

Dartford Churches Winter Shelter Project

2018 Report

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

**Dartford Churches Winter Shelter
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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 fifth year of operation on 31 March 2018.

The shelter offered up to 12 beds each night for the period 2nd January to 31st March 2018 and 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. Places were offered on a first come first serve basis to homeless male and female adults aged 18 or over.

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 and other agencies, 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 evening meal was provided by the Salvation Army and overnight accommodation and breakfast was provided by City of David RCCG
Tuesday	Christ Church
Wednesday	Spital Street Methodist Church
Thursday	St Edmunds Church Living Well
Friday	Initially provided by St Andrews United Reformed Church, but problems after the first 2 weeks caused the shelter to relocate to Christ Church
Saturday	Brent Methodist Church

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.

Although in many ways, the project continued the work of previous years, 2018 was also a year of significant change.

The most significant change was that the Steering Group felt that the shelter had reached a point where it wanted to offer more than a glorified dinner, bed and breakfast service for the guests and to extend the work carried out by the Project Administrator in 2017 – Michael Pethick.

To this end, the Steering Group employed two Project Workers for the period 1st December 2017 to 30th April 2018. For the month before and after the shelter was open, they each worked 16 hours per week and for the duration of the shelter, they each worked 30 hours per week.

Because the project is an ad-hoc group of churches it is unable to act as an employer, so Christ Church Dartford took on this role and managed payroll, tax, national insurance and pension payments on behalf of the project. All costs, however, were provided from the shelter bank account and the employment had no financial impact on Christ Church and did not therefore feature in their financial returns.

The two Project Workers made a huge difference to the work with the guests, helping with setting up bank accounts, attending meetings and other activities. The summary reports of the workers are attached at the end of this report.

In addition, the project also employed a part-time temp during December to help Michael Pethick with preparation of documentation and photocopying.

This year also saw two new venues coming on board – City of David RCCG on Lowfield Street and St Andrews URC on Watling Street. The Steering Group is grateful to the leadership of both these churches for agreeing to become involved in this way and understand the problems and pressures which caused St Andrews to have to withdraw as a venue after only two weeks.

We are grateful that their venue coordinator and volunteer team were willing and able to relocate to Christ Church when that venue agreed to open for an additional night.

The final change for 2018 was that, for the first time, the project received a grant from Dartford Borough Council. Although the grant of £10,000 could not be used to pay salaries, it did mean that donations given by others could be used for this purpose and the money from the Council used for the general running costs.

A full financial summary is included later in this report and this shows that, once again, income for the year has slightly exceeded expenditure. The generosity of our supporters, whether they be churches, organisations or local individuals, continues to overwhelm us and the Steering Group thanks God for this.

On a sadder note, with the end of the project, Michael Pethick stood down as Project Administrator – a voluntary role he has undertaken for the past two years. The Steering Group is grateful for the many, many hours he has put into the project and acknowledges that it wouldn't be doing what it is if it had not been for his hard work.

Looking Forward

Michael Smith, who has been treasurer for the Project for the past two years, has agreed to step forward and become the new Project Administrator, so we are now looking for a new treasurer.

While the shelter was in operation, and listening to what the project workers were saying, the Steering Group felt that we, as a project, are being called to take a further step to support the homeless in Dartford, who we all know don't disappear when the shelter closes its doors.

To this end, and based on the available finances in the bank account, the Steering Group agreed to advertise for and appoint a part-time project worker to work throughout the year, under the supervision of the Project Administrator and the Steering Group, to serve and support the homeless in Dartford.

Volunteers

Volunteers were drawn from the various churches in Dartford and the surrounding area and many individuals from the local community.

A total of over 200 people volunteered across the seven venues including the Church Venue Co-ordinators, with some volunteering at more than one venue and hence the figures below add to more than the total number:

Net Church	26
City of David RCCG	32
Christ Church	36
Spital Street Methodist	31
St Edmunds Living Well	23
Gateway @ Christ Church	33
Brent Methodist	42

The age-range of volunteers was between 18 and 80+ years old. Volunteers offered their help from between once or twice during the three month period to those who volunteered every week.

Volunteer activity was co-ordinated and supervised by the Venue Co-ordinators at their individual church site. Induction training for volunteers was delivered in the weeks prior to opening 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.

Steering Group

The Project is run by a steering group made up of members of interested churches, without whose enthusiasm and commitment, the project would not exist.

As at 1st June 2018, the Steering Group composed of:

Ian Anderson	St Edmunds Temple Hill
John Atkins	NET Church – Steering Group Chairman
Eileen Bingham	Highfield Road Baptist Church
Marcia Bluck	Gateway Vineyard Church
John Davis-Ashdown	Dartford Lions
Ed Dean	The Salvation Army
Sue Dean	The Salvation Army
Alistair Gregory	Dartford Community Church
Emmanuel Komolafe	City of David RCCG
Colin Machan	The Salvation Army
Mary Olowu	COSEC Sanctuary Of Hope
Jane Paine	Spital St Methodist Church
Wendy Pemberton	Highfield Road Baptist Church
Arthur Saldanha	St Edmunds Temple Hill
Liz Segun-Kingsley	City of David RCCG
Michael Smith	Christ Church – Project Administrator & Steering Group Treasurer
Elaine Strafford	NET church
John Wilson	Brent Methodist Church
Lorna Wilson	Brent Methodist Church
Steph Wood	St Andrews URC – Steering Group secretary
Bart Woodhouse	The Beacon Church

We cannot say thank you enough to all those who support this project both financially and with their time and enthusiasm and expertise.

We believe that we are doing the work that God has called us to do and we are making a difference to the homeless in Dartford.

Guest Statistics

Referrals

	2018	2017
Total Referrals to Shelter:	59	70
Progressed to Interview Stage	51	51
Referrals Accommodated	35	41

Occupancy

	Bed Spaces Filled	% Full	Average	2017 Comparison
Week 1 (5 days)	58	97%	12	7
Week 2	81	96%	12	8
Week 3	75	89%	11	8
Week 4	82	98%	12	11
Week 5	75	89%	11	11
Week 6	78	93%	11	9
Week 7	78	93%	11	9
Week 8	74	88%	11	10
Week 9	77	92%	11	12
Week 10	76	90%	11	12
Week 11	74	88%	11	12
Week 12	62	74%	9	11
Week 13	56	67%	8	11

Total Users

	2018	2017	2016
Total Number	35	41	28
Male	31	34	24
Female	4	7	4
Bed Space Availability	1068	998	880
Bed Space Used	946	879	607
Occupancy Rate	89%	88%	69%

Length of Stay

(The shelter ran for a total of 89 nights)

	2018	2017	2016
1 Night only	3	6	
2 -4 Nights	7	10	10
5 – 10 Nights	5	4	6
11 - 20 Nights	3	6	
21 – 30 Nights	6	3	5
31 – 40 Nights	3	4	
41 – 70 Nights	3	4	7
71 – 80 Nights	2	4	
Over 80 Nights	3	0	

Age of Guests

18-20 years of age	2 guests
21-30	11
31-40	7
41-50	7
51-60	7
61 or over	1

Nationality of Guests

British	21
East European	10
Nigerian	2
Portuguese	1
Zimbabwean	1

Moving On Statistics

	2018	2017
To own arranged accommodation	5	9
To Hostel Accommodation via Porchlight	1	8
To Hostel Accommodation via DCWS	7	4
Returned home/family reconciliation	0	6
Return to sofa surfing	7	6
Unknown	8	8

Finance

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expend.</i>
Account Balance as at 01/06/17	£14,778.37	
Account Balance as at 01/06/18	£19,269.31	
Totals for 2018 as at 01/06/18	£28,680.00	£24,714.06
Anticipated Additional costs		£1,832.48
Anticipated Total Cost for 2018	£28,680.00	£26,546.54
Anticipated surplus for 2018	£2,133.46	
Anticipated Account Balance	£16,911.83	
Staff costs		£14,913.06
Accommodation		£655.00
Running Costs		£10,978.48
Total cost for 2018		£26,546.54
<i>breakdown of running costs</i>		
<i>Admin, excluding staff costs</i>		£4,664.55
<i>Sunday - NET Church</i>		£1,032.27
<i>Monday - City of David</i>		£321.75
<i>Tuesday - Christ Church</i>		£1,094.77
<i>Wednesday - Spital St Methodist</i>		£1,108.35
<i>Thursday - St Edmunds Temple Hill</i>		£905.66
<i>Friday - Christ Church</i>		£832.09
<i>Saturday - Brent Methodist</i>		£1,019.04
<i>Breakdown of Income</i>		
<i>Church donations</i>	£13,500.00	
<i>Personal donations</i>	£3,455.00	
<i>Dartford BC grant</i>	£10,000.00	
<i>Other grants</i>	£1,750.00	

DCWS Project Worker Closing Reports

Dave Foot

I believe we would not have been able to make the progress we have made without the knowledge and experience that the Shelter and its volunteers bring from the previous four years, and as such for the successes of us as Project Workers and of the Shelter this year we owe significant credit to the work done in previous years. Lizzie and I are both particularly grateful to the Venue Coordinators, to Michael Smith and John Atkins, and to Michael Pethick.

We registered more than 60 people, though a few of them never stayed a night with us or stayed for one or two nights before moving on.

We had to ban 12 people across the four months of the Shelter, generally for violent or threatening behaviour, for dishonesty or inability to follow rules or for drug/alcohol use within the Shelter.

We secured long-term accommodation for 10 guests who came through the Shelter.

We have also helped secure benefit payments, open bank accounts, register guests with doctors' surgeries or with drug and alcohol services and mental health provision.

We have helped build CVs and assisted with job searches, social housing applications and also done a lot of mentoring/informal counselling work, helping guests to understand their emotional behaviours and develop better thinking processes to deal with a range of situations.

Things We'd Do Differently

- The balance of an evening between Venue Coordinators and Project Workers perhaps needs clarification.
- No registrations 'on the night'. Prospective guests should be invited to come back to register at an agreed location the next day.
- We need to think very carefully about whether to introduce mandatory bag searches.

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Firstly, Dartford needs its own drug and alcohol services. CGL (Change, Grow, Live) works in Gravesend and does have a satellite service which runs out of the Dartford YMCA one day a week. They don't however take new referrals or do assessments there and it's only for people who are already under their care. Dartford has a growing narcotics problem. That's not so much something the Shelter is responsible for but it does need to be aware of it. The majority of the guests appear to have 'used' at some point.
- Although we have made a number of useful contacts, hostels, probation, drug and alcohol services, the police, the housing office, etc. it was sometimes a challenge to get any of these services to talk effectively to each other and we found ourselves liaising between them, which was slow, difficult and very frustrating. In Tonbridge there is a multi-agency working group which meets monthly throughout the year, and weekly whilst the winter shelter is running. Sitting on this 'board' is a representative of the winter shelter, the council housing department, probation, drug

and alcohol services, Citizens Advice Bureau and any charities working with the homeless or those at risk of homelessness in the area.

We feel that Dartford needs such a working group and that this would make each of these agencies' jobs easier when working with this particular group.

- We also need to be involving God more in our plans and actions throughout the Shelter. Although it's vital that we don't compromise on our policy not to take advantage of our guests' vulnerability to preach at them, it is not true that God does not want to be involved in the process or that us being a Christian project is a taboo subject. A third of our volunteers may not be churchgoers but they are also fully aware that the project is run by the churches and has the backing and funding of the Dartford Churches coalition.

I think we should be prioritising praying for each evening as a volunteer group before we open the doors at 7pm, we should be meeting weekly to pray for the individual needs of the guests and for any other issues which have arisen. With Him we will achieve far more than by our own efforts.

- By far the biggest problem facing our homeless population is the lack of things to do or places to go in the daytimes. The ensuing boredom contributes massively to the pull of drugs or other destructive behaviours and the feelings of loneliness, rejection and lack of purpose have very serious effects on the mental health of these people. Whilst we look at more permanent solutions such as a café/community space with activities, can we as churches offer any solutions – even a day a week – that can alleviate the boredom?

Lizzie London

Most of the people that used the service who could be helped had a drug problem or were determined to stay on a bad path without recognising the dangers. The saddest and most difficult thing to deal with was the fact that I could not offer them an alternative recreation to drugs.

Reflecting on this project I can see what we could have done better.

- In addition to the shelter, we should have created a safe space for people to be creative and to expand themselves through interaction, art, acceptance, knowledge and support. Show them that they can be more and that we will support them helping themselves.
Of course, some people do not want to change and for some people there is no pathway into housing. The fact is that there are no houses in Dartford and we cannot make them appear from nowhere.

What we did and continue to do was show compassion and offer a much-needed service at a great time of need.

- I strongly recommend we look at our application process and create a robust procedure that ensures all guests are checked before entry.
- Along with this I feel we need develop a more in-depth training programme for some or all of the volunteers. We all need drug awareness training, how and when to intervene and how to support guests and what to do if a guest becomes violent, behaves inappropriately or is concerning.
- We need to ensure that any project workers have better safeguarding through regular contact with a supervisor that advises on the client work and make the contact less personal.

In short, I suggest that in addition to providing the original shelter, we take a different direction.

- Create and support CGL and other drug services in Dartford to help with the prevention of homelessness.
- Refer to Porchlight and support them appropriately. Only helping with filling in forms etc.
- Create safe homely space for our clients during the day.
- Put a counselling service in place. Unfortunately, I didn't feel we had what we needed in place for that this year.
- Educate ourselves and establish procedures to maintain boundaries rather than winging it. This includes how to avoid conversations that are designed to create guilt and manipulate volunteers. I feel we have had a big problem with people in and out of

the shelter and by letting ourselves be abused we create a situation where people keep coming back and even tell others to try.

- Establish the correct boundaries for admission/ removal and ensure we do not deviate from it.
- Look at the spaces we are using and find a better option if possible.
- Look outside the churches for volunteers and support.
- Continue to grow our connections with other services. I have had the privilege to work with some great people and develop a relationship with people at probation, community police, House of Mercy and other hostels so we can ensure we can look for gaps in services.