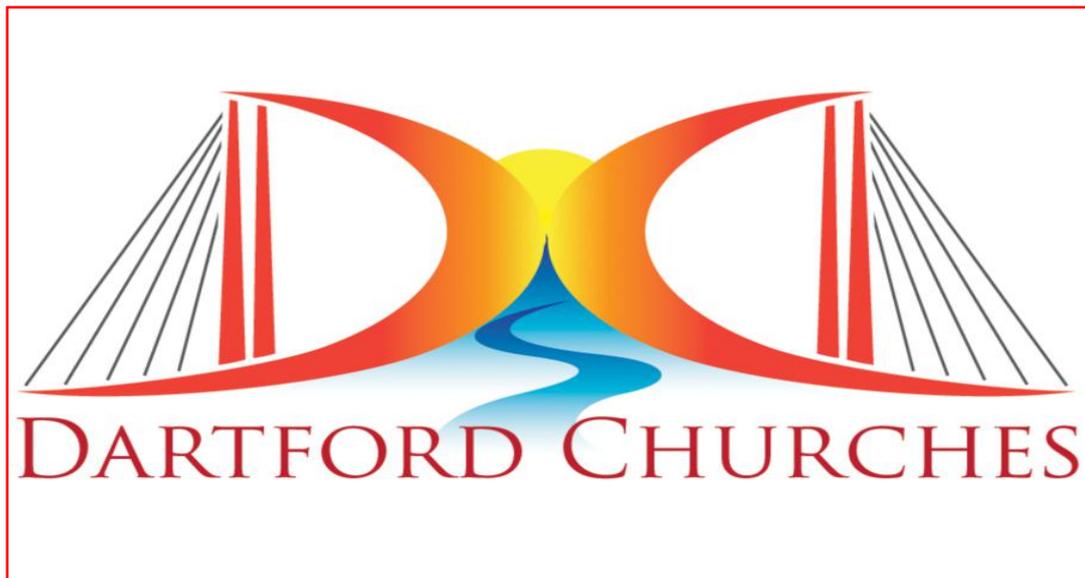


# **Annual Report Year 2016/2017**



## **WINTER SHELTER**

***“Making a difference in the lives of  
rough sleepers in Dartford”***

**Dartford Churches Winter Shelter  
PO Box 438, Dartford, Kent, DA1 9NJ  
e-mail: [office.dartfordwintershelter@gmail.com](mailto:office.dartfordwintershelter@gmail.com)**

## **Headlines:**

- Shelter's busiest year since opening in 2013/2014
- Referrals accommodated 41 – a 46% increase on last year
- Seven churches provided 10 beds per night from 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 to 31 March 2017 (increased to 12 spaces from 1 February 2017)
- Operating for 88 nights gave a potential 998 bed nights
- 879 were filled (88%) - an average of 10 Guests per night
- Over 1,700 meals served (+ those for volunteers)

## **Introduction:**

Dartford Churches 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 fourth year of operation on 31 March 2017.

As in the previous 3 years, the shelter initially had ten available spaces, but in response to demand we increased bed space to 12 per night from February 2017, although we were still unable to meet all requests for a bed on a number of occasions. Places 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 individuals have to use the separate sleeping areas for male and female.

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. Additionally 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 through the active support of Porchlight, to which guests were referred following arrival at the shelter. The shelter also served as a hub which guests used to access key statutory services, such as health care and welfare benefits.

This year, the Shelter was provided at eight church venues over seven nights from 7pm to 8am.

|           |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|
| Sunday    | - | Net Church   |
| Monday    | - | The Salvation Army (for evening meal)<br>Grace Outreach Church (overnight/breakfast) |
| Tuesday   | - | Christ Church  |
| Wednesday | - | Spital Street Methodist Church   |
| Thursday  | - | St Edmunds Church Living Well  |
| Friday    | - | Gateway Vineyard Church  |
| Saturday  | - | The Brent Methodist Church   |

Volunteers were drawn from the various churches in Dartford and the surrounding area and many individuals from the local community. Some 195 volunteers were involved this year, with 70 being newly recruited.

The project was managed by the (voluntary) Project Administrator with activities at each venue supervised by the church venue co-ordinators. The Administrator reported to the Shelter Steering Committee.

### **Shelter Statistics for 2016/2017**

#### **Occupancy:**

Occupancy of the Shelter was up from a 69% take-up in 2015/2016 to 88% this year. This figure increased to 93% when taking into account those that had booked a place but failed to turn up.

On 13 occasions it was necessary to exceed our bed space numbers due to exceptionally high demand.

| <b>OCCUPANCY</b> | <b>Bed spaces</b> | <b>% Full</b> | <b>Average</b> | <i>2016 Comparison</i> |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Week 1*          | 35                | 70%           | 7              | 7                      |
| Week 2           | 57                | 81%           | 8              | 7                      |
| Week 3           | 58                | 83%           | 8              | 5                      |
| Week 4           | 75                | 100%          | 11             | 6                      |
| Week 5           | 76                | 97%           | 11             | 8                      |
| Week 6           | 63                | 75%           | 9              | 6                      |
| Week 7           | 61                | 73%           | 9              | 8                      |
| Week 8           | 68                | 81%           | 10             | 7                      |
| Week 9           | 80                | 95%           | 12             | 6                      |
| Week 10          | 84                | 100%          | 12             | 7                      |
| Week 11          | 82                | 100%          | 12             | 7                      |
| Week 12          | 77                | 92%           | 11             | 8                      |
| Week 13*         | 64                | 89%           | 11             | 8                      |

\*Part week only

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Total Referrals to the Shelter | 70 |
| Progressed to Interview stage  | 51 |
| Referrals Accommodated         | 41 |

It was often not possible to take a referral due to the shelter having no space available at the time. Whilst placed on a waiting list potential guests found other accommodation – very often at Sanctuary (Night Shelter) in Gravesend. Whilst interviewed some referrals just did not turn up for their bed space.

| <b>OCCUPANCY</b>             | 2017 | 2016 |
|------------------------------|------|------|
| TOTAL USERS                  | 41   | 28   |
| MALE                         | 34   | 24   |
| FEMALE                       | 7    | 4    |
| Total bed space availability | 998  | 880  |
| Total bed spaces used        | 879  | 607  |
| Total no shows               | 48   | -    |
| Occupancy Rate               | 88%  | 69%  |

### ***Gender***

Of the 41 guests that were accommodated, just 7 were female. The males who were offered places at the shelter were separated from the females by either being in a separate room or in a screened off area.

### ***Age profile of registered guests***

| Age     | Number of Guests |      |
|---------|------------------|------|
|         | 2017             | 2016 |
| 18 - 29 | 9                | 6    |
| 30 - 39 | 9                | 6    |
| 40 - 49 | 13               | 9    |
| 50 - 59 | 8                | 6    |
| 60 - 69 | 2                | 1    |
| 70+     | 0                | 0    |

### ***Ethnic profile of registered guests***

|               | Number of Guests |      |
|---------------|------------------|------|
|               | 2017             | 2016 |
| White British | 28               | 16   |
| White EU      | 9                | 9    |
| Black British | 2                | 2    |
| Asian British | 1                | 1    |
| Other         | 1                | 0    |

### **Reasons for Homelessness**

|                                | Number of Guests |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Alcohol abuse dependence/abuse | 12               |
| Drug dependence/abuse          | 11               |
| Relationship/Family breakdown  | 15               |
| Debt                           | 4                |
| Recent Migrant                 | 7                |
| Out of Choice                  | 2                |
| Evicted                        | 10               |
| Release from Prison            | 1                |
| Domestic Violence              | 1                |

For a number of guests there are multiple reasons for their homelessness

### **Length of stay**

|                | Number of Guests |                            |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
|                | 2017             | 2016                       |
| 1 night only   | 6                |                            |
| 2-4 nights     | 10               | <i>Under 3 nights - 10</i> |
| 5-10 nights    | 4                | <i>4-10 nights - 6</i>     |
| 11-20 nights   | 6                |                            |
| 21-30 nights   | 3                | <i>11-30 nights - 5</i>    |
| 31-40 nights   | 4                |                            |
| 41-70 nights   | 4                | <i>Over 30 nights - 7</i>  |
| Over 70 nights | 4                |                            |

### **Moving on statistics**

|   | Number of Guests |
|---|------------------|
| To own arranged accommodation   | 9                |
| To hostel accommodation (via Porchlight)                                    | 8                |
| Returned home/family reconciliation   | 6                |
| Still working with Porchlight/Dartford Borough Council (at time of closure) | 4                |
| Return to sofa surfing  | 6                |
| Unknown   | 8                |

### **Volunteers:**

For the first time, the shelter was both managed and staffed entirely by volunteers.

A total of 195 people volunteered across the seven venues including the Church Venue Co-ordinators. The age-range of volunteers was between 18

and 80+ years old. Some volunteers worked at more than one venue. Volunteers offered their help from between once or twice during the three month period to those who volunteered every week. Volunteers included those involved in Nursing, Doctors, Pastors, Pensioners, Foster Carers, Students, Social Workers, Managers, Teachers and Local Government Workers.

Volunteer numbers were as follows:

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Net Church              | 25 |
| Grace Outreach Church   | 37 |
| Christ Church           | 25 |
| Spital Street Methodist | 29 |
| St Edmunds Living Well  | 23 |
| Gateway Vineyard Church | 31 |
| Brent Methodist         | 39 |

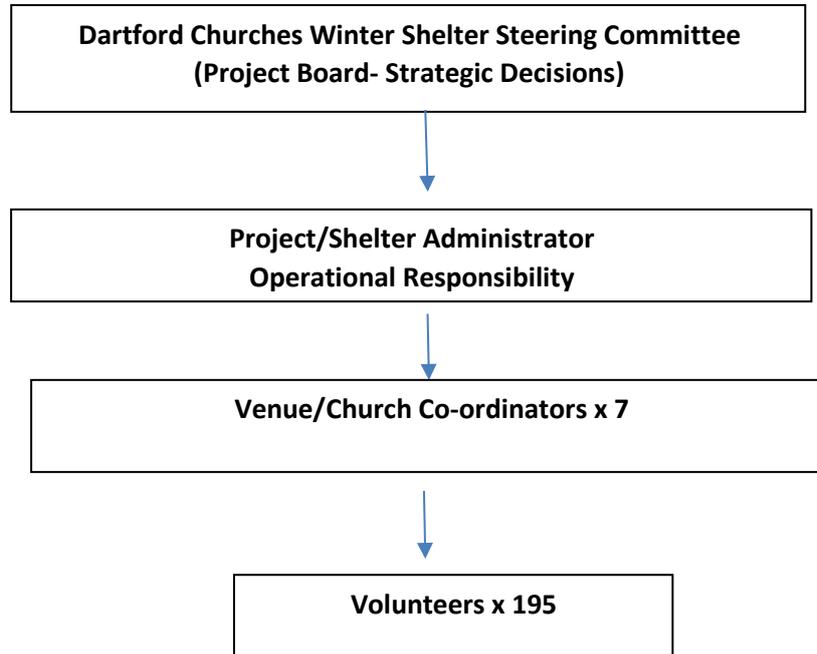
Although the majority of the volunteers worked at single venues, some 14 were able to work across venues. Volunteer activity was co-ordinated and supervised by the Venue Co-ordinators at their individual church site. Volunteers found themselves involved in the following roles:

- 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
- Offering basic first aid when required
- Providing advice, support and sign-posting
- Providing pastoral care to guests as and when needed with support from the Venue Co-ordinators
- Staying awake at night to supervise and serve guests

### **Training:**

Induction training for volunteers was delivered in the weeks prior to opening at each of the venues and all volunteers were provided with a Volunteer Handbook. Volunteers received health and safety venue specific inductions on their first shift. New volunteers recruited after opening received on-site training at their venue.

## Winter Shelter Organisational Chart



**The Venue Co-ordinators** 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 at 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 the Project Administrator with registration of guests
- Providing pastoral care and support to guests and to volunteers
- Day to day decision-making for the individual venues
- Support Project Administrator as part of the senior management team for the shelter
- Liaising and updating their Church leadership on Shelter activities
- Supporting Venue Co-ordinators from each of the other 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

**The Project Administrator** had overall operational responsibility for the Shelter, being responsible for

- Recruitment of volunteers and processing applications
- On-site training of volunteers.
- Liaison with partners & referring agencies, local authority and police neighbourhood support services
- Supporting Venue Co-ordinators day to day shelter activities
- Assessment & registration of guests
- Supporting Venue Co-ordinators in managing guest conduct
- Managing access to the Shelter
- On-call to offer advice and direction to Shift & Venue Co-ordinators
- Attend Dartford Winter Shelter Steering Committee meetings and provide feedback to steering committee members
- Ensuring effective communication between venues
- Conflict resolution
- Ensuring guest conduct is maintained
- Providing advice, support and sign-posting on issues around welfare benefits and housing
- Providing pastoral support to guests and volunteers

#### **Typical Programme:**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 6.00 pm/6.30 pm | Volunteers arrive to prepare venue & cook the meal |
| 7.00 pm         | Doors open – guest registration                    |
| 8.00 pm         | Meal served  |
| 11.00 pm        | Bed time – Lights out                              |
| 7.00 am         | Wake-up time                                       |
| 7.30 am         | Breakfast  |
| 8.00 am         | Guests leave - clear-up begins                     |

#### **Finances:**

Expenditure for the year is as follows:

|                                   |                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Administration/Printing/Publicity | £ 1,636.75        |
| Bedding                           | £ 658.35          |
| Catering                          | £ 3,291.71        |
| Facilities                        | £ 1,589.01        |
| Clothing                          | £ 158.32          |
| Travel                            | £ 135.70          |
| Telephone                         | £ 142.72          |
| Polish/English New Testaments     | £ 152.39          |
| Total                             | <u>£ 7,764.95</u> |

Expenditure was met by donations from Dartford Churches and interested supporters. There were no salary costs in 2016/2017, although it is envisaged this will change for the coming year.

### **Shelter Venues:**

Apart from Grace Outreach Church who operated between 8.00pm and 7.00am, due to operational reasons, all the other venues were open to guests between 7.00pm and 8.00am.

**Sunday: *Net Church*** was in its second year as a venue. Like Gateway 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 provision of a table tennis and snooker tables were a great asset at this venue and much appreciated by guests.

**Monday: *The Salvation Army***. The Monday Drop-in continued to provide the evening meal (which they do throughout the year) for shelter guests, before they moved on to Grace Outreach Church for sleeping.

***Grace Outreach Church***. This was their third 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 moved to a sitting area, just outside the hall, where the night volunteers could relax while on duty. The volunteers used an adjacent hall as their sleeping area.

**Tuesday: *Christ Church***. This was their third 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 relaxation lounge and eating area. The volunteers on the night shift took turns sleeping in a small office. As the room where the guests slept isn't very large, and can only accommodate 9/10, the sleeping area had to be extended into the TV lounge area and separated by screens to accommodate one or two extra guests.

**Wednesday: *Spital Street Methodist*** - were also in their third 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 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. A small room at the front of the church was available as a separate sleeping area for female guests. A small kitchen downstairs was available to volunteers on the night shift for tea and coffee making.

**Thursday: *St Edmunds Church*** was also being used as a venue for the third time. Shelter was provided in the main church area which has underfloor heating, which the guests loved, although on occasion it was necessary to switch it off, being too warm! Meals were provided in the church reception/café area, which has a fully equipped kitchen conveniently located for access to the designated dining area. Guests are given access to the

computers in the reception area. A side room was used as a sleeping area for volunteers on the night shift. The provision of shower facilities is of great benefit and much appreciated by guests

**Friday: Gateway Vineyard Church** is in its fourth year of hosting the shelter. 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, while the upstairs hall was used as a sleeping area. As in previous years, using two rooms on different floors presented a challenge to volunteers in ensuring guests were not left alone in any area. Guests were offered the use of a locked room to keep their property in for security. A great group of volunteers coped admirably with the limited cooking facilities at this venue, where takeaways were enjoyed on occasions. With several guests working and the proximity of pubs to the venue there were several occasions on which guests would spend their Friday evening drinking and so end up not being allowed into the venue.

**Saturday: The Brent Methodist Church** is also in its fourth 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. The kitchen and serving area are of a very good standard and conveniently located for access from the designated dining area. Guests and volunteers had access to a comfortable TV lounge which was adjacent to the kitchen. The TV lounge was also available to volunteers after lights out.

### **Referrals**

Referrals to the shelter came through Porchlight, Citizens Advice Bureau, Haven Food Bank, The Salvation Army, Mental Health Team, Dartford Council, Kent Police and Sanctuary Night Shelter Gravesend. Word of the shelter soon got around and a number of guests self-referred. All potential guests were interviewed prior to being offered a place in the shelter.

### **Incidents:**

In the 3 months the Shelter was operational there were very few incidents of major concern, although several drink fuelled occasions and relationship issues amongst guests did lead to stern warnings being issued. Major incidents resulted in:

- Three bans being issued due to a breach in Shelter rules
- Guests being taken/sent to hospital on 3 occasions
- Police being involved on 2 occasions (Grace Outreach & Net Church)

## **Guest and Volunteer Feedback:**

Feedback from both guests and volunteers was sought both verbally and through a satisfaction survey questionnaire and was very positive.

The majority of guests enjoyed good relationships with both volunteers and other guests and felt well supported by the shelter. Their responses included such comments as:

- *Just to say "Thank You" for everything.*
- *In response to what could we do better? - Not a thing!*
- *There's nothing that can be improved.*

An overwhelming number of volunteers felt the project was exceptionally worthwhile and were heartened that the Churches in Dartford are actively trying to do something for the homeless. The majority said they would be glad to volunteer again next year. Comments included:

- *I really enjoyed my experience and felt I was giving something very special back in helping those who are homeless, meeting people and talking and helping the guests to feel welcome.*
- *It's been a privilege to volunteer/help at the shelter.*
- *The Winter Shelter is a much needed resource, run at an amazingly high standard. It's been such a blessing to be part of it and meet great people.*
- *There is a deep sense of responsibility providing support for those in such unfortunate circumstances. It's been a great opportunity to work at the shelter.*
- *There have been times when it has been good and I felt encouraged. At other times it has been challenging but I have gained valuable experience.*
- *Increased my understanding of homelessness and insight into the complexity of this global issue. Great opportunity to give back to the community and contribute in a positive way. An excellent service.*
- *Very rewarding – nice being able to help.*
- *I found it an enjoyable and humbling experience. A worthwhile cause.*
- *It's great to know the churches in Dartford are reaching out and providing this service for homeless people – and I have been very happy to be a part of it.*
- *I have found it a very rewarding experience. The gratitude and friendliness of the guests make it all worthwhile*
- *Whilst it is sad the churches run these venues – in fact there should be no homelessness – it is a great thing they are doing. Whilst there are people out there in need long may it continue!*

Some new volunteers who do not belong to or attend a church said they were very impressed with Dartford Churches and hadn't realised how much the Christian community in Dartford contributes to the town.

For returning volunteers, the shelter provided 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.

### **Other Points:**

The Winter 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, but at the same time we realised we needed to be more than just a B&B. Out of the 41 guests who were registered, 23 had somewhere to go when they left the shelter.

There were no major incidents for the duration of the Shelter apart from a few scuffles, but we need to take action to ensure less drink related issues in the future. Relationships between volunteers and guests developed positively as the shelter went on.

Thanks to newcomers coming on board this year we were considerably better staffed on overnight shifts (a minimum of 3 people are required at each venue) but this continues to be a challenge.

Grace Outreach Church is not able to offer their venue next year, but we are delighted to welcome on board City of David RCCG based in Lowfield Street.

The year saw a complete administration review of policies and procedures, the production of an updated Volunteers Handbook, production of a new Venue Co-ordinators Handbook. A brochure promoting the shelter was produced and sent to local statutory & voluntary agencies as well as to all churches in the Dartford area.

The Winter Shelter is very much a partnership with the 7 churches providing venues, the volunteers to manage and staff them and support agencies like Porchlight.

The shelter joined both the Kent Winter Shelter Network and Housing Justice and benefitted from the sharing ideas and experiences and the support these two groups offer.

The Salvation Army continues to provide a meal once a week for people on 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.

Gateway Vineyard continues to host the Saturday breakfast every week. This breakfast continues to be a place where homeless people and people on the fringes of the community continue to come for friendship and support.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations are made for the future:

- Employment of a case worker(s) to work closely with guests whilst in the shelter and continue to provide support after closure, where needed. To help develop an action plan for each guest, addressing the

issues of drug/alcohol abuse, domestic violence and relationship breakdown and health related issues.

- To seek a centrally located information / registration point in the town centre, available a minimum 3 days per week.
- To continue to recruit new volunteers, especially for night shift cover.
- Increase publicity to churches and in the local press to raise both awareness and funds
- Seek local authority support for employment of case worker.
- Seek donations of toiletries, underwear, socks etc. from local churches and businesses.

**Thanks are expressed to:**

- Dartford Churches offering the use of their premises as venues.
- Porchlight – the Kent charity supporting the homeless - for providing brilliant support to our referrals, with special thanks to Louis Perkins.
- The 195 volunteers (inc. Church Venue Co-ordinators) for making this work possible.
- Christ Church for the continuous use of their photocopier.
- The Clancy Group and Whitecode Design Associates for donation of toiletries, food, hats and scarves.
- All our donors (for money and gifts in kind).
- Artur Wilczynski for translation of Guest Agreement and Guest Conduct & Rules into Polish for our guests.
- Michael Smith for his help in producing the revised Handbooks.
- Members of the steering committee for their continued support & guidance.

***“Dartford Churches Winter Shelter .....***  
***Providing a place where homeless men and women in our***  
***community are met with friendship and a listening ear.”***