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Dartford Churches Winter Shelter Project 2019 Report

***“Making a difference in the lives of
homeless 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 sixth year of operation on 31 March 2019.

The shelter offered up to 12 beds each night for the period 3rd January to 31st March 2019 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 served 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 Dartford Borough Council Housing Team, 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	St Vincents RC Church Hall
Saturday	Brent Methodist Church

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

Following on from the experience of previous years, the Steering Group appointed a Project Worker for the period 1st December 2018 to 30th April 2019, working 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 Project Worker again made a huge difference to the work with the guests, helping with setting up bank accounts, attending meetings and other activities. The Project Worker's summary report is attached at the end of this report.

This year also saw another new venue coming on board – St Vincent's Roman Catholic Church on Temple Hill. The Steering Group is grateful to the leadership of this church for agreeing to become involved in this way and allowing the project to use their church hall.

Once again, the project received a grant from Dartford Borough Council. This year we were given £12,000 which covered most the routine running costs.

As an experiment, the Steering Group bought camp beds to trial at two of the venues, instead of the airbeds which were prone to deflating and much less comfortable. Following the very positive feedback from the guests, we were very grateful when the Dartford Lions offered to fund the purchase of airbeds for the remaining venues. By the end of the project, 5 out of the 7 venues were using camp beds. (The remaining 2 venues continued to use airbeds for practical operational reasons.)

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.

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 150 people volunteered across the seven venues including the Church Venue Managers, with some volunteering at more than one venue.

65 individuals volunteered for the project for the first time this year and roughly half of all the volunteers registered a connection with a church (and a total of 28 churches were named).

The age-range of volunteers was between 18 and 80+ years old. Volunteers offered 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 Managers at their individual church sites. 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 inductions specific to the venue on their first shift. New volunteers recruited after opening received on-site training at their venue.

Looking Forward

Having reviewed the project's financial position, the Steering Group felt able to extend the Project Worker's contract until the end of September, with the hope of continuing it beyond then. Although the shelter itself is closed, the need to support the homeless with moving on still exists.

The Steering Group is working to implement its vision of moving from a Winter Shelter running for three months in seven venues to a Homeless Shelter running all year round, on a single site. We acknowledge that this is a big step but we feel that this what is needed in Dartford.

We are also seeking to have a more visible presence in the town centre, through the use of a shop front in one of the shopping centres.

The Winter Shelter project is now part of the New Avenues charity (reg no: 1160597), established to work for the prevention or relief of homelessness and poverty in Dartford, and is therefore now in a better position to seek out support and grant funding to expand its work.

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 2019, the Steering Group composed of:

Ian Anderson,	Venue Manager - St Edmunds Temple Hill
John Atkins,	Steering Group Chairman, Venue Manager - NET Church
Eileen Bingham -	Highfield Road Baptist Church
John Davis-Ashdown -	Dartford Lions
Ed Dean -	The Salvation Army
Sue Dean -	The Salvation Army
Alistair Gregory -	Dartford Community Church
Steve Ives,	Project Worker, member of Christ church
Emmanuel Komolafe,	Venue Manager - City of David RCCG
Colin Machan -	The Salvation Army
Mary Olowu -	COSEC Sanctuary Of Hope
Jane Paine,	Venue Manager - Spital St Methodist Church*
Anna Pearce,	Project Treasurer
Wendy Pemberton -	Highfield Road Baptist Church
Arthur Saldanha,	Venue Manager - St Edmunds Temple Hill
Peter Sansom,	Venue Manager - Christ Church
Liz Segun-Kingsley -	City of David RCCG
Rachael Sheen,	Venue Manager – St Vincents, member of Christ Church
Michael Smith,	Project Administrator, member of Christ church
John Wilson -	Brent Methodist Church
Lorna Wilson -	Brent Methodist Church
Steph Wood,	Steering Group secretary, member of St Andrews URC
Bart Woodhouse,	Venue Manager – Brent Methodist, Ebbsfleet Com.Ch.

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.

* Jane Paine is moving on from being Deacon at Spital Street Methodist Church at the end of July 2019 and the Steering Group wishes to express their thanks to her for all her hard work on behalf of the project and church and wish her well in her new appointment.

Guest Statistics

Guests

31 registered

Average occupancy = 9 guests

- 12 guests for 3 nights
- 11 guests for 10 nights
- 10 guests for 30 nights
- 9 guests for 16 nights
- 8 guests for 19 nights
- 7 guests for 8 nights
- 6 guests for 2 nights

Average residence = 33 nights (4.7 weeks)

Total project = 88 nights (12.6 weeks)

- 5 guests used shelter for duration
- 1 guest for 11 weeks
- 9 guests for between 3 & 7 weeks
- 4 guests for between 1 & 2 weeks
- 8 guests used for less than 1 week
- 4 guests didn't use shelter

Average age = 38

- 4 guests over 50
- 11 guests 40-48
- 10 guests 31-39
- 6 guests 18-28

Severe Multiple Disadvantage Index

- Homeless - 12
- Homeless + offending history or substance misuse - 12
- Homeless + offending history + substance misuse – 7

Outcomes

- 6 guests housed by DBC
- 6 guests housed by other agencies
- 5 guests returned to previous accommodation
- 2 guests were banned
- 4 guests didn't use shelter
- 8 guests returned to homelessness -
 - 2 returning home (Romania & Poland)
 - 4 currently working with DBC

Nationality of Guests

- British 22
- Polish 6
- Romanian 2
- Zimbabwean 1

Finance

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
Account balance as at 01/06/18	£19,269.31	
Account balance as at 01/06/19	£15,953.85	
Totals for 2018/19 as at 01/06/19	£18,939.52	£22,254.98
Additional receipts 05/06/19	£5,000.00	
Anticipated surplus for 2018/19	£1,684.54	
<i>Breakdown of running costs</i>		
<i>Staff costs</i>		£13,374.45
<i>Admin, excluding staff costs</i>		£3,474.51
<i>Sunday – NET Church</i>		£973.47
<i>Monday – City of David</i>		£622.12
<i>Tuesday – Christ Church</i>		£1,030.51
<i>Wednesday – Spital St Methodist</i>		£382.89
<i>Thursday – St Edmunds Temple Hill</i>		£889.76
<i>Friday – St Vincents RC Church hall</i>		£579.34
<i>Saturday – Brent Methodist</i>		£927.93
		£22,254.98
<i>Breakdown of income</i>		
<i>Dartford Borough Council</i>	£12,000.00	
<i>Dartford Lions & other organisations</i>	£3,803.00	
<i>Church donations</i>	£6,956.52	
<i>Personal donations</i>	£1,180.00	
	£23,939.52	

Project Worker's Report

It has been a successful three months in terms of numbers of guests moved on from homelessness and I am happy to be able to continue working with the homeless in Dartford.

The shelter ran particularly smoothly this year and credit for that must go to the Venue Managers and all of the volunteers who gave up their time to look after our guests. Thank you so much, what a wonderful caring group of people you are.

The continued dialogue with DBC is very encouraging. They have been very supportive of the project and have housed many guests. I will be seeking to continue the good working relationship we have over the coming months.

I have briefly outlined below what I think we did well and what I think could be tweaked or improved for the future.

Guest interaction with volunteers

I can say that having been present at the venues pretty much every evening I've seen an incredible amount of positive interaction with our guests many of whom commented to me how welcome they felt and it was "just like being round a friends for dinner." The food was as always fantastic (I think I put on half a stone over the winter).

The sleeping arrangements were very much helped by the purchase of camp beds (thankyou Dartford Lions) which all the guests preferred and should have some longevity compared to the airbeds we had been using.

Many of our guests had jobs during the day with early starts and the night staff did an excellent job of logging wakeup times and in many cases making early breakfasts.

It seemed we had a more flexible attitude towards guests' arrival times as many had work that didn't finish until late evening. This was good to see and allowed some guests to continue to work while using the shelter and therefore save enough money to get back into their rented accommodation or make the first month's payment on a room/flat.

Venue security was very well observed and there were no incidents of unexpected people turning up.

Registration

The registration process is thorough and necessary in order to ascertain who exactly is coming through the doors into our venues. I do feel, however, that it would be beneficial to have two people at registration times as some clients can be tired, frightened or agitated and I have had occasion to say no to guests who were not suitable for the shelter. The process would be helped with two people to support each other and reassure guests who are worried about giving their personal data or are becoming agitated.

Looking forward

I will be continuing to help those rough sleeping or sofa surfing to move on from homelessness, including any of our guests who didn't get housed or moved into a hostel when the shelter ended.

I am currently expanding the time and resources we can offer people who need help. Together with the help of the YMCA, Dartford churches and DBC, among others, we aim to offer a range of services including signposting to relevant agencies, help with benefits advice and DBC's housing process, help with medical appointments and also a shower facility.

We have an obvious need for a permanent building where we can look after those in need. A building with a sleeping area, kitchen, lounge area and washing facilities which would also house the Dartford Food Bank. This is a big ask but I feel we are closer than ever to realising our vision of an all year-round shelter rather than a Winter shelter.