having been continually and increasingly aware of the number of homeless people seeking ad hoc assistance - particularly from the Salvation Army. Events earlier in the year, leading to the untimely death of an individual seeking shelter from sleeping out, had galvanised many people's resolve to provide some form of respite for rough sleepers/people at risk of rough sleeping. This was reinforced both by the experiences of individuals involved from The Folkestone Rainbow Centre and its associated "Food Stop" (soup run type service), Millfield Drop In Centre and Salvation Army Community Programme, particularly the breakfast club. Also, a recent street count (coordinated by Porchlight, a Kent based homelessness charity) had recently indicated a rise in rough sleeping around Folkestone, in comparison to recent years.

We were aware of the differing statistical and anecdotal accounts as to the numbers of rough sleepers around Folkestone. At best the figures are an indication of levels of homeless but may not be a totally accurate figure.

In March 2009 the first Shepway Homelessness Forum was started, involving Shepway District Council, statutory agencies, Salvation Army and other churches. More agencies have joined this body as time has gone on with the net effect of a pooling of a wealth of experience and knowledge. The idea of a church based winter shelter was suggested by the Salvation Army. From the outset, the aim was to work alongside existing bodies in partnership, not to duplicate or usurp other work already underway by other people. (e.g. Rainbow Centre which this year celebrates 25 years of operation, Food Stop, operating for 13 years, Millfield Centre, operating since 2004, Salvation Army Community Programme operating for 8 years, including the breakfast club of 4 years duration).

Throughout all stages of the Winter Shelter, the more contact we have had with local church and voluntary sector agencies working in homelessness, the more the need for this project has been reinforced.

We regard people who are rough sleeping as among the most vulnerable, excluded and impoverished group of individuals in our society.

Having become increasingly and unavoidably aware of these needs and frustrated by the situation we came together drawing upon a Biblical heritage that has at its heart the person of Jesus: born in temporary accommodation and living a life of transience for 3 years of his adulthood.

"...the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

The words of Jesus in Matthew 25, also speak of caring for the marginalised within society:

"...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

We were aware that the churches in Folkestone are very well placed when it comes to providing a response to a need such as homelessness. We have well-established networks; human resources, including many people already involved in working with homeless people; buildings and other practical resources¹; particular funding streams and a willingness to contribute materially at a grassroots level. There is also a freedom that allows for creativity and quick responses, even more so than the mainstream voluntary sector. And all of this is underwritten by guiding principles of the faith that speaks of reaching out, of overcoming injustice.

We had some key considerations that determined the shape of our response. Our project would need to be:

1. *Meeting the needs:* it would need to be of practical help to its guests (or guests as we came to know them)
2. *Manageable:* it would need to be structured and sufficiently systematic to be operable on what would inevitably be a part time basis

¹ Much has been written about the use of "Faithful Capital" - the combination of buildings and people that church networks have access to. For more information see: http://www.culf.org.uk/content_1.0.asp?p=2 which contains the report "Faithful Cities: a call for celebration, vision and justice" from the Commission on Urban Life and Faith. Much more detailed research can be found via the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, particularly, "Faith as social Capital" <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/faith-social-capital>

3. *Achievable*: it would need to be realistic and simply effective
4. *Safe and secure*: risk assessment and active risk reduction would need to underpin all aspects of the project

Our response: Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter 2009-2010

The group resolved to set up a temporary night shelter for 14 homeless people (male and female) and that this would run from 7th December 2009 to the morning of 1st March 2010. We would provide an evening meal, a simple bed and breakfast. The venues would be in 7 church locations based around Folkestone.

Winter Shelter Model

The Steering Group looked at several models of winter shelter, including "static venue" and "floating shelter" schemes. The one originally proposed followed a "floating shelter scheme" as operated by many London churches involved in similar work. (e.g. Croydon, Camden², Robes project³)

"Floating shelters" operate by being run from different locations for a given night of the week. Whilst this may seem initially confusing and a nightmare logistically, it makes sense for many reasons:

Many church buildings are actively in use for church and (more frequently) wider community activities, such as Scouts, Guides, after and pre-school clubs, theatre groups etc. As such, they provide a valuable community building resource⁴ and this can also be used to foster positive links with the wider community as part of the churches inherent mission and witness.

Such activities also provide much valued revenue to keep such facilities maintained and available for community use. As such, it would be financially impractical, unethical (and downright rude) to persuade (or tell) the community groups using a facility that they would not be welcome for up to 3 months, whilst a winter shelter would be in operation!

² <http://www.coldweathershelter.org/>

³ <http://www.robcs.org.uk/2009/>

⁴ For more on this see the Rowntree Foundation Report *op cit*

It gave a real sense of ownership for individual churches to be involved and for making "their" venue work. It also gave a real focus for volunteers, prayer and commitment.

Churches were approached through the network of Churches Together Folkestone, which is comprised of over 20 local and surrounding area churches. Churches Together Folkestone has a real commitment to working together in practical ways to benefit Folkestone and the surrounding area. Various churches gradually came on board to become involved. For some churches, due to community group usage, space constraints or other factors, usage of premises was not an option but they still chose to be involved through a combination of financial giving, supplying volunteers and pastoral/prayer support.

Most venues were secured by mid November. Many churches (most!) initially offered facilities for use on a Saturday or Sunday evening, as these were not in use by wider groups. The final venue was secured with less than one week to go before opening⁵, when a local theatre group kindly offered to temporarily relocate their venue to another church (already hosting on another night).

In terms of the number of beds offered, some people wondered if it was too many or too few. In practice it was a manageable number, as some venues were much larger than others (e.g. Salvation Army venue). For future projects this may be reviewed and reduced to 12, as some venues were markedly smaller and there were times when surroundings seemed very "cosy!"

Many people suggested the provision of a single building fixed venue and this could be explored in time. Apart from the logistics, however, much commitment and "ownership" may have been lost to volunteers, leading to people feeling "venue less" or detached.

We had 7 host venue churches, however, the volunteer pool came from beyond these. Some churches hosted and worked in partnership with surrounding churches to staff the venues.

⁵ In fact, this was only secured on the evening the training event was being held.

What we did in order to set up the Winter Shelter:

- Visited different churches and their PCCs to advertise the venture and encourage volunteer sign up, financial and pastoral/prayer support
- Set up a winter Shelter project plan to track tasks and progress
- Regularly attended the Shepway Homelessness Forum for networking, recruitment and publicity
- Obtained input from police and Police Community Support Officers
- Publicised activity in local press, radio and church publications
- Contacted local businesses, Chambers of Commerce and local Rotary clubs
- Publicised venture and raised funds from local councils
- Utilised a DVD produced for a Nottingham shelter to "sell" the idea of a shelter.
- Sought advice and discussed our requirements with the local authority Environmental Health department
- Sought advice and discussed our requirements with the Fire Service and local authority fire officer
- Worked with homeless agencies in order to design a project that was not only safe but most relevant to the current needs of rough sleepers
- Contacted some trained clergy to offer pastoral support to guests within the church space if requested. Some guests did this and valued it greatly
- Contacted the press, local MPs and a bishop to publicise the shelter
- Constructed a website for publicity and as a mechanism for agencies to access and download referral forms
- Constructed a "Blog" page and also a Face Book page for news, information and updates
- Made it clear that we were not providing a service for under 18s

Timing

This was an aspect that caused much reflection and debate amongst the steering group. The period we operated for was 12 weeks (Dec 7th-Mar 1st). Many times people asked, "Why is it operating for such a short time period?" There were several reasons:

- It was not a short period of time, although admittedly not all year round! Many schemes are only open for between 7 days to a month to provide respite
- It was the first time such a scheme had operated in Folkestone and as such, it was important not to be overambitious (although how 3 months can be seen as under ambitious is open to question!)
- 3 months was felt to be long enough for initial opening as it was important to not overtire teams, coordinators and church ministers
- The dates chosen were felt to give a suitable time to get used to set up, opening and agency linking
- The start date was ahead enough of Christmas to get people used to the idea of being involved, instead of focussing on the "very busy" time of Christmas for churches and people generally

In hindsight, with 3 increasingly severe snowfalls in December, January and February respectively, the timing was felt to be the best it could have been. It is only speculation, but with the severe weather, many felt the FCWS timing and duration to be incredibly fortuitous and that it almost certainly prevented loss of life.



Finance

We compiled a budget of our projected costs. This budget was continually revised as we progressed.

We requested financial support from a range of funding streams as well as from local charitable trusts and local churches and individuals. We received funding from many sources including:

Shepway District Council: £10000

Salvation Army central funds: £6000

Folkestone Town Council: £2950

NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent Mental Health Promotion Funding: £2840

Folkestone Rotary Club: £2000

Amongst other individual and church donations amounting to over £27000

We received numerous other donations of clothing, bedding (including hospital grade mattresses from a recently closed night shelter), foodstuffs and toiletries from various churches, individuals and agencies.



Staffing of the Project

Recruitment

Job descriptions and a framework were worked out on behalf of the steering group - predominantly from Matt Clifton and Richard Fitzgerald, whose previous experience gained in Croydon churches and Nottingham Churches winter shelter operations respectively, proved invaluable. There was also further input from Bev Hudson, (Salvation Army Divisional HQ in Maidstone). Once funding was secured, recruitment was undertaken by placing of adverts in local press.

Paid workers

Paid staff were employed by The Salvation Army, with payroll and winter shelter donations being entered into a separate fund within Folkestone Salvation Army Corps for administration and accounting purposes.

The project was mainly staffed by volunteers, with only the Lead and Associate project managers being employed. The Project Director was also a paid position but this was undertaken by the local Salvation Army Captain (Matt Clifton) as part of his duties.

It had been felt that with a specific job description and for a limited time period fixed term contract there would not be much response - we couldn't have been more wrong! Over 26 people applied for one or both posts. A big factor was the recent closure of the Scrine Foundation's night shelter - the only one of its kind in Kent and the subsequent interest of people soon to be made redundant. The selection and interview process was carried out and the workers appointed. The posts were awarded to Richard Fitzgerald⁶ as Lead Project Manager, and Jon Limebury as Associate Project Manager.

Richard Fitzgerald brought much experience gained with Nottingham church based homelessness work, including winter shelter set up and operations

Jon Limebury brought much valuable experience from working with the Scrine Foundation Night Shelter (and was one of the recent redundancies!)

⁶ Richard Fitzgerald, though part of the steering group was excluded from participating in the screening, selection and interview process in the interest of transparency and openness.

Volunteer Recruitment

Local church based volunteers predominantly staffed the project. Volunteer recruitment was predominantly through church networks. PCC or church council visits, Sunday morning sermon slots, Churches Together Folkestone event publicity, church bible study group visits, emailing of flyers and other publicity to churches - including advertising on church notice boards and the Vine Christian bookshop, all helped in recruitment.

Church Venue Coordinators

Within the volunteer pool, a key post was that of venue coordinator. This person was selected by the hosting venue minister (and in some cases was one and the same or an appointed deputy). They were then briefed by their ministers in recruiting volunteers and/or coordinating volunteers for the different functions needed within the volunteer team. They were also responsible for ensuring they had enough cover for their venue's evenings.

Training

We held a 3-hour training session twice in one day prior to the commencement of the project.

Training was delivered by:

- Lead and Associate Project Managers
- Kent Council on Addiction for substance misuse training

Volunteers were also issued with a handbook containing the policies and procedures for the operation of the shelter.

The training was mandatory for volunteers. This was vitally important in order to communicate:

- What people's expected roles were
- Policies and procedures
- Basic safety training including personal boundaries
- What support volunteers could expect
- Procedural aspects of the project
- Food hygiene; personal safety and risk/other management issues
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Physical health issues

- And many more (further information can be found in the worker's and volunteer's handbook)

For people who became interested later on, separate training was provided before being involved in a venue.

One of the key achievements of the Winter Shelter was the consistency of the service and care offered to guests - no mean feat with so many different individuals and venues being involved.

Volunteer Recruitment Response

If we thought the response to the paid positions was unprecedented, we were certainly not prepared for the volunteer response! We were expecting 30ish for our training morning, in terms of people who had confirmed they were coming. In the event we had 55 and had to print off more Winter Shelter worker booklets! The evening was even more remarkable - 95 people attended, with a further 30 attending an extra event the following evening at another church due to an event clash. This gave 180 volunteers who attended the events, not including the representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies who also attended to find out more or who actively contributed to the training events. (e.g. Kent Council on Addiction who gave some drug awareness training).



Some of our wonderful volunteers

Eventually, on analysis, we had over 248 people who actually had a physical presence at the shelter! Over 348 people had registered an interest but this also included agencies and other bodies who were involved in other ways. The composition of the volunteer team was thoroughly ecumenical as well as reaching well beyond church people, e.g. other people heard about it and wished to be involved.

In some instances the project did its own recruiting, i.e. when people heard about the project taking place in their community they said they would like to volunteer!

A main part of the volunteer recruitment process was "selling" the idea of involvement so that people would not become overburdened. There can be a tendency within church and community projects for the same individuals to be used to run/staff activities. What we sought to do was to have a wide pool of volunteers so that people could be involved every other week, or 3 weeks. Some people did one evening, others did many more.

Some of the residual 100 volunteers felt that physical shelter involvement was a step too far as they were either elderly (75+) too uncomfortable, or too busy with other activities. e.g. some people were involved with the Rainbow Centre, Millfield, Food stop or Salvation Army already.

Such people often helped in other ways by baking cakes or undertaking to pray for the venture. Whatever people did, high profile or behind the scenes roles, it was important to say thank you and value people - without such a dedicated pool of people it could not have happened.⁷

Policies and procedures

We drew upon the experiences and expertise of other relevant projects⁸ and thought through very carefully what would be necessary, prudent and effective in guiding all people involved in the Winter Shelter. This also included visiting, networking and speaking with London based church

⁷ In a previous venture in Nottingham, we had ~ 70 people volunteering over the space of a month

⁸ Nottingham churches winter shelter, London based schemes including Croydon, North West London Churches Winter Night Shelter, 4CWS and many others.

schemes and listening to their experience and practices, including also linking in with Housing Justice⁹ and also Homeless Link.¹⁰

Consequently, we devised a wide range of policies and practical procedural guidelines that were (mainly) compiled into a workers booklet and issued to all volunteer staff.

We carried out risk assessments on fire safety, food hygiene, general hygiene, violent incidents and other emergencies and shaped our procedures accordingly. Some were also modified during the operation of the shelter as we reflected on their effectiveness and workability.

Drugs, alcohol and smoking

Our policy was to be clear that there was no place for illegal substances or consumption of alcohol on the premises. There was a facility for guests to deposit their alcohol, methadone and "works kits" (syringes and needles) with staff for safekeeping and collect as they left in the morning.

We had some concerns that alcohol dependent guests would struggle with not being able to drink on the premises nor being able to leave the project temporarily. This however remained manageable both for staff and the guests concerned. Sometimes this involved allowing drinkers to leave early so that they could drink outside of the shelter to avoid withdrawal and potential fitting.

Our policy was communicated to guests at point of referral and upon entering the project. It was reinforced by staff awareness through training and ongoing vigilance as well a willingness on the part of guests to cooperate in the vast majority of cases.

Following the advent of smoking legislation, the churches were no smoking buildings. Throughout the planning process this was one of our main practical concerns. We had to be creative with a solution to this issue. To allow guests to stand outside the project smoking could undermine the security of all concerned, draw unwarranted attention to the venues, and also opening of doors could have caused problems with unknown exit and

⁹ Housing Justice is the national voice of Christian action in the field of housing and homelessness.

¹⁰ An umbrella organisation funded by the Communities and Local Government office, Home Office, Dept of Health, the Economic and Social Research Council and many others. Its role is to challenge policy and educate organisations regarding homelessness provision and policy.

access, as well as disturbing guests already asleep. Guests were allowed out to smoke and were supervised by volunteers or staff (whilst also having a crafty fag!). Volunteers standing outside in the cold talking to the guests on "cigarette breaks" helped build relationship.

Assembling of resources

A substantial part of our preparatory work was gathering all of the things that we had worked out were needed for a temporary floating night shelter scheme.

A decision was made early on to build one stock of resources to move around the venues. This was mainly down to an issue of cost. i.e. It is cheaper to buy one set of items rather than seven different sets. Also, storage was an issue in many venues, with much space being used by the different community groups and uniformed organisations (scouts, guides etc).

Following the closure of the Scrine Foundation night shelter, we were able to acquire a set of hospital grade mattresses that we moved around from venue to venue.



Now you see it...



Now you don't...

Premises

The 7 hosting churches varied in size and were all within 1.5 miles of each other and the town centre. There was a delicate balancing act to be followed for many venues due to other user groups accessing before or after the shelter set up/dismantling on a daily basis, coupled with access to the Salvation Army drop lift Luton van which needed to be used for shop collections and deliveries. This led to a few tight situations, which we apologised for! It did raise issues and questions regarding further operations that will be discussed later. For most venues it was a step into the unknown in terms of taking a very real risk with their buildings. Amongst other considerations were:

- Impact on existing user groups, including child protection and vulnerable adult issues
- Impact on surrounding environment and neighbours, including potential damage, noise, nuisance.

Many buildings were adjacent to residential buildings and this was a real concern. In many cases, the FCWS was not publicised too widely with neighbours in case fear and mistrust became a factor. If this seems "a bit sneaky," such venues do not (on the whole) inform wider surroundings regarding other community activities (e.g. guide, youth group sleepovers, youth group activities, etc).



Simple, safe, effective accommodation

Some people were afraid of who may be coming to use the buildings, but on reflection, how many churches vet people coming into their Sunday services, which are totally open to anyone? This concern leads into the next section.

Referral Procedures

Following discussions with people with experience in other shelters (Nottingham, Croydon, 4CWS, Robes Project etc) and other agencies, it was decided that entry to the shelter would be by referral only through a recognised agency.

The referral would also have to be checked and authorised by one of the project managers. i.e. it was not just a case of someone filling in form and gaining entry, the person, information and form would have to be checked by allowing access.

Why did we choose this route?

To some people, this process seems exclusive and a barrier to support and there are many good reasons for and against. Some church schemes have NO referral process and still have an extremely good safety record.¹¹

We followed this route for several important reasons:

To ensure we were the most appropriate service for our prospective guests. If somebody presented with *very complex* needs. e.g. severely physically impaired, or serious mentally ill, it would be unreasonable to expect (very well meaning and capable) volunteers to be able to give the degree of care required. We also followed this route so that we would not become a place that people could enter in order for other agencies/services to discharge their duty of care. We specifically did not cater for under 18s, yet we still had an agency from Canterbury trying to place a 17 year old with us. We also faced similar calls from probation services to which we denied access - not to be discriminatory to people with an offending history, 60% of our guests had this, but in order for people to fulfil their statutory duty of care and responsibilities rather than use the FCWS as an easy route.

The above may seem harsh, but the over riding concern of the project was to provide a safe place for vulnerable people, as well as reducing risks for volunteers and workers. Also, the function of the shelter was not to provide specialist care for people with serious health problems - something that the statutory agencies should have been providing, in some cases refusing entry "forced" relevant agencies to arrange proper care. Many people with mental health issues did present and use the shelter but some service user requirements were beyond the remit/ability of the shelter, and really should have been addressed elsewhere by other agencies.

This system gave reassurance to volunteers, venues and also police liaison. Guests could only enter by referral, people could not just turn up and gain

¹¹ <http://www.wlchc.org/>

entry - even though some people tried on occasions. We also officially refrained from offering door services (although admittedly these did occur on a few occasions). The aim was to avoid crowds of people congregating outside of a venue, thereby causing a disturbance and nuisance factor and drawing unwanted attention to the presence of the winter shelter venues.

A referral form was available for download from the FCWS website, as well as a risk assessment and copy of the shelter rules. It was communicated to agencies that referrals must be completed (by the agency representative - not the guest¹²) and a copy of the rules signed by the prospective guest before faxing over to us at the Salvation Army or emailing through as a PDF. Incidentally, we received some very interesting referral forms, despite previous instructions!

Referrals came in from between 8:00am to 17:00, but we did receive a few "late" referrals from police after 19:00 hours. If we could do background checks, verify information and had a space, then people could have a bed. Safety of guests and staff was paramount.

Referring agencies included:

KCA
Salvation Army
Rainbow Centre
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Shepway Housing Options
Shepway Community Mental Health Services
Porchlight
Police
Probation
Route 25
And a few others...

If we were fairly certain there was a low risk of harm to a potential guest, existing guests, volunteers etc and we felt we could meet their care needs then a bed space would be offered.

We had initially thought of issuing guests with a ticket (printed and signed) at a referring agency. It became apparent that this was not necessary as the duty project worker, who had taken the referral during

¹² This was very important. Many (prospective) guests have literacy problems.

the day would be present at the start of the shelter venue for when guests turned up.

Referrals were made for the day ahead. If people wished to stay again they let us know in the morning and we reserved a bed. If people did not turn up for more than one evening, then they lost their bed and went to the back of a waiting list (if present).

Guests needed to access their bed at the Winter Shelter between 7:30 - 9:00 pm. Queuing before 7:30pm was firmly discouraged and if seen as happening, could result in exclusion from the project. This seems harsh but in reality did not happen. The aim was to keep the FCWS as far as possible invisible to the surrounding area. Late admission was to be denied. These stipulations were important in our desire to have a minimal impact upon the local community.

We decided that we would have no automatic exclusions but would conduct individual risk assessments on the basis of the guest in question and our ability to manage the risks they presented with. Several people were refused access, as the shelter would not have been able to cope with particular behaviour/or was not appropriate for their needs.

- One person was refused a referral due to being a known serial arsonist who saw no issues with his behaviour and had previously made 14 people homeless from an accommodation block one night as a result of fire lighting tendencies. In our own 14-bed provision, this was a risk too far and we did not wish to expose anyone to this.
- Another was refused referral as they had accommodation already but wanted to come in and stay with us.
- Two young men were asked to leave one night due to behaviour. Individually they were fine, but together interacted in such a way that it made several people uncomfortable and we had 3 more vulnerable people prepared to leave that evening. They had recognised medical problems (ADHD/Asperger's Syndrome/ODD) but had had to leave many hostels and B+B accommodation. Something was clearly failing in their cases.

Dogs

We sought to accommodate dogs as best we could. In the event we had only one dog (puppy) that was very small and not too difficult apart from chewing door wedges at the Salvation Army and having minor accidents at

Harbour Community Church. Some feel it inappropriate to have dogs in a church building, others see no distinction between dogs and guide dogs, which we would not deny a blind person from bringing into a church service. In many people's experience, whilst not necessarily officially trained, most "street" dogs owned by homeless people are very obedient and well behaved. Many rough sleepers have dogs for:

- Warmth
- Security
- Companionship

If faced with the prospect of gaining accommodation or access to a shelter but having to give up their dog, most street people would choose to keep their dog. This is an issue that needs looking at closer for next time. It may be that a compromise would be to issue a muzzle for when the dog was inside and for the owner to undertake to clear up any accidents¹³.

Winter Shelter Up And Running

The project became live on December 7th 2009 with referrals being accepted from 10am on that day. We had prompted local homelessness agencies to "pre-refer" people who were known to them to be homeless/sofa surfing/rough sleeping. Despite this, uptake in the first week was very slow. Even with several referrals a day, we had few guests. On the first day we had one, the other potential guests having been sorted with other accommodation or just not turning up at all. For the second and third nights we had no one turn up and closed the shelter at 10:00pm - there was no point staying open for the sake of it. A solitary guest resided with us for the next 5 nights before numbers picked up and consequently became our resident expert in Shepherd's pie - menus were changed more frequently after this!

It was important in this time period to congratulate and motivate the volunteers, as for them; there was a lot of effort but no one using the facilities. It was communicated that people had been sorted elsewhere, but there was a sense of disappointment in some circles. The quiet first week was incredibly valuable, however, as it gave the venue coordinators and volunteer teams a chance to see exactly what the layout was like. It

¹³ We had a few people who had "accidents" that were cleared with no questions, why therefore, did we seek stricter criteria for pets?

also gave us on the management side, an opportunity to get used to lugging 16 mattresses, bedding and associated supplies around the place! A volunteer said that the quiet week was God's way of letting us get used to the operation with out panicking!

It had also been an incredibly mild December so far and possibly people needed to reach a certain level of discomfort before entering into a strange place run by unfamiliar people. To put this into context, how many of us would find it easy to enter a place and sleep in a shared room with strangers present?

Typical (?) Day Structure (!)¹⁴

Referrals would come in from 8:00 onwards but usually later, including some from the breakfast club at the Salvation Army, courtesy of their volunteer community worker, Hayley Mulcahy.

8:30 - 10:30

Salvation Army Breakfast club would open and most guests from previous night would make their way to this venue. Here follow up appointments could be made/kept with external case workers/agencies, including KCA, Porchlight, Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), Mt Zeehan (Alcohol misuse project).

09:30 - 13:00

Appointments as before. The "open" nature of the Salvation Army building became more restricted for guests, with people only being officially allowed to stay if they had appointments to keep with people coming into the building (e.g. housing workers, social services, any of the afore mentioned).

Within this time on a Wednesday morning case conferencing occurred between FCWS Project Managers and (most usually) Porchlight and CAB. Shepway District Council housing options were invited but could not attend due to resource constraints - this also happened with other agencies. The ironic thing is, that by attending case conferences many issues can be resolved which can save time for agencies. The difficulty is each agency working out which is the most appropriate use of their time. Case conferencing had initially been at the end of the morning, however,

¹⁴ ? and ! are there for a reason. Very often, due to situations arising, events could become more reactive as they arose. As guests stayed with us they felt safer and more comfortable other issues would "bubble" to the surface. Also if appointments had not gone well, there may be some follow up work.

it switched to the start, as it was useful to share information/clarify issues before the respective agencies saw individual guests.

13:00-14:00

Not necessarily a quiet part of the day but for obvious reasons tended to be quieter due to agencies/services/offices being closed.

14:00-17:30

Probably where most of the referral follow up/checking was done. Venue coordinators usually rang in to check numbers for catering over the coming evening

17:30-18:00

Finalising of bed lists and write up for coming evening. This was important for handover to oncoming evening staff. Whilst not a "life story" it was important for overnight teams to have an appreciation of what background guests were coming from and what issues they faced.

18:00-19:00

Combination of collecting "portable winter shelter" from venues, if not already done so, and then ferrying onto the next one.

19:00 onwards

Handover by project manager to oncoming team and venue coordinator

19:30-19:45

Opening of venue. Welcome of guests by all and logging in by project manager. Depending on how many were present (and how cold it was), food would be served later.

20:00-21:30

Food served, conversations etc

21:30-22:00

Food clear up and evening shift prepare to leave. Guests were able watch a DVD, play games or chat.

22:00-22:30

Overnight shift in and briefed - shelter coordinator leaves.

23:00

'Lights out' time was 23:00 - although this time moved forward - instigated by some guests who wanted to get a good night's sleep. Very often guests had done much walking around during the day as they had tried to access services from various agencies. Some venues did not have separate areas where a TV could be set up away from the sleeping space. In such places most of the lights went out earlier.

During the night 4 volunteers were on duty. Volunteers took it in turns to sleep for the early or late part of the shift. The volunteer sleeping area was in a separate part of the venue (e.g. back office) At all times 2 people were awake for safety, security and company. The other people were available in case of emergencies.

There was an on-call arrangement with the duty Project Manager in case of emergencies.

07:00

Morning team arrive. Wake guests and provide simple breakfast, tea/coffee. A breakfast was not necessarily provided at each venue but guests could make their way to the Salvation Army building where a breakfast was provided. Guests were required to leave the locality by 07:45am (in order to minimise any impact on the local community and for the safety of our users). On Saturdays, there was a breakfast followed by a prayer meeting - some guests went to this and also services at the Salvation Army following a cooked breakfast on a Sunday only for shelter guests.

08:00

Pick up winter shelter if appropriate/or if not being picked up later. Brief handover to project manager. This could be by phone and the logbook picked up later. The logbook was important for recording information and gave a record of who was in the shelter (volunteers and guests) and could be used for legal purposes following any incidents that might have arisen.

08:30-09:30

Project manager collects/delivers equipment to next venue and starts at Salvation Army.

The project was open to men and women but in the event we accommodated 7 women out of the total 47 guests. Separate sleeping areas in the same hall were provided in most venues, apart from 2 where separate rooms were consistently available. Every 10-15 minutes a brief

visual check was done of the sleeping areas to ensure guests safety. We also tried to ensure at least one female volunteer at all times.

Bedding and Laundry

Guests stored their own bedding in marked Ikea bags, if they were planning to return the next night - individual guests bedding was washed every two days or sooner if required. This vital task is important for hygiene and dignity of guests.

The intention had been to try to find a commercial service to undertake this for us. In the end it became obvious that we would have to do it ourselves. Many fruitless hours were spent trying to sort this out. As somebody who has worked in the health service and also been a Facilities Manager, I was amazed at how difficult this was to try to arrange. No one wanted to take it on as a commercial service! The aim had been to obtain a complete linen service through a hospital, nursing home or hotels. A moment of clarity was reached when after visiting seven hotels and 2 nursing homes one morning (in an attempt to buy into their service) the realisation dawned that the machine at the Salvation Army was broken. We undertook to buy a new one and a condenser dryer, which could then remain in the centre afterwards. This arrangement worked but was not entirely satisfactory as it was quite time consuming in terms of one person sorting it out. Also, we did some guests washing but eventually started charging for this at £2 a time. The reasons for this were;

- Most people were on benefits
- No one had any outgoings as food and lodging was provided
- Launderettes would be more expensive at ~ £5 wash and dry, so we were not being exploitative
- There was a tendency for guests to take it for granted. We would not be doing anyone any favours if we weren't encouraging people to plan sensible use of their money

For 84 nights the FCWS ran on this basis and gave shelter, advocacy, companionship and value to the guests who came to stay. The project became a hub from which guests could access services and support. The volunteers provided a service for some of the most vulnerable people in our society by creating a non-judgmental and welcoming atmosphere where people felt affirmed, encouraged and enabled to move forwards in some way.

The people of Folkestone, mainly through the churches, provided a minimum of 1440 volunteer slots of differing times of between $\frac{1}{2}$ hour and 12 hours. This was given directly by people cleaning, providing food, friendship (and foot massages!), talking, playing chess, accompanying to official interviews and medical appointments, shopping, laundry and setting up/checking supplies etc.

What was evident was the difference the Winter Shelter made to people's lives. People fed back how they felt valued and were treated with dignity and respect. The interventions and consistent support from all involved within and beyond the project made a difference to vulnerable people where and when it mattered. People involved (from all agencies) were able to place 16 guests into accommodation by the end of the shelter operation.

By whichever criteria we would wish to judge Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter our assessment is that it was a success!



Vally, (centre), one of our guests about to head back to Romania

Some operational issues which were addressed or need to be borne in mind for next project.

The aim of this section is give some honest account of some difficulties that were encountered. Honesty, openness and accountability are important. It was a first time venture for most people concerned. The other purpose of this section is to raise these areas for anyone else considering using this as a model to establish their own winter shelter project.

Some issues we became aware of as the project continued, some as they were raised to us at the different venues by coordinators and volunteers.

1. Dependency

The issue of creating dependency by guests was very real. For some this was a case of not having the life skills or confidence to enable their own participation or engagement with services. For others it was lack of motivation, for others it was a matter of taking advantage of what was on offer in front them.

Care is needed so that we don't live people's lives for them. If we do not equip people with the necessary life skills (long term) we cannot expect to see a break from the cycle of homelessness. Very often when people met with Jesus, he asked them, "What do you want?" We should consider a similar approach. Some of our guests did not realise they had a choice and could therefore make some positive decisions about engagement with services. We should not assume what people want. If we do we impose *our* solutions onto them and they may not wish it. Some people are terrified of having a tenancy because of the extra responsibility it brings. Some studies have shown that if people are not given tenancy support (and this needs to be more than 1 hour every fortnight, valuable as this is in itself), they are at real risk of becoming homeless again within 6 months.

Should we expect guests to contribute to their stay? Some places do make a nominal charge and then claim housing benefit in order to cover the costs of running the shelter. For people in receipt of benefits who have no other outgoings

2. Resource challenges

People - Volunteers and project workers

Some people volunteered for one slot, others did much more, appearing each week at their respective venues. One was even involved every day for many hours. Some people felt energised by their work in the shelter, eager to help each week. A few felt tired but under an obligation to continue. It can be difficult to get the balance right. I am not suggesting any easy answers apart from highlighting that maybe people need to be "given permission" to say they have had enough and are getting tired and they could step back. This may be something for project managers and volunteer coordinators to discuss and bear in mind.

Pastoral support

This also needs to be considered. Sometimes traumatic experiences were recounted or a guest might get upset or even have a mental health crisis. For volunteers and workers, it was important to have some follow up with someone checking if they were OK. Most coordinators seemed switched on and gave their volunteers time to debrief at the end of a shift but it is important to ensure this is specifically offered.

Volunteer Motivation and Utilisation

Volunteers were highly motivated and willing to be used, with many willing to be involved next time and even wishing to carry on doing similar work once the FCWS had finished. We hope to feed some volunteers into the existing Rainbow Centre, Millfield, FoodStop, Salvation Army community activities and even training to be qualified Citizen's Advice Bureau volunteers.

Paid worker arrangements

The working arrangements for the Project Managers were 3 days on 3 days off, with telephone handovers and email to communicate issues. The working hours were ~ 37 hours per set of shifts but the reality was very different. Due to early clearance of venues, having to deal with late night mental health crises and paramedic call outs and even hospital visits, it was not uncommon to have a regular 16-18 hour day, particularly from about half way in. Also, with 3 days off, there was still management,

reports and multi-agency work (e.g. KCA, Shepway Homeless Forum and FCWS Steering group meetings) that had to be done. From (before) the start of the project the workload was intense, with no time for a proper break. These are not complaints but an observation that needs to be recognised and taken into account for future operation of the FCWS. It would be sensible to either offer paid administration support, or more practically for an overall manager to be employed along with 2 project workers. Such an arrangement would also offer contingency for illness cover that was not built in to the project just finished and almost led to cover issues.

Buildings

The Salvation Army building is a multi use building frequented by different community groups including pre school. It was used every day for the breakfast club activities, people staying for appointments, people just dropping in from the local area who wanted company or something sorted out and winter shelter guests meeting to wait to be escorted to the evening venue or to access showers. This led to a blurring of boundaries and arrangements within the buildings between other users and winter shelter guests that also had potential child protection issues. There were sometimes not enough volunteers to monitor/supervise all



areas effectively and alternative arrangements had to be made in terms of toilets allocation and whether guests were "held" on a ground floor or first floor. These issues were highlighted and changes to working practices were carried out. It may be a positive step next time to use the Salvation Army building during the day

for advocacy and support but not to use it for an evening venue - Salvation Army volunteers could still be used to staff another overnight venue; or conversely have the advocacy from a different centre e.g. Rainbow Centre. The Salvation Army is known for its community work and possibly it is inevitable that some confusion/blurring of boundaries may occur.

It has been previously mentioned about venue issues and close clearance issues between winter shelter equipment and other users. A serious consideration next time has to be the provision of equipment for each

venue to avoid transport issues. This may lead to some venues used this time not being involved next time due to space issues. This would need discussing early on in the next project and it may be prudent for existing venues to consider where any space exists. Another possibility is the provision of a dedicated volunteer team for equipment moving. This, however, is vulnerable to team illness issues and is resource intense.

Dedicated equipment would also mean a reduction in the urgency of laundry. If each venue was responsible for provision of bedding, towels and associated laundry, this could take place in the subsequent week and avoid the rush for having it done on the same day.

4. Ongoing (ex) guest support

Many guests expressed a sense of bereavement when moving on or when the shelter faced closure. For people who obtained accommodation during the shelter, we allowed them to still attend for evening meals for 3-4 days so that they weren't suddenly excluded and isolated. It was not possible to continue to allow people to keep coming back for meals otherwise we would have been catering for 30 plus. We are hoping to extend the Millfield type provision by either providing more volunteers or possibly having other churches open up early evening for post shelter guest activities.



5. Boundaries

Several guests developed relationships with each other during the shelter and this pushed certain boundaries, which had to be re-drawn quite definitively. Other guests and some volunteers felt uncomfortable at times. With any project there can be "boundary creep" after a period as guests try to have things run more along their lines rather than the provider's. Guest consultation in offering services can be valuable but if fluid boundaries are in place it can be a recipe for confusion. Many people coming to stay in shelters have very disorganised chaotic lives and we can add to this if we do not provide a degree of order and rigidity. Amongst the project workers the guests came to perceive one as "Mr Nasty" and the other as "Mr Nice." This led to guests trying to play one worker off against the other, with boundaries

having to be reintroduced after a set of shifts several times. Again, it was a steep learning curve and this is normal for this type of project - people naturally push boundaries.

This came to a head after about 5 weeks and boundaries were very firmly redrawn. A review meeting with most of the coordinators and both project workers took place about half way through the project. Within this, the redrawn boundaries were emphasised and everyone knew what the official accepted procedures were, with no room for deviations.

Boundaries were also crossed by volunteer staff at a venue, as there was disagreement towards shelter policy and procedures. People/host venues need to be fully aware of what they are signing up for and if people disagree with FCWS policy/procedures then it is probably better that they do not participate - and this must be fully backed up by the individual venue leadership. There is not much point in agreeing to work to a set of procedures/guidelines and then choosing not to. Again, a consistent approach is required otherwise confusion/uncertainty can arise. No one was harmed but a period of uncertainty/disagreement arose which caused tensions within a venue volunteer team and shelter staff in trying to resolve issues.

Other issues included:

- Uncertainty of catering requirements - particularly in the first 2 weeks. This may be inevitable until people attend and numbers stabilise. This did lead to frustration - particularly when catering volunteers had worked incredibly hard.
- Administration. This did become awkward at times - particularly with so much advocacy and other "ad hoc" work going on. It was often solved by lots of post midnight oil burning!
- Keeping track of so many volunteers. From our lists, and because many people signed up for lots of sessions. We appear to have not utilised ~ 30 volunteers who expressed an interest. We are developing a volunteer database to enable us to keep more track of where people are used.
- Taking volunteer details at the venues attended into a database would have been more efficient. We will do this next time.
- Accurate recording of logbook information and possibly looking at electronic records.

Winter shelter findings/analysis

74 individuals/agencies enquired about the shelter

- 1 was not allowed to be referred due to serial arson history
- 1 was under 18 and not allowed (even though the referring agency tried their best to get the person in as a guest until gently reminded about their statutory duty of care)

22 people made referral enquiries but declined places or did not turn up (some had found accommodation elsewhere, for some it was step too far to take)

For the 47 individuals who were guests:

Total Bed space capacity offered for duration project = 1176 (14/night)

Service user spaces reserved = 865

Bed spaces taken up = 729

84% of reserved bed spaces were taken up and used which represents 62% total shelter capacity used over duration of project

Mental Health Issues

- 28 guests (60%) had disclosed mental health issues
- 17 guests (36%) were taking prescribed mental health related medication
- 1 guest was sectioned during their residency
- Several had appointments or were awaiting follow up work from the Community Mental Health team

Drug/alcohol problems exhibited or claimed by guests

- 21 guests (45%) disclosed substance misuse issues
- 6 guests (13%) opiates (heroin, morphine)
- 10 guests (21%) disclosed alcohol issues
- 16 (34%) were multi drug users
- 3 (6%) were on methadone scripts

Offending history of guests

- 28 guests (60%) had disclosed an offending history

Age Range and Gender

- 7 women were guests
- Youngest guest 18
- Oldest 64

Has it worked?

- Potentially 30 positive outcomes out of 47 guests, including:
- (Have not included people going to stay with friends/relatives in this)
 - Section (now at least getting appropriate care)
 - Prison (possibility of linking in with longer term support)

Some Causes of Homelessness

- 3 Domestic Violence
- 14 family or relationship breakdown
- 8 rent arrears
- 2 tenancy breach
- 4 travelling
- 1 landlord sold property

Local Connection?

- 47% of guests local connection
 - But if look at bed occupancy - 67% local connection (491/729 beds used)
- Some people with no connection only stayed 1-2 days before moving on.
i.e. we were not invaded from outside
3 were from Europe and heading home

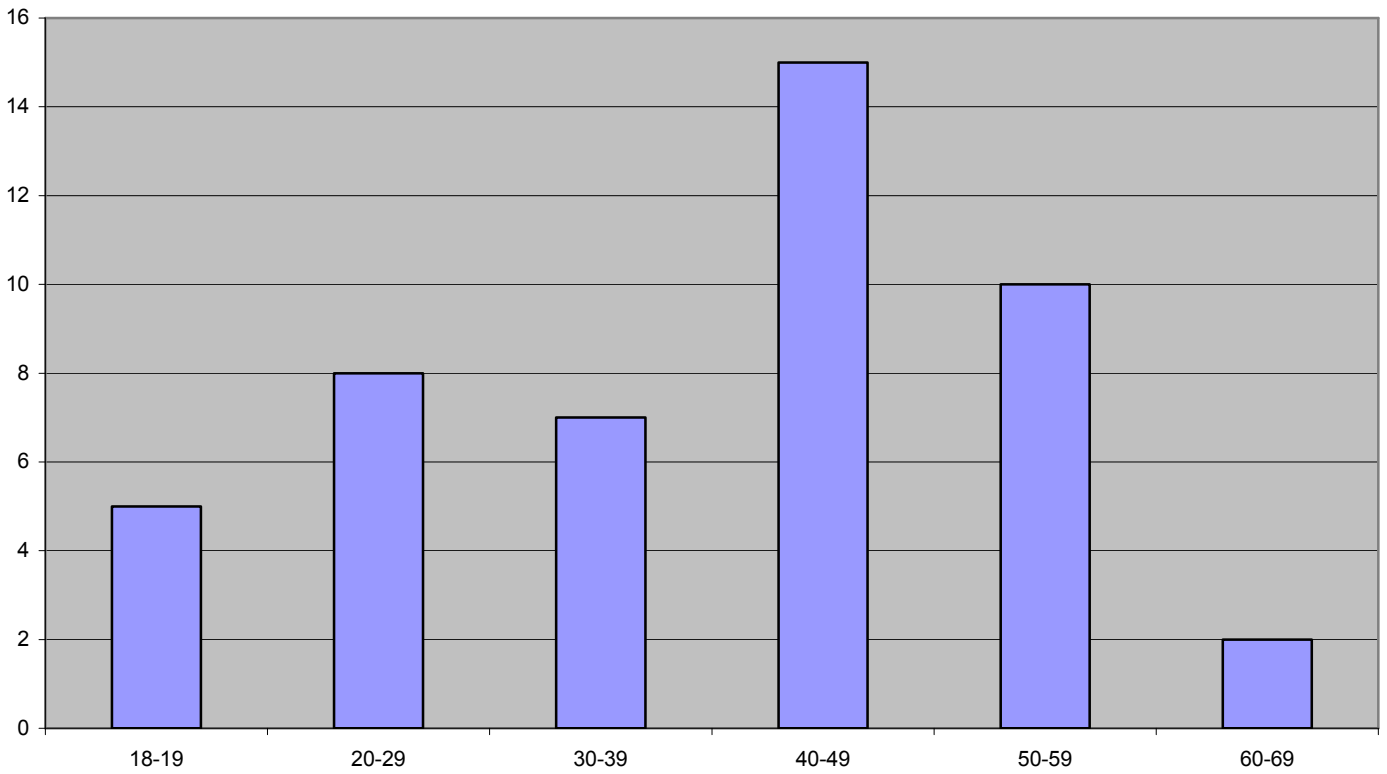
Equivalent B+B Cost

- Equivalent cost for B+B for local connection = **£14730 (25+5x491 beds)**
- Total equivalent cost for B+B = **£21870 (25+5 x 729 beds)**

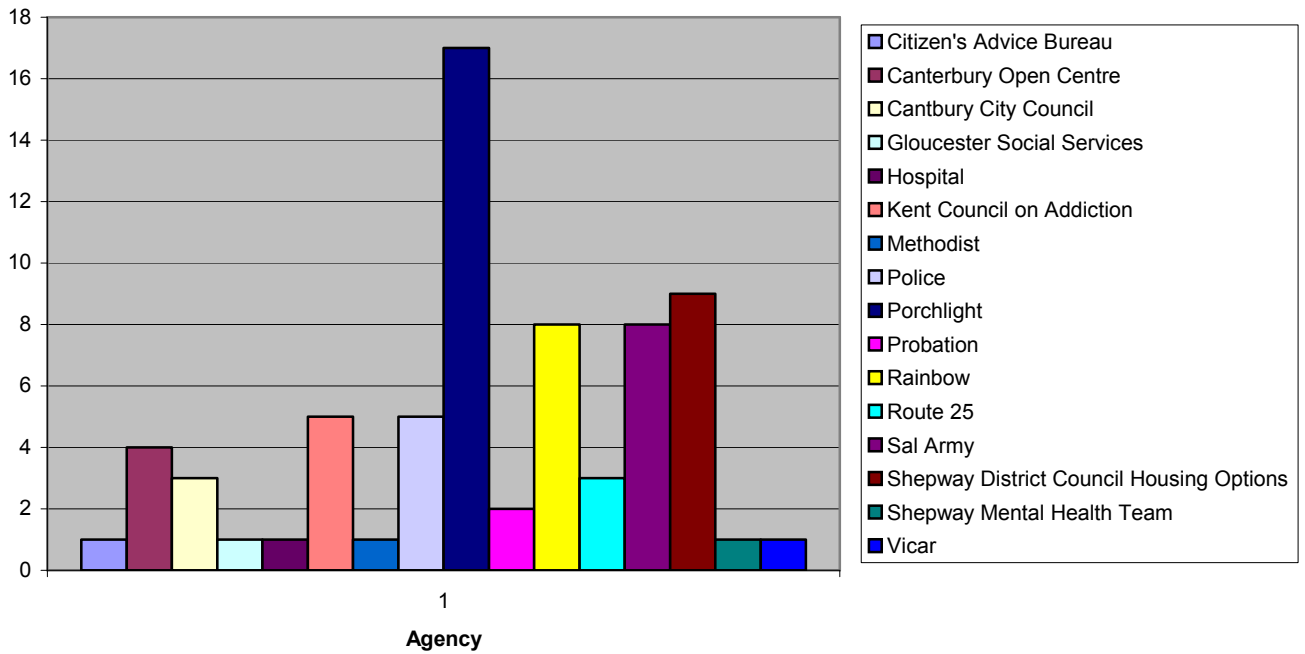
Where are they now?

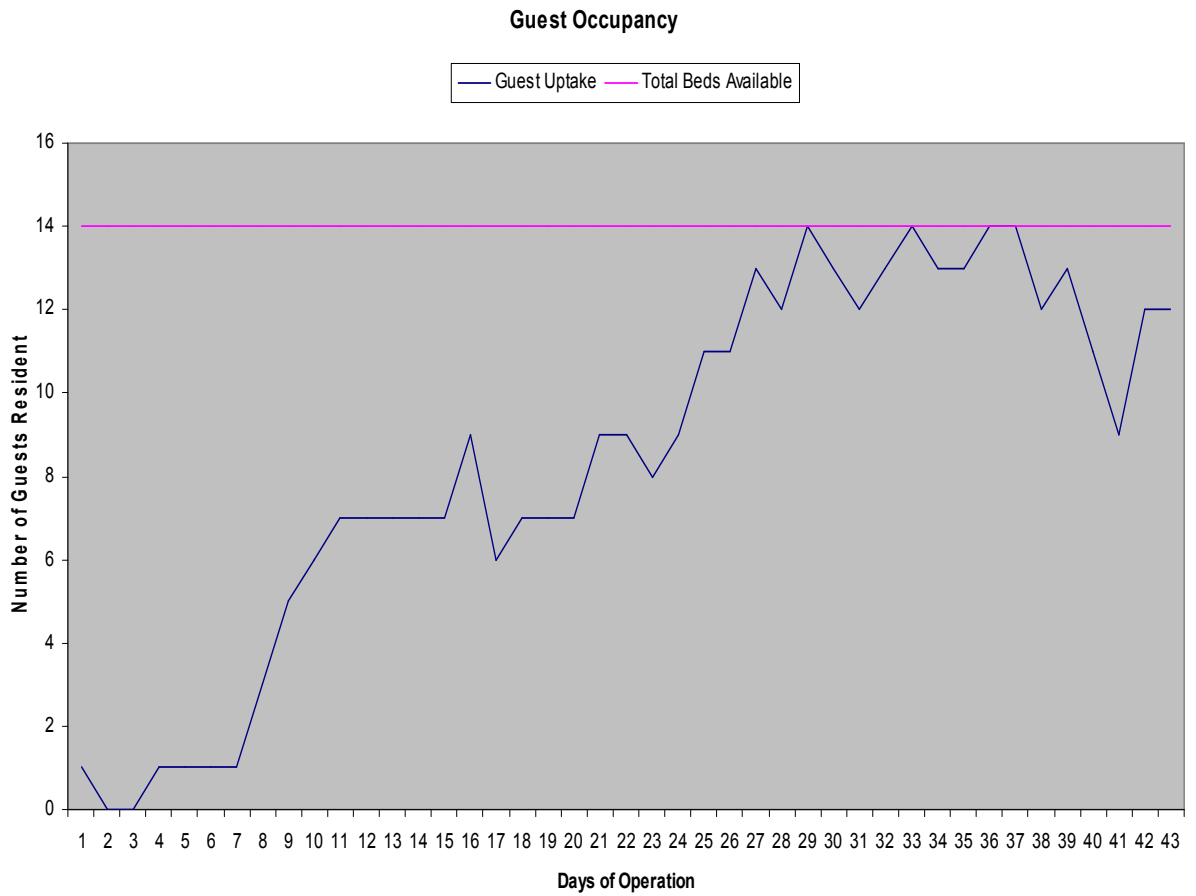
- 3 to Porchlight Projects
- 14 private/council/housing association rented
- 1 sectioned
- 1 prison
- 11 back to country/point of origin

Guest Age Profile at 80 Days

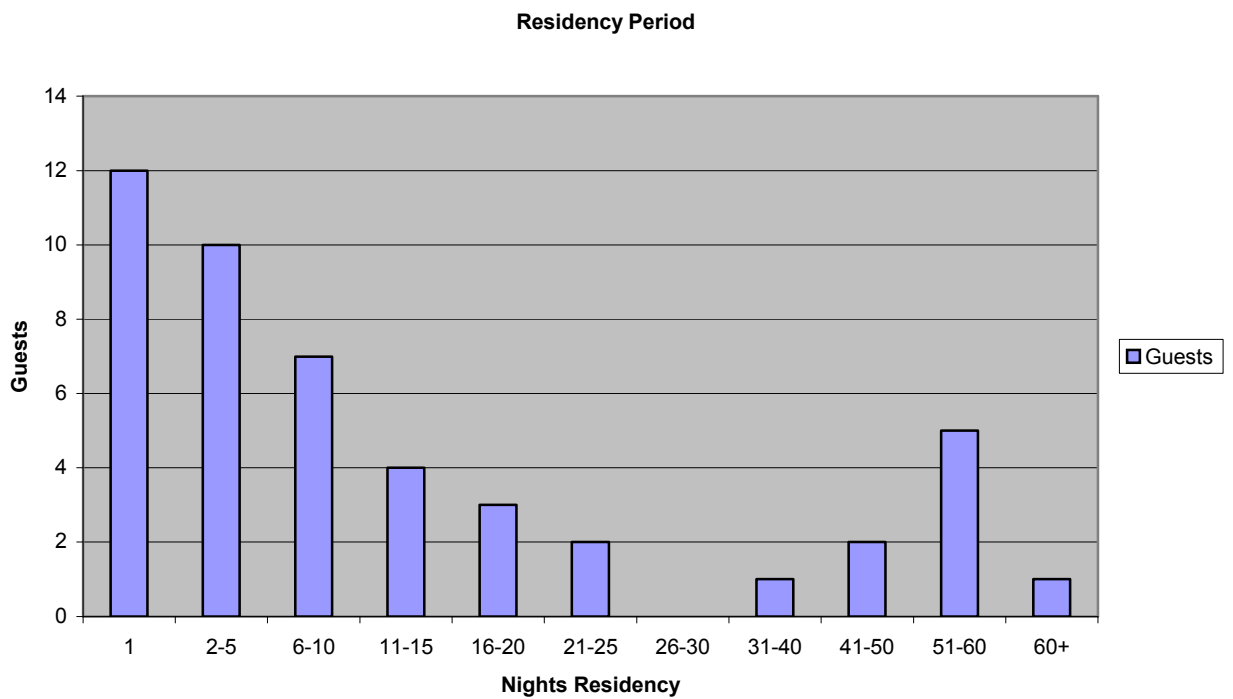


Referral Route - Total of 70





Following slow uptake, residency continued in a similar pattern until shelter end



It is easy to be critical of statutory authorities and their service provision but very often their hands are tied and they have to operate within a specific framework. The value of faith based agencies and projects is that very often there is more freedom to act with compassion and not just meet specific criteria or targets. So often, vulnerable people are not quite vulnerable enough for statutory agencies to act - this is also often experienced with mental health issues where people can become quite desperate but not enough to be a significant danger to themselves or others, which would trigger extra care (even though there is specific provision in the Homelessness Act for this, not all are registered with GPs, or know how to access services).

Support for released prisoners is patchy and there are many reasons for this and too many to fully examine but they include:

- Prisons see their duty of care as mainly inside the walls and not outside, there is often not enough in terms of resources to allow "bridging" of internal and external support services/agencies
- These problems have been recognised and systems/resources are being allocated, including prisoner mentoring schemes where volunteers meet prisoners a week before release and attempts at support are set up. Some research shows that the first 48 hours are critical post release in order to reduce the likelihood of resorting to offending behaviour. The St Giles Trust does some excellent work in terms of prison release preparation and follow up but this is not a wide service.

High points included:

- Seeing people make a real effort to stay off drugs/alcohol
- Seeing people realise that they can make positive choices
- Seeing people's faces when we brought out birthday cakes or presents!
- Seeing people engage with services and regain hope
- Seeing some terrified volunteers gain confidence and really engage with guests in a sometimes challenging environment
- Persuading MIND at local and national level to review/amend policies regarding their provision of services to homeless people. (i.e. they previously did not but now they do!)
- Guests looking out for each other e.g. translating Romanian
- Guests donating own benefit money to help people out

Low points included:

- A window being smashed
- Seeing the number of vulnerable people (particularly with mental health issues) who apparently fall through the safety net of established services
- Having to remove 2 young people with medical/behavioural issues from the shelter as we could not cope with their complex needs

Guest feedback

Here are some of the things that guests said about the project...

- ✓ "If it hadn't have been for this project I would have been dead"
- ✓ "If it weren't for this project, I would not be here now - I would be dead"
- ✓ "I don't want to think about what would have happened without the night shelter - I don't think I'd be alive"
- ✓ "You've all been so lovely"
- ✓ "Why do you give your time to do this?"
- ✓ "This is the longest I've stayed in one place"
- ✓ "This project has restored my faith. Everyone has been wonderful and the volunteers couldn't have been more helpful"
- ✓ "Coming here has been the step I needed to start putting everything right and I now hope to be housed by the time the project finishes"
- ✓ "You gave me the confidence to take a step, it was hard, very hard but you three helped me do it"
- ✓ "It was run in a very professional way"
- ✓ "It was a safe place"
- ✓ "Can we come back and help next year?"

Initial Evaluation

- a. The level of usage: 47 individuals accessing the project, demonstrates that there was a basic need that was met
- b. For many of the people using the project we provided an invaluable safe shelter coupled with advocacy whilst other accommodation options could be explored or were waited for

- c. We were able through advocacy and contacting Mental Health and Social Service Commissioners of services to influence policy change in organisations and also obtain some positive interventions for people.
- d. The FCWS Project Managers and volunteers undertook much more follow-up work for guests than was envisaged originally, e.g. trying to get more permanent accommodation and engaging with guest's established contact agencies, housing associations, mental health services, multi agency meetings and case conferencing
- e. Project workers and volunteers had freedom to do extra/ad hoc outreach work and assist those who were not yet ready to access the shelter - although this undoubtedly did take time away from other activities.
- f. In spite of doubts and fears raised by a first time venture (and of this size!), careful and thorough planning paid off: the project operated with relatively few practical difficulties or incidents
- g. The accommodation was simple and worked, it enabled easy management - although this could be improved
- h. People could access showers via the Salvation Army centre or the Folkestone Rainbow Centre
- i. Multi-usage of the premises generated extra work and maintenance/clearing up pressures
 - Volunteers did a good job in cleaning/preparing the venues for incoming user groups including pre-school groups that met in the same hall used for the guests sleeping area. There were no/or few complaints from such groups.
- j. Few difficulties reported from other building users
 - A theatre group arranged other accommodation for the duration
- k. Safety and security: was thought out and planned very carefully but there were issues around Salvation Army building being used daily for other community groups/children's activities and guests use (e.g. showers, waiting/meeting area before going on to venues)
- l. Local media coverage and publicity was good (churches, business networks, BBC Radio Kent interview, Folkestone Herald and Gazette,

Canterbury Diocese "Outlook" Magazine), but could have been much better and planned more. It is surprising there was not coverage in Salvation Army media due to their involvement.

- m. Referral process worked well in most instances: problems of losing referrals in the period from referral time to checking in time at Winter Shelter producing voids (i.e. 69 referrals but 47 attendees)
- n. Excellent collaborative working with other agencies throughout, particularly Porchlight, CAB, Rainbow Centre and Shepway Housing Options
- o. Extra agencies sought to make use of us, e.g. police, probation, mental health services, KCA
- p. The requirement that guests re-refer each day worked well in ensuring that contact with other services was maintained
- q. An excellent broad base of volunteers has been established, across Christian denominations, communities and branches of the homelessness sector. Social, faithful and buildings capital has been established and exploited to produce a cohesive community project which met a real need.
- r. A positive response to the project has been received from: local community, police, other homelessness agencies, the guests, volunteers and paid staff
- s. Excellent feedback from Kent Adult Social Services and East Kent Mental Health Commissioners
- t. A regular chiropody clinic was provided and was well used.

Recommendations

- a) On the basis of the high numbers both of referrals and attendees at the Winter Shelter, together with the reactions of frontline workers across the homelessness sector, we firmly believe that there is a definite case for more *easy access* accommodation for homeless

people in Shepway and possibly a case for a 6-8 bed year round provision.

- b) As a group of concerned citizens now with the experience of the Winter Shelter, we should seek to have ongoing conversations with the District Council and other significant agencies in Shepway in order to open a way for increased provision and/or a more collaborative approach - including case conferencing to produce creative/appropriate solutions for individuals, particularly people who are regularly presenting as homeless and for whom current strategies are failing. A diplomatic line needs to be followed here - council policy is set in place following central government guidelines. It is not always easy for guests to fit specific targeted criteria in order to obtain help or accommodation. There are instances, however, of the "local connection" criteria not working positively in favour of established local rough sleepers/homeless persons.
- c) Assignments of a trained key worker for each guest for follow up, advocacy and support and for consistency of support in order to progress. (A key worker could look after several guests e.g. max of 3).
- d) Use of a more formalised log system (electronic?)
- e) Capture information electronically on a nightly basis regarding volunteers to prevent a bigger, retrospective job later on
- f) Provision of a more structured day time support system to enable people to engage and take some responsibility for obtaining accommodation and a more meaningful involvement with everyday life. Systems such as STAR or WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning) could give people ongoing structured support mechanisms and a way of staying out of the homelessness cycle. It is important to give people long term coping strategies rather than just being a temporary or quick fix to an accommodation problem.
- g) We should endeavour to raise the profile of rough sleeping all year round
- h) Seek earlier clarification about support services for pre-released/released prisoners

- i) Provision of a directory (hard copy or online) of services, which identifies service providers and access routes. (e.g. Mental Health support, CAB, CAP, etc)
- j) We should continue to capitalise on the links that have been made across and within church denominations, across communities and between the churches, FCWS and other agencies - this was the case with Shepway Homelessness Forum and the aim will be to continue this
- k) We should keep established links/involvement with other bodies such as KCA multi-agency forum
- l) If there is no significant change in current provision and no clear evidence that levels of rough sleeping have decreased, we should operate a similar project in winter 2010 and beyond

If the Winter Shelter is to run again, we should...

- a) Retain the model from this year since it has largely been successful
- b) Continue with the requirement for guests to register every day with a referral agency, as this ensured continuing and, in many cases, increasing engagement with those services including registration with council run services
- c) Consider having a structure wind down after 12 weeks with an additional 2 weeks for people who have not found accommodation. This is to include a transition period to enable people to adjust/acclimatise to the end of the shelter support period.
- d) Provision of an alternative evening activity at the end of the shelter, which does not contain an accommodation element. e.g. an evening meal/fellowship provision/activity
- e) Pursue all appropriate possibilities for partnership working with other agencies to provide more "joined up" or coordinated work
- f) Further to the above point, ongoing tenancy support is vital to try to keep people in their accommodation or obtain new accommodation. Persistent, consistent, regular support from voluntary agency staff

improves and clarifies the communication with statutory bodies. Voluntary sector staff can interpret and clarify statutory agency rules to statutory agency staff, who may not be clear on policy/procedure. Tenancy support/mentoring schemes are effective.

- g) Seek to exploit favourable media coverage over a wider area
- h) Enhance our training with a more practical procedural edge (even though this was very thorough, there is always room for improvement)
- i) Offer more activities with a spiritual insight
- l) Offer guests more activities, letter writing, art, games, creative activities



STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Period Start Date 01-Sep-09

Period End Date 31-Mar-10

SECTION A Receipts and Payments

	Unrestricted Funds to the nearest £	Restricted Funds to the nearest £	Total Funds to the nearest £
A1 Receipts			
Grants			
Shepway District Council	10,000	-	10,000
Folkestone Town Council	2,950	-	2,950
Kent County Council	660	-	660
The Salvation Army	6,000	-	6,000
Rotary Club, Folkestone	2,000	-	2,000
East Coast NHS Primary Care Trust	2,840	-	2,840
Donations	3,288	-	3,288
Sub-total	27,738	-	27,738
A2 Asset and Investment Sales etc.			
	-	-	-
Total Receipts	27,738	-	27,738
A3 Payments			
Project Manager Recruitment	485	-	485
Project Manager Remuneration	21,460	-	21,460
Vehicle Running Costs	513	-	513
Public Transport	70	-	70
Food	773	-	773
Utilities	680	-	680
Building Repairs	157	-	157
Cleaning	258	-	258
Telephone	434	-	434
Printing and Stationery	397	-	397
Sundry Expenses	873	-	873
Sub-total	26,100	-	26,100
A4 Asset and Investment Purchases etc.			
	1,593	-	1,593
Total Payments	27,693	-	27,693
Net of Receipts/(Payments)	45	-	45

SECTION B Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash Funds	45	-	45
B2 Other Monetary Assets			
Fine payable in installments by Court Order	500	-	500
B3 Investment Assets			
	-	-	-
B4 Assets retained for Shelter use			
Estimated Current Value	200	-	200
B5 Liabilities			
	-	-	-

For more documents, information, press releases and a radio interview go to the Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter website

www.folkestoneshelter.com

For more information on the future developments contact via the website

What some of the people involved with us had to say:

Shepway District Council

Shepway District Council believe that the Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter has provided a valuable and effective service for the district. It has enabled vulnerable households without a roof over the heads to access shelter, food, warmth, advice and companionship, in what was obviously one of the coldest winter periods for many years.

We are particularly pleased that the initiative has enabled the partner agencies, to work together to solve the housing and related needs of a number of long-term homeless and vulnerable clients. Should the Shelter reopen during 2010/11, we feel that there is further scope to further improve the multi-agency partnership working.

The Council would like to pass on it's thanks to all those responsible for developing and implementing the project, the volunteers involved in the day to day operations of the shelter, as well as the other organisations and individuals who have provided the necessary funding for the shelter.

Porchlight Homeless Agency

I found the Winter Shelter a great help, especially when the temperatures dropped to below zero.

Although the local council was happy to pay for Bed and Breakfast when the temperatures dropped, it was often very difficult to find a Hotel, which would accept my clients, or the clients were unsuitable for Hotel accommodation. The Winter Shelter was a great last resort and safety net when other facilities were not available.

I sent 2 clients to the Shelter and they were both very complimentary of the administration, and especially the food. They had no concerns and felt safe and well looked after.

My only worry was that local councils would start to use this facility to house people, thus avoiding their responsibility.

Vincent Benedict

Porchlight Outreach (Canterbury)

Feedback from church ministers:

Hilary Nabarro at URC Radnor Park

It was a wonderful privilege to be involved with this project, to work together with other churches and other agencies to offer hospitality where it was needed.

I felt certain right from the beginning that God was at work in this project. That was borne out throughout the period of planning, the project itself, and comments and experiences since. I felt we were being carried on a wave that was definitely not part of our own making. It has been particularly valuable for the churches to work together, and indeed to enable one another to serve and to do together what we could not have done alone. I think this experience will be transformative for Churches Together, as it has built a base of common experience and growing relationships. Many - most? - volunteers were very uncertain and apprehensive before we started, despite bringing enormous compassion, conviction and commitment. It was amazing how differently things turned out. More and more people gained confidence to become more involved as we progressed - and I think that applies to volunteers and guests!

Rosemary Siebert at St Saviour's Church:

The Winter Shelter project came at one of those absolutely right moments.

St. Saviour's Community Centre was just lifting off with its own venture, looking for new ways of making life better for its immediate community, alongside tried and tested ones.

At the same time, St. Mary & St. Eanswythe, linked with St. Augustine's, responded generously with mission funds to provide food, and human bodies as volunteers for the evening and night shifts.

Issues voiced were handled well. It was apparent early on that there were too many volunteers for the evening shifts, and too few for the nights. Whilst the former were not able, for understandable reasons, to transfer to nights it would be helpful to hear whether they were able to relocate to other churches and how they felt about that. Perhaps more meetings before start-up, and particularly between the church co-ordinators, would assist but we recognise that some of this is a learning as you go along situation. The initial briefing at the Salvation Army was clear on the big issues but not so clear as to how the shelters would work on the ground. In retrospect, specific info on bedding arrangements, timings, and sleeping arrangements would be good. Also, might shelters be given their own box of supplies to save some box handling between churches?

Those who took part expressed joy at being part of such a tangible outreach project. We all felt that the best bits were the kindness and gratitude from guests. Being asked for 2nd and 3rd helpings of food was brilliant! The worst bits were

struggling to get up at either 2.45 am or 6.45 am after a few hours' sleep but that was a tiny part of what it must have felt like for guests doing it night after night.

For those who spent many hours at the church already, the giving was sacrificial (my words, not theirs; they would make no mention of it). It was a wonderful way of getting to know one another better...

Thank you project leaders Richard and Jon for your dedication to this project and your absolute commitment to always being available, deeply impressive.

Graham Coombs South Kent Community Church

As a pastor and the co-ordinator for our church I felt it did as much for the team serving over the 12 weeks as it hopefully did for the guests. There was a growing confidence in many of the team as they learnt to interact and respond to the various needs, recognising that each guest had their own unique story and some were still struggling with pain and unresolved issues in their lives. As the weeks went by there was an increasing compassion, understanding and genuine interest in each individual as barriers came down and bridges of trust and openness were built up

*God bless
Graham*

Coordinators

From Karen at HCC

When I was asked to be a co-ordinator I was excited and frightened but curious how the whole project would work. Once it started and we meet the guests I was surprised how young some of them were, how sad it was they had no one to turn too! So it highlighted how crucial this project was to each guest. It was great to see how the majority of the guests moved on to a place with the support from the relevant agencies as well as the constant support of Hayley, Richard and Jon when things got tough.

Had this project not been available I wonder how they would have survived the freezing temperatures. Just to say all my team gained much enjoyment with all the guests and great conversations and a lot was learnt by all.

Richard Fitzgerald Trinity Benefice at Sandgate Road Methodist

People really stepped out of their comfort zones and got involved. It was wonderful to see people grow in confidence each week and get closer to the guests. In particular, the non-judgmental, welcoming attitude meant that many guests felt welcomed, safe and secure, so much so that they came back each night. A true reflection of the love God has for all people.

Jon Limebury Associate Project Manager

I have never known such a welcoming non-judgmental project where all felt welcome.

Vikki St John's Volunteer

I may as well have been physically poked - the sudden urge to get out of my comfort zone and get involved was overwhelming. Initially I felt scared, but after one of the most inspirational talks I've ever heard, I volunteered for overnight shifts on Saturdays at St John's.

During my first shift I spent the night listening to some really hard-to-swallow stuff, which combined with sleep deprivation made me feel completely useless the next day. There was so much suffering and I felt I could do nothing to change it.

Then it clicked - God had put me and so many others in place not to change the past, but to change the circumstances surrounding the future for local homeless people, letting them

know that people do care and want nothing in return. I really didn't expect the project to affect my life quite as much as it has.

URC Volunteer

Before we got involved we felt very frightened, now looking back it is hard to see what we were frightened of.

Salvation Army Volunteer

Shelter = Safe haven extending love to every resident

Shelter = See how even little things encourage recovery

St George's Volunteer

I could never have seen myself doing something like this - but I am very glad I did!

Police and PCSO comments:

It seemed like a good project to me, I am not aware of any complaints or problems and would be happy to see it run again. Chief Inspector Martin Bradley

I did not have cause to use this being a Dover officer, but that aside I do think it is a good idea to have. Is there a chance that something like this could be arranged with churches in the Dover area?



David Smith Podiatrist MSChP MSc App Biomechanics

Richard Fitzgerald
Folkestone Winter Shelters

Report on Podiatry Service Provided For Guests of Folkestone Winter Shelter

As my part of the voluntary service to the shelter project I offered a free podiatry clinic service for the guests attending the Folkestone Winter Shelter at Harbour Community Church between the beginning of Dec 2009 and end of February 2010. The clinic took place on Tuesdays of each week at 7.30am – 10am (ish). At first I intended to do a monthly clinic but it quickly became apparent that a weekly service was required since there was a need for guests to gain trust and also a turnover of potential clients that meant that an individual may only be there for one or two weeks.

The uptake of the service was perhaps less than initially expected, however the clinical and social importance of the service and the two way interaction between guests and me as service provider far outweighed the impact in terms of plain numbers treated, in total 10 guests had 20 treatments over the 12 week period. There were 2 main problems; firstly ingrown nails with infection, second but by far the most prolific was tissue trauma aetiological of wet feet. The problem of immersion foot or trench foot leading to deep eroded bullous ulcers, epidermal exfoliation (deep blisters and peeling skin) and pitted keratolysis (erosion due to the acidic nature of waste products from bacterial colonisation) was one that was not easy to resolve. One guest also had deep callus that had broken down into dermal ulceration in the heels, this was successfully treated. One guest just liked having his feet pampered i.e. cleaned and massaged with herbal cream.

The wet feet were either caused by ingress of water or from excessive sweating or both. The fact that guests often walked around all day with only one pair of socks and worn out, split shoes in very inclement and freezing weather did not make the goal very easy to attain. The main objective in these cases was to keep the feet dry and warm. Many guests were provided with two or three pairs of EVA insoles and several pairs of new socks plus a supply of Friars Balsam and Potassium permanganate, one with a particularly bad case of trench foot had new shoes provided. Patient education and compliance in using the devices and medicaments correctly, especially difficult in one case, meant that all the cases of immersion foot were successfully treated.

It may be worth noting that a tea foot bath recommended by a fellow podiatrist had an excellent drying effect on the skin. The use of the medicaments to provide a barrier and an anti bacterial effect worked very well when combined with the opportunity to have dry sock and insoles to change throughout the day. I will consider the idea of putting together a foot protection kit for homeless people that attend as guests of Folkestone Winter Shelters, if it goes ahead next winter.

This is a project I would like to be involved with again and I feel we all were privileged to be humbled by our interaction with a group of people who we might never have otherwise become involved with. 'There but for the grace of God go I' was always at the forefront of my thoughts.

Regards Dave Smith

FootHouse Podiatry Fitness Works 18 Radnor Park Ave Folkestone Kent CT19 5HX
01303 249300 david@foothouse.co.uk HPC reg. 21258

Grateful thanks are owed to:

South Kent Community Church, Harbour Community Church, St Saviour's group of churches, Salvation Army Folkestone Corps, Sandgate Road Methodist Church, St John's, URC Radnor Park Centre - all for use of their buildings and facilities, Millfield, Foodstop, The Rainbow Centre, KCA (and their useful substance misuse practitioner forum), Porchlight for info and good links (Hooray for Maggie!), Shepway Citizen's Advice Bureau (Clive, Kelly, Jacqui and Penny). Shepway Community Mental Health Team, Folkestone NHS walk in centre, Arthur Atkins, Shepway Principal Environmental Health Officer, Candice Watson, Folkestone Fire Safety Inspector, Route 25, Folkestone and National MIND (who changed their policies following our interventions and now offer support to homeless people - Hooray!), Shepway District Council, SDC Housing Options team, Folkestone Rotary Club, East Coast NHS Trust Mental Health funding (Sara Moreland), Folkestone Town Council, Salvation Army central funds, Julie Johnson, (Salvation Army centre manager who put up with a lot of hassle, including frequent invasion of her office), all involved on the Shepway Homelessness Forum, (and Kate Marsh for taking the minutes), Churches Together Folkestone, Emily Shepherd (Canterbury Diocese Press Office), Linda, Beryl and SA kitchen team, Hayley (Star!), Dave Smith for chiropody clinic for guests at one of the venues, Jo Baker and John Knight (PCSOs), DC Peter Parkington, Neil Goddard RMN, Alf, Helena and Arthur from Folkestone Cleaning Services, David Donald for insurance advice and support generally, Carmichael's bakery on Black Bull Road, "Win Dragon", The Nailbox, Alex McNeice, Richard Murrells, Dr Graham Bowpitt, Homeless Link, Housing Justice, 4CWS, Danny Strickland from West London Churches Winter Shelter, all of the volunteers young and old who played greater and lesser parts but ALL incredibly valued and selflessly given, numerous other individuals who made donations, gave encouragement and advice, and the 47 people who responded so meaningfully to what we were seeking to do and enriched the lives of those who met them.



The "Dream Team" Jon Limebury (Chuckle Brother 2) Hayley (Star) Mulcahy, Richard Fitzgerald (Baldric)

Once again a huge "thank you" to everyone, from Richard Fitzgerald, (FCWS Lead Project Manager 2009/2010) on behalf of the FCWS Steering Group:

Councillor Lynne Beaumont, Capt Matt Clifton, Richard Fitzgerald, Bev Jackson, Jon Limebury, Hayley Mulcahy, Colin Taylor,

Thank you!!!

Post Script.

Zoe Orr 30/4/1986 - 4/4/10 (23 Years old)



It is with great sadness that I announce the death of one of our former guests, Zoe Orr. She tragically died during a severe asthma attack. Zoe had stayed with us for over 2 months and finally obtained a place in a project in Canterbury. Zoe had many issues, which we saw, particularly with drug use. Despite this, however, we did see much beauty in her. In particular, her sheer delight at building a snowman outside St Saviour's church one night, her joy at being pampered and having her hair done and a makeover, her realisation that we saw her as precious and beautiful beneath her drug issues and her realisation that she could choose otherwise. She, the person beneath was beautiful - Princess Zoe was the name Vikki (a volunteer) coined for her.

She was met with love by many people in the churches and was deeply affected by this. Many volunteers also formed deep bonds with Zoe and were impacted by meeting her. You all had an impact on her life and she will be greatly missed.

Many of us, guests, volunteers and workers alike will attend her funeral shortly and have been invited by her family, particularly in view of the difference we made to her last few months.

Let us hope that in the coming winters (and rest of the year) that we may make a difference to such people's lives.

For Jeff and Zoe, we do this for you and others like you, so you may find shelter, peace and friendship.