

**Dartford Churches Winter Shelter
Report
Winter 2015/16**



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1. Background and purpose of this report

- 1.1 **Dartford Winter Shelter** is a project aimed at helping homeless adults from Dartford to stay warm and safe during the cold winter nights, and to assist them with finding somewhere more permanent to live. The Shelter completed its third year of operation on 31/03/16.
- 1.2 As in the previous 2 years, the shelter had ten available spaces, which were offered on a first come first serve basis to homeless male and female adults over the age of 18. The shelter does accept couples, but they have to have separate sleeping areas..
- 1.3 The shelter provided each guest with a hot meal, light entertainment, companionship, and a warm and comfortable place to sleep. Guests were also provided with breakfast in the morning. In addition, the Shelter aimed to act as a bridge leading to more permanent accommodation for guests, by providing them with some stability before they moved into longer term accommodation. The shelter also served as a hub which guests used to access key statutory services, such as health care and welfare benefits.
- 1.4 This year, the Shelter was provided at seven churches over seven nights from 7pm to 8am.
- 1.5 The majority of Volunteers were drawn from the various churches in Dartford and the surrounding area. Some were drawn from Local people and a few others were from West London, East London and Redhill.
- 1.6 The activities of the church venue coordinators were overseen by the paid project coordinator, who reported to the employing church senior pastor representing the Dartford Cold Weather Shelter Steering Committee.

2. Shelter statistics and demographics for 2015/16

OCCUPANCY	Bed spaces	% Full	Average
Week 1	52	74%	7
Week 2	51	73%	7
Week 3	37	53%	5
Week 4	41	59%	6
Week 5	53	76%	8
Week 6	45	64%	6
Week 7	55	79%	8
Week 8	47	67%	7
Week 9	41	59%	6
Week 10	49	70%	7
Week 11	52	74%	7
Week 12	54	77%	8
Week 13	30	75%	8

2.1

TOTAL USERS	28	MALE	24
		FEMALE	4
3 Nights & under	10		
4 - 10 Nights	6		
11- 30 Nights	5		
Over 30 Nights	7		
Banned	4		
Housed	9		
Prison	1		
Maximum of 10 Guests only reached twice:			
6 January	Spital Street Methodist		
23 February	Christ Church		

2.2

Guests	Total Nights Stayed	Moved To: (where known)
1	88	Hostel in Gravesend
2	3	Not known
3	85	Not known
4	80	Not known
5	22	Temp Accommodation in Bexleyheath
6	22	Temp Accommodation in Bexleyheath
7	32	Prison
8	1	Sofa surfing
9	6	Not known
10	1	Not known
11	1	Not known
12	4	Not known
13	2	BANNED
14	60	Not known
15	26	Hostel in Thamesmead
16	45	BANNED
17	2	Employment/Sleeping in Van
18	9	Accommodation in Gravesend
19	10	BANNED
20	10	Hostel in Thamesmead
21	46	Sofa surfing
22	2	BANNED

23	1	Not known
24	22	Sofa surfing
25	3	Not Known
26	15	Accommodation in Gravesend
27	7	Hostel in Maidstone
28	2	Not known
TOTAL PLACES USED	607	AVAILABLE: 880 OCCUPANCY: 69%
AVERAGE NIGHTLY	7	

2.3 Gender

Of the 28 guests that were registered, only four were female.

The Males who were offered places at the shelter were separated from the females by a screen.

2.4 Age

Table 1- Age profile of registered guests

Age	Number of Guests
18 - 29	6
30 - 39	6
40 - 49	9
50 - 59	6
60 - 69	1
70+	0

2.5 Ethnicity

Table 2- Ethnic profile of registered guests

Ethnicity	Number of Guests
White British	16
White EU	9
Black British	0
Black British African	2
Black Other	0
Asian British	1
Other	0

2.6 Tables 3 & 4 show where people registered for shelter slept before registration

Table 3- Where people slept before registration.

Where People slept before registration	Number of Guests
Long-term rough sleepers	6
Individuals who had recently started sleeping rough	3
People who had just become homeless, but had not yet slept rough	5
People long-term sofa surfing	7
Ex-offenders recently released from prison	1

Table 4- Reason for Homelessness

Reasons for Homelessness	Number of Guests
Alcohol abuse dependence/abuse	12
Drug dependence/abuse	3
Relationship breakdown	7
Debt	4
Recent Migrant	6
Out of Choice	1
Evicted	6

2.7 The shelter was staffed primarily by volunteers. The majority of volunteers were recruited from Dartford Churches.

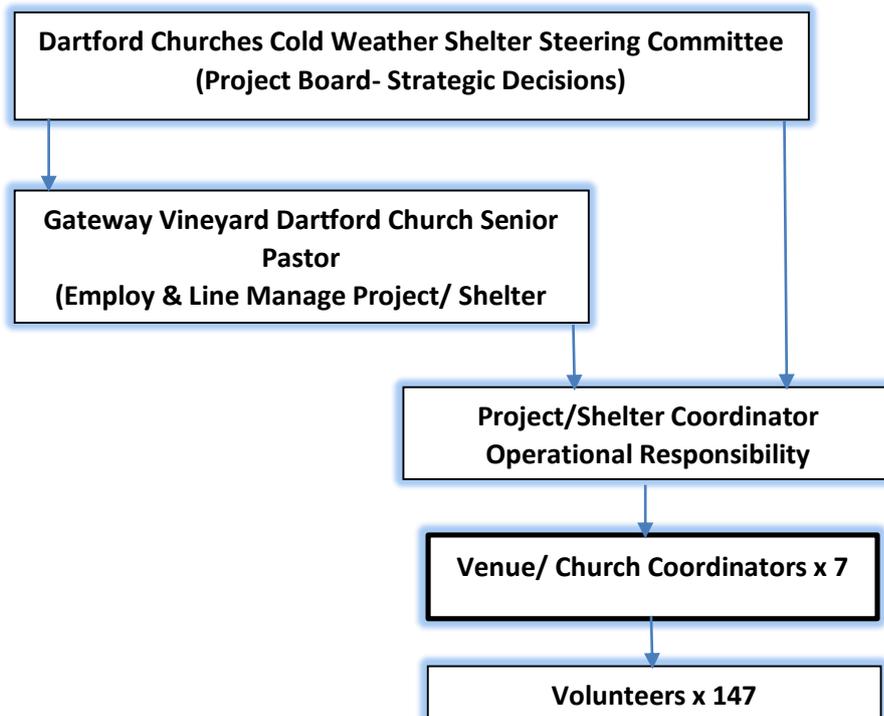
2.8 A total of 147 people volunteered across the seven venues including the seven Venue Church coordinators. The age-range of volunteers was between 18 and 73 years old.

Training:

Induction training for volunteers was delivered at Dartford Community Church, Net church, Spital Street Methodist, Gateway Vineyard and Grace Outreach Church. Volunteers received further health and safety venue specific inductions on their first shift

Chart 1 below shows the organisational structure of the shelter.

Organisational Chart Cold Weather Shelter



2.9 Listed below are the volunteer roles.

- Food shopping
- Preparing meals
- Serving meals
- Washing up after meals
- Setting up at church venues
- Clearing up church venues after shelter
- Receiving guests
- Interacting with guests
- Coordinating shifts
- Offering basic first aid when required
- Providing advice, support and sign-posting on issues around welfare benefits, health and housing
- Provide pastoral care to guests as and when needed with support from the Venue Coordinators
- Staying awake at night to supervise and serve guests

2.10 Although majority of the volunteers worked at single venues, some were able to work across venues. Volunteer activity was coordinated and supervised by the 7 Venue Coordinators at their individual church site.

The Venue Coordinators were responsible for

- Ensuring all shifts and roles were adequately covered
- Allocating duties to volunteers
- Purchasing food and other provisions for the Shelter
- Volunteer induction at venues
- Health and safety of all individuals at the venue when shelter was in operation
- Ensuring venues were cleared up following shelter in time for other activities in the church venue
- Supporting volunteers in their roles and providing feedback on their performance
- Recording shift activity and incidents in the Shelter Log Book
- Supporting Shelter Coordinator with registration of guests
- Providing pastoral care and support to guests and to volunteers
- Day to day decision-making for the individual venues
- Support Shelter Coordinator as part of the senior management team for the shelter
- Liaising and updating their Church leadership on Shelter activities
- Supporting Venue Coordinators from each of the 7 venues offering accommodation
- Supporting guests and coordinating volunteers' support of guest in the provision of advice, support and sign-posting on issues around welfare benefits, health and housing

2.11 The Shelter Coordinator role was a part time paid post. The Shelter Coordinator was employed by Gateway Vineyard Dartford Church on behalf of Dartford Churches Cold Weather Shelter Steering Committee. The Shelter Coordinator had overall operational responsibility for the Shelter. The Shelter Coordinator was responsible for

- Recruitment of volunteers
- On-site Training of volunteers.
- Liaison with partners & referring agencies, local authority and police neighbourhood support services
- Supporting Venue Coordinators day to day shelter activities
- Assessment & registration of guests
- Supporting Venue coordinators in managing guest conduct
- Managing access to the Shelter
- On-call to offer advice and direction to Shift & Venue Coordinators
- Attend Dartford Cold Weather Shelter Steering Committee meetings and provide feedback to steering committee members
- Ensuring effective communication between venues
- Conflict resolution
- Ensuring guest conduct is maintained
- Providing emergency cover where necessary

3 The Shelter Venues

3.3 Apart from .St Edmonds and Grace Outreach Church who operated between 8 pm and 7am, due to operational reasons, all the other venues where open to Guests between 7pm and 8pm.

3.4 **Mondays:** Grace Outreach- This is their 2nd year of providing a venue for the Shelter. They provided accommodation and hospitality in their back hall which was split in two by screens. One part was used as the sleeping area for Guests while the other was used as a TV lounge and eating area. The TV lounge was cleared up after lights out (11pm), and the TV was transferred to a sitting area, just outside the hall, where the night volunteers could relax while on duty. The Volunteers used a hall opposite this as their sleeping area.

Grace Outreach Church kitchen and serving area are of a very good standard, and conveniently located for access from the designated dining area. Only light snacks were provided in the evenings, as the guests had their meal provided by Salvation Army, which runs an evening drop in service, every Monday, which provides meals for homeless people and those on low incomes.

Incidents: None

3.5 Tuesdays: Christchurch- this was 2nd year of providing a venue for the Shelter. They provided accommodation and hospitality in two small rooms. One room was used as the sleeping area, while the other was used as a TV lounge and eating area. The Volunteers on the night shift took turns sleeping in a small office. . As the room where the guests slept wasn't very large, and could only accommodate 8, the sleeping area had to be extended into the TV lounge area and separated by screens to accommodate one or two extra guests.

The Kitchen at Christchurch is small but well equipped, and of a good standard. It is conveniently located for access to the designated dining area.

Incidents: A Guest with Mental health issues displayed threatening and abusive behaviour towards a Volunteer on the night shift. She was spoken to by the Project Coordinator the next morning, following which the Project coordinator sadly had to take a decision to permanently ban the guest, over concerns about the safety of the other Guests and Volunteers.

3.6 Wednesdays: Spital Street Methodist - were also in their second year of providing their venue for Shelter purposes. They provided accommodation and hospitality across two floors. The upstairs room was used as an eating area, as this is close to the kitchen, which is well equipped and of a very good standard. The downstairs area was split into a sleeping area, and also used as a TV lounge and an area where Guests and Volunteers could play games. There is also a small kitchen downstairs, which the volunteers on the night shift have access to, for tea and coffee making.

Incidents: One of the guests had to be taken to hospital. The Project Coordinator and a Venue Coordinator went to A&E to support him.

Thursdays: St Edmonds Church were also being used as a venue for the second time. This venue opened the doors to volunteers at 8pm, and Guests had to leave by 7pm the following morning, because the building is shared with other partners who also use the building as a GP Surgery and a Sure Start Drop in. Shelter was provided in the main church hall, this has underfloor heating, which the guests loved. Meals were provided in the church reception area, which has a fully equipped kitchen conveniently located for access to the designated dining area. There is also a TV in this area. Volunteers on the night shift were given access the computers in the reception area. A side room was used as a sleeping area for Volunteers on the night shift.

Incidents: One of the guests took an overdose of his medication, and had to be taken to hospital by Ambulance.

3.7 Fridays: The Vineyard Church is in its third year of being used.

3.8 It used two halls on two different floors to provide shelter and meals to the guests. The downstairs church hall was used as an eating area/TV lounge, while the upstairs hall was used as a sleeping area. A room attached to

the hall upstairs was used by guests on their breaks during the night shift. As in the two previous years, using two rooms, on different floors presented a challenge to volunteers. Although lights out was at 11pm, some of the guests chose to retire early. This meant that the team of volunteers on the evening shift was split during the busiest period of the shift, when some volunteers were washing up after dinner, some socialising with guests and also the need to supervise guests who had gone upstairs to bed. Guests left their property by their bedsides and it was necessary to supervise in order to protect property from theft. Guests with bulky property had to leave their property downstairs overnight, thus presenting a security risk.

The challenge at Vineyard Centre continued to be the kitchen facilities which were not adequate to prepare the evening meals. On most occasions, hot meals were prepared there, with the use of slow cookers; however, this was not always possible depending on the number of volunteers and guests. On some occasions, when this was not possible, guests were given takeaway meals such as fish and chips or kebab. However, the guests said that they enjoyed the takeaways.

Incidents: A guest turned up drunk and refused to leave. This led to the police being called. The guest was given a one night ban. Another guest who also appeared to be drunk, threatened a volunteer who had challenged him, because he was smoking upstairs. He was given a total ban.

3.9 Saturdays

The Brent Methodist Church is also in its third year of being used, It provided shelter and hospitality in two halls and a TV lounge on the same floor. One hall room was a dining area; the second hall room had the beds laid out for the sleep area. Guests and volunteers had access to the TV lounge which was adjacent to the kitchen. The TV lounge was also used by volunteers after lights out.

Brent Methodist Church kitchen and serving area are of a very good standard, and conveniently located for access from the designated dining area. Brent Methodist Church venue experienced difficulty covering the night shift at the start of the Shelter. However this improved with recruitment of more volunteers for the night shift towards the end of the project.

Incidents There were no incidents reported at this venue.

Sundays:

Net Church replaced Salvation Army as a venue this year, due to essential works being carried out the Salvation Army Venue. Like the Vineyard and Spital Street Methodist, it used two halls on two different floors. As with the experience of the other venues, guests staggered their sleep which meant that volunteers also had the challenge of managing upstairs and downstairs to ensure security.

The kitchen at Net Church is of a good standard and the serving area was accessible to guests.

As in Previous years, it proved to be a very difficult shift to recruit volunteers for. This was to do with people having to go to work on Monday morning.

Incidents: None.

4 Incidents

4.3 In the 3 months the Shelter was operational there were very few incidents of concern. Listed below are the incidents that occurred in the 3 months

- Three permanent bans were issued in the 3 months were given to guests. Two were due to a breach in Shelter rules, while the other was because a guest was found to not be from the Dartford area. He was referred to the Gravesend area, but kept on coming back and trying to access the shelter.

5 Guest Feedback

5.3 Feedback from the guests was very positive. Feedback was provided verbally and also through a satisfaction survey questionnaire.

- All guests felt that being at the shelter had been a positive experience.
- They said they were treated as equals, shown love and given dignity, respect and hope.
- They said that the environment at the shelter had been relaxing and fun packed. They had enjoyed the banter and playing scrabble and chess.
- Two guests said they would have committed suicide if they hadn't been offered places at the shelter.
- Five guests said they liked the fact that most venues had Televisions, as this helped them to keep p to date with the news, and they were also able to watch some very nice films.
- One guest said his faith in humanity had been restored.
- Guests said that they enjoyed all of the meals they were served.
- Guests said on the whole they found their beds comfortable in the shelter.
- Guests said that they were pleased that they could access the Shelter for 7 days a week.
- One guest said 'I can't even begin to express what you guys have done in my life. There are no words!'
- Eight guests said they had made friends with others guests and hoped to maintain these new relationships
- A Guest left the following message on the shelter Facebook page:

Would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers at the shelter for all the support and especially the lovely food that was so carefully chosen and the effort that went into preparing it. Also for the greatly needed clothes and hats and gloves that were so much needed at cold times. I couldn't have asked for more, and greatly appreciate all the people who gave up their own time to make sure that we weren't left out on our own in the cold, and spent time talking and watching films with us. XXX

May God be Always with You!!!

6 Volunteer Feedback

6.3 Volunteer feedback was verbal.

6.4 Like last year, the overwhelming feedback from volunteers was the frustration that the project was not running all year round. They were however heartened by the fact that 9 of the guests had been rehoused. They worried that those who weren't rehoused might need continued support, and that all the efforts put into working and supporting the Guests would be undone.

6.5 Majority of the Volunteers said they would happily volunteer again next year.

6.6 New volunteers said their view of homeless people had changed for the better, and that they would now feel confident enough to speak to homeless people on the street.

6.7 New volunteers said their views about Dartford had changed. They felt it was a vibrant town with a lot of goodwill.

6.8 Some non Christian volunteers said they were very impressed with Dartford Churches and hadn't realised how much the Christian community in Dartford contributes to the town. Some have joined local congregations.

6.9 For old Volunteers, it was an opportunity to catch up with people they had met in previous years, and for the new ones, they loved the fact that they had met people from the various different congregations in Dartford, and planned to maintain the friendships that had been formed over the last 3 months.

7 Conclusion & Recommendations

7.3 The Shelter again achieved its aim of providing shelter for each day of the week to help the homeless people of Dartford stay warm and safe during the cold winter nights. Out of the 28 who were registered, 9 were rehoused,

There were no serious incidents for the duration of the Shelter.

Relationships between volunteers and guests developed as the shelter went on. Volunteers came out of their shells and got to know one another, as well as each guest by name.

Volunteers got to know the guests and found out some interesting things about them.

Amongst the Volunteers this year, there were Nurses, Doctors, Midwives, Pastors, Pensioners, Foster Carers, Physiotherapists, Students, Social workers, Managers, and Teachers.

The Shelter allowed relationships amongst volunteers to develop.

Residents from the town and surrounding areas, who go to different churches, had the opportunity to serve the community together and form new friendships.

The Salvation Army has continued to provide a meal once a week for people in the margins of the community and those that are experiencing homelessness. This is a safe space where people can seek support from volunteers over matters in which they may need support and advice.

Vineyard Centre continues to host the Saturday breakfast through the shelter. The breakfast has continued to be a place where homeless people and people on the fringes of the community continue to come for friendship and support.

The Shelter was provided within the financial resources available, within budget.

7.4 This report makes the following recommendations for the future.

- Throughout the year, there should be ongoing publicity of the shelter at different churches, via newsletters and church websites, so as to further improve the recruitment of volunteers, especially the night shift.
- It is important that we work towards a permanent shelter/hostel so that key work can be done with guests around drug/alcohol abuse, domestic violence.