

# Dover Winter Night Shelter



## Project Report 2017/18



## **Foreword by Dover Outreach Centre - Chair of Trustees**

I was in the fortunate position to be able to more involved in the organising and operation of the Winter Shelter this year, and I must say that although, quite tiring and draining, particularly towards the end of the period, it has been a very rewarding experience.

For me, I need to express thanks to so many people, without whom it would not have been possible to run a winter shelter. Firstly, to Glenn, our Co-ordinator who in 2016/17 was a guest. His insight was so valuable having been where the current year's guests had been before. He worked tirelessly, covering the bulk of any shifts that were undermanned, maintaining a cheerful, empathetic, yet firm disposition throughout. I am sure he has grown through this experience. Secondly, I would like to thank our army of volunteers, doubling in number from last year, and so many who came back to volunteer again. Your love, care and kindness shown to the guests has really been appreciated, both by them and by us. You are amazing people and I hope that you have all received something as well as having given. Lastly, I need to thank those of you who have donated funds to enable this to happen, may you be blessed many times over for your sacrifice.

Our guests this year, the most important people of all, have been an interesting mix, all with their own particular story to share. Some we have got to know a little and others quite a lot. We have seen them struggle with their addictions, alcohol and drugs affecting many. We have also had the sadness of 2 men who stayed one or more night at the shelter pass away during the night shelter period. It was heart warming to see the way our guests cared for one another at these times, they are in many ways a family.

Finally, it would be wonderful if there was no need to run a winter night shelter, but until that time it is my and the resolve of the other Dover Outreach Centre trustees that we will continue to do everything in our power to ensure that this provision is in place every year

God Bless you all – Noel Beamish

## **The Winter Shelter Initiative - An Overview from Co-ordinator      Glenn Mayo**

Following on from the 2016/2017 project, the shelter ran during December, January and February. Whilst we only managed to facilitate six of the seven days a week last year, this year saw us fulfil the vacant Saturday night with one church providing two separate nights, being Thursday and Saturday. Five other churches kindly allowed us to use their halls and other facilities to shelter 30 of Dover's most vulnerable people over the three-month period for seven nights a week.

The Trustees of the Dover Outreach Centre employed me as co-coordinator for the 2017/18 winter project and I took up the role in the middle of November. My first task was to collate volunteer registrations and place these into rotas for each day of the week. These forms were completed by the volunteers at one of the three training events held at the Living Well Church. I personally took control of the rotas for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. Four church coordinators had already volunteered and been designated these duties for the other churches. I provided them with the names of those volunteers who had offered their services for their respective churches and kept in regular contact with them throughout the project. I continued to take referrals during the running of the shelter and lent a hand on many occasions at the Dover Outreach Centre. I also had cause to engage with Ernie from Porchlight and Dover District Council representatives on a regular basis. A special thank you must be directed to the volunteers who did the night shifts especially as these are the most difficult to fill, and to those who volunteered to do the extra shifts whilst we operated a three-day extension owing to the bad weather.

Having been a guest myself for the duration of the shelter last year, I knew what to expect to a certain degree. However, I did not imagine it would be so tiring and test my resolve in the way it did. I found the roll of being a co-coordinator very challenging but rewarding at the same time. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the vast numbers of volunteers from the different churches and am confident in thinking that I left a good impression, not only for the reputation of the DOC, but on a personal level too. Managing volunteers was challenging on a few occasions, but on the whole, I continued to have a good rapport with an overwhelming majority of the volunteers and they were a delight to have on board.

In concluding, I would like to thank Noel and the other trustees of the Dover Outreach Centre for the opportunity to be involved in the project this year. It has installed in me again a self belief that I can indeed be challenged and possess the ability to succeed in a task that a year ago I would have looked at as impossible.

### **Preliminary requirements**

In terms of the number of guests we could accommodate, it had been decided that we would follow on from the previous year and cater for fifteen people. This was based on the smallest venue at our disposal. Our maximum number of guests on any one night was 14, however we did manage to fill the maximum numbers of accepted referrals (15).

The appropriate insurance, as was the case last year was set up and fire risk assessments were drafted for each venue before a meeting was held with the fire service to ensure that we were compliant with their risk assessment policies, and minimum requirement.

## **Volunteer/Training**

By way of word of mouth and our recruitment drive, we began our training days on 04/11/2017. There were three training events over three weeks, which saw a diverse and varied group of volunteers attend. From the information supplied on the registration forms, we welcomed the array of skill sets offered by the volunteers and were confident that they would fulfil all the requirements needed to operate the night shelter.

The training consisted of an overview of the homelessness problem in the United Kingdom and the more practical aspects of the role. A volunteer handbook containing our policies and volunteer agreement were handed to each volunteer. The signed agreements were then collected throughout the duration of the project from the volunteers.

## **Church Coordinators**

Each coordinator was informed on the number of guests that we would be expecting to use the shelter for that night. This was done either by way of telephone call, text message or email. They then would arrange for the volunteers on their rota to be briefed and duties assigned for that night. They also controlled their own budget for all catering supplies for the duration of the shelter, even after DOC had offered assistance. Each venue possessed cooking facilities and a hot evening meal with dessert was provided every night. Dietary requirements were noted and had been conveyed to the respective chefs through the coordinators. Some chefs chose to cook away from the venue and bring the food in. A simple breakfast was specified to be supplied in the morning, however some venues chose to cook a hot breakfast every now and then.

## **Shift/ Duty Slots**

Each venue had three shifts throughout the night. These were generally split into the evening shift time of 18.00-21:00; overnight duty time of 21:00-06:00; and then the morning shift time of 06:00-09:00. One church however operated a 18:00-22:00 evening shift. The night shifts generally did not pose any problems, but for the lack of numbers sometimes. I personally did 20 'night shifts' owing to cancellations or just not enough volunteers willing to do them. I would recommend that next year a dedicated list of night shift volunteers be recruited for each church. A skeleton crew of two volunteers had to be put into operation on several occasions, which maybe the dedicated crew idea might be the solution to.

## **Bedding and Storage**

Each guest was supplied with two pillows, two pillow cases, one sleeping bag, one throw and/or blanket. These were placed into a large robust bag and named accordingly. Camping beds were also allocated to the guests who wanted one, however some chose to use the foam mattresses instead. All the above was then stored in the DOC van during the days and transported to each venue by Noel.

## **Host Churches/ Venues**

Six churches kindly made their premises available to host the Dover Winter Night Shelter. They are listed below with the relevant main contact/coordinator for each venue:

**Venue**

**Contact**

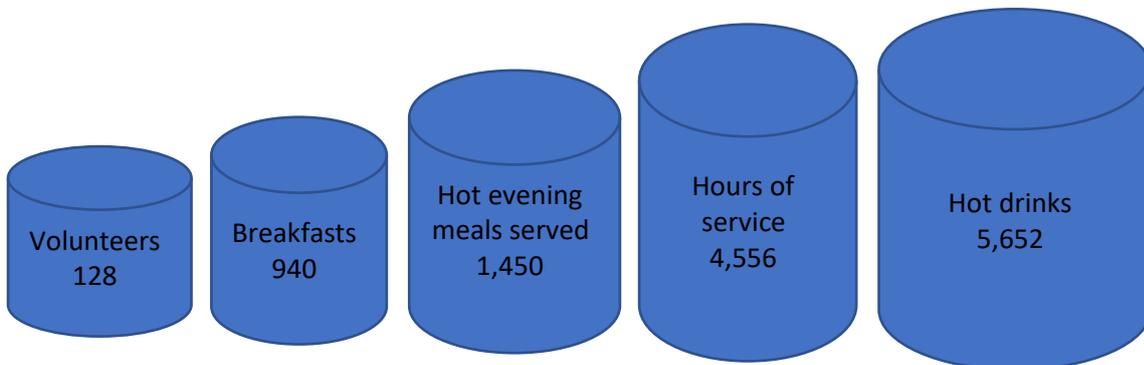
The Ark  
The Beacon  
Dover Baptist Church  
St Paul's Catholic Church  
St Martin's Church  
St Mary's Church

Peter Wallace  
Michelle Legumi  
Graham Stanford  
Sandra Gatward  
Malcolm Gavin  
Anthony Shilson



**Volunteers**

We had a total of 139 people volunteered for the Winter Night Shelter, including church leaders who also gave their time to participate on various shifts. Eleven did not manage to do a shift and six did one or more shifts and then could not commit to the project anymore. We are sincerely grateful to all our dedicated volunteers who freely gave up their time to make a difference to the homeless of Dover. Our wonderful volunteers covered a total of 4,436 hours of service, serving 1,403 hot evening meals, and 906 basic breakfasts (cereals and toast) and we served about 5,436 cups of tea and coffee. (Figures based on an average of 6 hot drinks per person per shelter, for 3 months). An additional 3 nights were operated owing to the bad weather, which saw another 120 volunteer hours, 47 meals, 34 breakfasts and 216 hot drinks were served.





## **Our Guests**

All guests wishing to access the Winter Night Shelter could do so on a referral basis only, either through a self-referral, an outside agency such as Porchlight, Forward Trust, Judicial Authorities, Job Centres, Dover District Council and sometimes other shelters across Kent. Each referral was face to face and took place at the Dover Outreach Centre. Information supplied by the potential guest was then verified initially, which could include background checks, health checks, information sharing with the Kent Police and Dover District Council's Safety Unit. A risk assessment was carried out on each referred person by Noel Beamish and Glenn Mayo and a decision made as to whether to offer them a place or not.

In total, 42 people completed a referral for the shelter and we accepted 35 as guests. 7 were declined a place for various reasons, which were established during our checks and risk assessment process. These reasons included being a risk to other guests, or volunteers, as a result of excessive alcohol or drug use. 5 did not use the shelter even after being offered a place. Of the 30 guests who chose to use the shelter, 4 were females. The age range of female guests was 27- 60 years, and the age range for male guests was from 23-78 years. Ten (10) of the guests were foreign nationals.

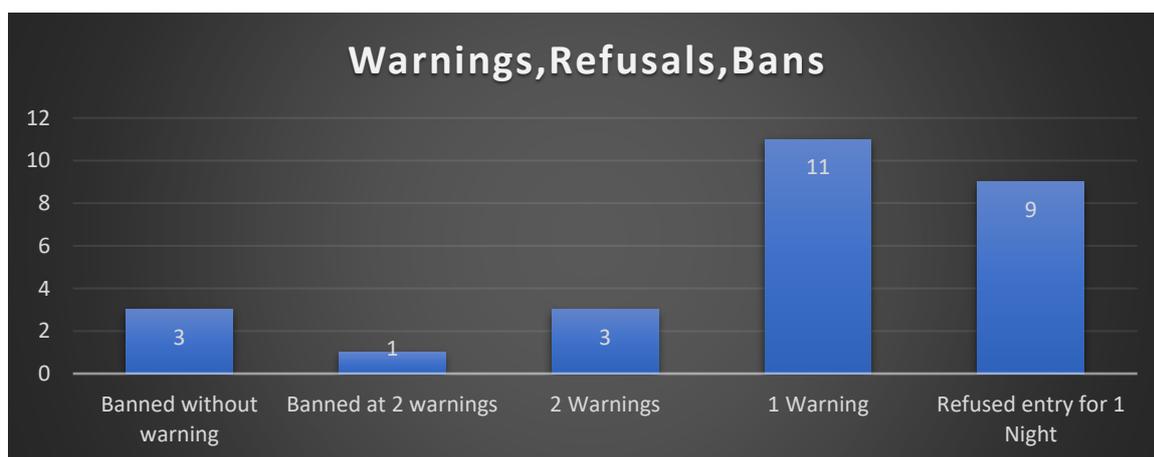
## Code of Conduct

Under the Housing Justice Model, a blanket shelter code of conduct was explained to and signed up to by all guests across the venues in the form of our Guest Agreement. If guests did not adhere to this, they were generally given a verbal warning. The incident would be discussed between the co-ordinators and noted. If after one warning they breached the code of conduct again, the co-ordinators held a review of the guest's place in the shelter and they may be asked to leave the shelter. If guests broke the rules deliberately, which put them and/or others at risk, they were asked to leave without warning. This would include drinking alcohol or taking drugs on the premises or concealing sharps.

Six guests were refused entry on the night (one for three nights, one for two nights, four for one night) and turned away from the shelter for being too drunk and anti-social behaviour. These guests were given sleeping bags and blankets on the night and told they would be allowed in the following evening depending on their sobriety. Two guests were banned indefinitely, one for violent behaviour and abusive language, and the other for the theft of another guest's mobile telephone (caught red-handed with it in his coat pocket walking away from the shelter). Three guests were given a 2<sup>nd</sup> warning and served a ban for a few days for repeated breaches. Eleven 1<sup>st</sup> warnings were issued to guests and included breaches such as walking into unauthorised places; attempting to bring alcohol into the shelter; leaving the shelter in the middle of the night; using abusive language; urinating into bottles during the night in the sleeping area and attempting to smoke in the shelter.

Details relating to the number of guests given warnings/removed are provided below.

There was not one occasion during the original 3 month period, where it was necessary to contact either of the emergency services, i.e. Police, Ambulance or Fire Service. However, the Police were called on the very last night of the 3 night extension to removed a guest. Two guests were assisted and taken by the co-coordinator to the hospital for treatment with existing medical issues outside of shelter hours.



## Guest Outcomes

Following support provided through the Outreach Centre we are very encouraged that two guests were referred to; and agreed to enter into; residential rehabilitation programmes. Nine have been housed either through Porchlight, Emmaus and/or the Council; three repatriated (to Poland,

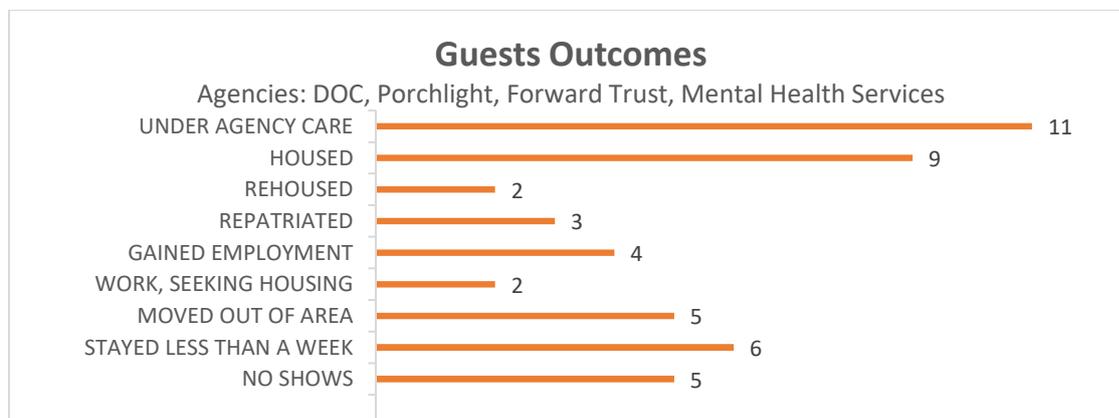
Romania and Portugal) one engaging with Forward Trust; three engaging with Porchlight for housing. Therefore 40% of our guests progressively 'moved on'.

Of our 30 guests, at the end of the Winter Night Shelter period, eleven are continuing to receive assistance from the Outreach Centre. Half of these we believe have engaged as a result of being in the night shelter. They are also engaging with Porchlight and Forward Trust.

Vee Bentley, the Outreach Centre manager commented: "The Centre is always busy in the colder weather and the morning sessions are busier still when the Winter Night Shelters are in operation. This year the upheaval was lessened by having both a Manager and a Coordinator, who worked together to facilitate a very organised approach to this, making for an almost seam-free process. On the whole the atmosphere in the Outreach Centre improves during the Winter Night Shelter period and we see closer bonds between our guests during this period. Our Mental Health Practitioner explains that there is a 'Hierarchy of Need' and that the top three requirements for happiness are Shelter, Food and Warmth. These are all being met within the caring environment of the Winter Night Shelters."

We also saw progress in other areas of their lives: For example, two male guests who had little meaningful contact with their family as a result of their addictions and subsequent homelessness started rebuilding their lives and tackle their addictions by agreeing to enter into a year long residential rehabilitation programme. One young male guest is on the verge of agreeing a similar route but he is also trying to sort out things judicially before. As broken relationships are the number one reason for homelessness, it is very encouraging to see guests attempting to rebuild relationships and heading away from addictions which have contributed to the circumstances that they find themselves in.

A more detailed breakdown of guest outcomes is provided below:



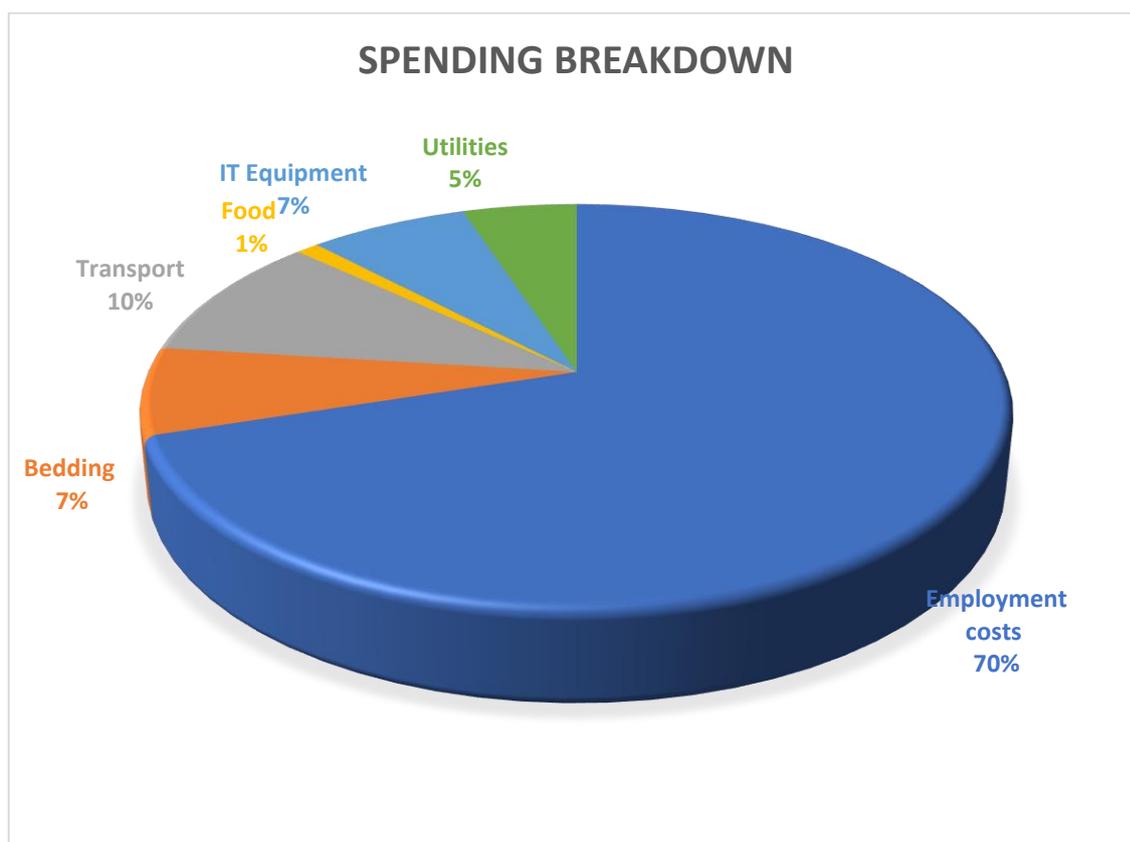
**Note: In the two weeks following the closure of the night shelter we have seen a further five guests in housing and two in work. This reinforces the benefit of running a temporary shelter over a permanent hostel as it does appear to encourage guests to move forward.**

## Wider Community Benefits

While our focus during the period of the WNS has been exclusively on the welfare of the guests, we are mindful that the shelter operation has had a positive social and financial benefit for the wider community. It has provided a positive and enriching experience for our volunteers and others engaged with the initiative. It has reduced the risks and tensions associated with rough sleeping within the town (for instance, rough sleepers can often be prey to anti-social behaviour). For Dover District Council, that operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), meaning that during periods of sub-zero temperatures the Council will seek accommodation for the homeless (in bed and breakfast accommodation and hostels), the operation of the shelter provides an alternative and 'reduced cost' means of looking after some of the most vulnerable people within our Community. Perhaps most importantly, it offers those that have lost hope in themselves and/or others, that they are valued and loved and that with encouragement and support there is a way back to living a purposeful life, reconnected with and in time contributing to our Community/Society.

## Finance and Donations

We were blessed to received financial donations from churches, schools, District and Town Council, businesses, organisations and from individuals in the Dover area, which enabled us to cover all cost of operating the shelter. Please see below for a breakdown of how this was spent.



We also received many donations of food, bedding, games, and a TV/DVD player for use in the shelter, and many other items of clothing and personal items.

## Conclusion

As our second year of operation has now ended, we are very encouraged by the positive outcomes we have seen for our guests. The relationships that have been built between guests has been very encouraging and has fulfilled our initial desires to build positive relationships which can then be transferred beyond the winter night shelter environment. It is also clear that many volunteers feel the experience has been very enjoyable and some even go so far as to say they have also been on a personal journey having learned as much about themselves as they have the guests. Having a number of our guests housed, repatriated and gain employment has been amazing and we are delighted that we have participated in giving them the tools they needed to help them move forward in their lives in a positive way.

All that remains is to say a massive thank you to all involved in this project which have made Dover Winter Night Shelter the success it has been this year. This would not have worked without input and sacrifice on behalf of so many people, you know who you are so please accept our grateful thanks. We can look forward with confidence to build on this years experience in the years to come.

Finally, we thought it appropriate that the last words should come from some of our guests – real people dealing with real issues but grateful for what they had received through the Winter Night Shelter.

“Staff have been excellent, good friends. They have really helped me; being homely and caring”

“The staff are very pleasant and they go out of their way to give you what you need for a very good evening. They are kind and caring the whole lot of them”

“The volunteers helped a lot and genuinely cared”

## **Appendix 1**

### **Feedback from volunteers**

From the feedback forms we received:

#### **Comments:**

Mrs W from The Ark said, "I was over-awed when some of the guests, they fell asleep straight after the meal and it struck me how frightening it must be to sleep on the streets, and how we all take safety and security for granted."

Mrs W from The Beacon wrote, "I have made many new friends during my volunteer experience. I see the positive emotional changes in our guests. The 'hollow man' disappearing with the kindness and compassion shown by others. I think it is 'hope' our guests feel instead of despair."

Mrs. R from St. Paul's commented, "It was VERY rewarding and we got to know so many people, both guests and volunteers. We will miss it."

#### **What do you think worked well?**

Mr. N from St Paul's said, "The huge amount of preparation and work put in by Noel and Glenn. We appeared to have a larger number of guests than last year and this was encouraging."

Mrs. W from Dover Baptist wrote, "I was impressed by the provision of the good wholesome food that I saw."

The G family from St. Martin's said, "It was good to have two coordinators working together, who were firm but fair with the guests. It was good to have the weekly emails."

#### **What do you think could have worked better?**

The G family also suggested that, "Maybe have the check-in time reduced to ½ hour so everyone is in by 7pm to allow food to be served a little earlier."

Revd W from St. Mary's asks, "Why be constrained by the beginnings or ends of months," and so "running the shelter mid-December to mid-March"

And finally, Mrs. M, also from St. Mary's said, "A magic wand to get some of the guests out of bed."