



**CANTERBURY
COMMUNITY SHELTER
REPORT
2017/18**

Compiled by Charlie Oakes (CCS Coordinator)

INTRODUCTION

The Canterbury Community Shelter (CCS) returned for its 8th year of running, operated by Catching Lives. It operates in a network of Kent winter shelters, altogether of which there are 10 which run during the winter months. The shelter opened on 1st December 2017 and ended on the 28th February 2018.

It runs during a time when numbers of homelessness are again on the rise. In Canterbury we estimate the number of rough sleepers on an average night is 70+. The difficulties faced include a lack of affordable housing in and around the area, the fact that many supported accommodation projects have waiting lists of up to a year, and a lack of statutory mental health services. Government street counts and estimates give a snapshot of the national situation. The latest figures showed that 4,751 people slept rough across England on any given night in 2017 - a 16% increase compared to the previous year, and a 169% increase since 2010.

THE SHELTER

Canterbury Community Shelter offers shelter for 3 months, during the winter period for homeless individuals. The shelter operates a 'rolling shelter' model, using 7 churches, all of which are located in the Canterbury area. We have been able to offer 20 bed spaces per night, and we review the bed list on a day by day basis, which means not everyone is guaranteed to get a bed space. This means that over the 3 months, we were able to offer a total of 1,800 bed spaces. Guests either refer to the night shelter by accessing the day centre, which is open 9am-2pm, 7 days a week. Or, guests are referred from outside agencies such as probation services, hospitals, etc. When the centre re-opens in the evening, night shelter guests are offered a hot meal before heading down to the church with an evening staff member, to sleep at the venue.

Those using the night shelter also have access to the day centre facilities which is open 9am-2pm, seven days a week. These facilities include getting breakfast and lunch, the use of showers, toilets, laundry, computers, and other basic needs. Not only this, but they are able to use the centre as a care of address, which helps hugely when needing to register with the bank, a GP, with benefits and so on.

WHO'S INVOLVED

Those staying in the night shelter are also encouraged to work closely with project workers at the day centre, to change their situation for the better. Our project workers offer a range of expertise in helping our clients improve their situation. We try to encourage our guests to do so, which includes everything from completing housing referrals, writing CV'S, job searches, and other areas they need support with.

The centre also has a mental health team, which all guests are required to meet with at least once, and who offer a service, that their door is always open to those who feel they need, or may want it. This is hugely important for the centre, and for our guests who use the night shelter, as being homeless often means issues and problems arise, so it is important for our guests to know there is extra support available for them. We hope that the team of staff and volunteers we have for the night shelter, mean that people feel supported and helped during their time whilst staying in the night shelter.

New to the centre is an arts coordinator, Miriam Ellis, who has been running art activities from 2pm-4pm, as well as sometimes during 9-2pm. The afternoon activities have provided guests with interesting activities to engage with during the time the centre is usually closed, and before coming back for the night shelter. The feedback from this has been extremely good, enabling guests to engage in activities and be creative, has received a great response and they have really enjoyed doing something different, and rewarding.

Catching Lives also works closely with outside agencies, to work together in providing support for those using our services. One of these is Porchlight, not only do we work closely with them when referring someone to their accommodation providers, but every Tuesday a Porchlight outreach worker, Sonia Langridge, comes in to meet people, give information, advice and refer rough sleepers on into their services.

An important addition to Catching Lives in 2018 has been the introduction of a drop in service, provided by The Forward Trust, a drug and alcohol support service, which now happens every Thursday at our day centre. This means it is much more accessible for our guests to use the services, if they are located at a day centre which they regularly use. This can hopefully result in more positive outcomes in the future, with our guests engaging with drug and alcohol support services more frequently and consistently.

It is extremely important to add the hard work, and time that our volunteers put in to running the night shelter. Their dedication and commitment is simply incredible, and the night shelter could not run without the huge amount of volunteers. There are over 120 of whom, give up their time to help run the night shelter. This is everything from cooking guest's dinner, to the transportation of bedding to and from each venue, to also overnight shifts at the churches. The kindness of volunteers continues to amaze those at Catching Lives, year after year, and we cannot thank you enough.

STAFF

Terry Gore –	General Manager
Charlie Oakes –	CCS Co-ordinator
Ellie Mullin –	CCS Deputy Co-ordinator
Graeme Solly –	Project Leader
Emma McCrudden –	Project Leader and Outreach
Chris Bloomfield –	CCS Project Worker
Geraldine Hiscott –	CCS Project Worker
Anthony Pickup –	CCS Project Worker
Nicole Huggins –	CCS Project Worker
Audrey Banks –	CCS Project Worker
Dorota Witczak –	Project Worker
Penny Wilson –	Project Worker
James Duff –	Trustee and On-Call
Paul Todd –	On-call
Kelly Napier –	Trustee and Campaign Manager
Karen Baxter –	Mental Health Outreach Specialist
Denis Tweedie –	Mental Health Outreach Specialist
Miriam Ellis -	Arts Co-ordinator
Sally Caless –	Mentoring Coordinator
Luana Ali –	Client Data Coordinator
Paul Willoughby –	Administrator

VENUE CO-ORDINATORS

Kelly Johnston –	St Mary Bredin
Jackie Curd –	St Pauls
Richard Cockell -	St Peters Methodist Church
Stephen Flower -	Canterbury Baptist Church
Linda Scott -	St Thomas' Catholic Parish Church
Rev. Phil Greig -	All Saints Church
Peter Brown -	St Stephens

VENUES

Mondays - St. Mary Bredin Church



Tuesdays - St Pauls Parish Centre



Wednesdays - St. Peters Methodist Church



Thursdays - Canterbury Baptist Church



Fridays - St Thomas' Catholic Church



Saturdays - All Saints Church



Sundays - St Stephen's Parish Church



Canterbury Open Centre



Shelter Statistics

70 Unique Clients in total were referred.

51 Unique Clients in total stayed for at least one night.

Whilst the winter shelter was running, 183 unique clients accessed the day centre – this means that 27% of the total unique clients accessing the day centre stayed and used the night shelter.

Over the 13 weeks of the shelter, out of a total of **1800 bed spaces** available:

1322 Bed spaces were **requested** by clients

1234 Bed spaces were actually **occupied** by clients

This was a 69% occupancy rate.

The average of total beds given per night was 14.

Monitoring information

Male clients	56
Female clients	14
Average age	42
Oldest client	67
Youngest client	20
Armed Forces	6 – 3 of which were British
Alcohol issue	25
Drugs issue	33
Ex Care leavers	13

Ethnicity

49	White British
14	White Other
2	Other Ethnic
2	Other Black
2	Mixed white/black Caribbean
1	Black African

Nationality

53	British
1	French
1	Iranian
1	Iraqi
2	Irish
4	Polish
3	Romanian
2	Scottish
1	Sudanese
2	Unknown

Comparisons to previous years-

2012/13-

64	People were referred to the shelter
54	People stayed in the shelter
12	Spaces per night on average were taken

2013/14-

77	People were referred to the shelter
54	People stayed in the shelter
11	Spaces per night on average were taken

2014/15-

- 68 People were referred to the shelter
- 52 People stayed in the shelter
- 12.5 Spaces per night on average were taken

2015/16

- 87 People were referred to the shelter
- 74 People stayed in the shelter
- 14 Spaces per night on average were taken

2016/17

- 67 People Stayed in the shelter
- 13 Spaces per night on average were taken

OUTCOMES

20 people who stayed in the shelter had a positive housing outcome during the period of operation (and the 2 subsequent weeks after the shelter closed).

This is **39%** of those who stayed

- 5 moved into supported accommodation
- 2 moved into private rented accommodation
- 4 were reconnected with family/ partner
- 1 housed by council in area of origin
- 1 returned to country of origin
- 7 placed in interim accommodation by Canterbury City Council

It is hoped that those who were not housed during the night shelter will continue to engage with the Catching Lives Day Centre to seek accommodation.

SOCIAL POLICY

The winter shelter has continued to highlight the issues surrounding social policy that our guests encounter. During the shelter period we have seen 5 people who have been released from prison to street homelessness, and 3 from hospital to street homelessness. All of which have no other alternative than to stay in the night shelter after being released in these circumstances. The campaigning done by Campaign Kent, in connection with Catching Lives, works to highlight these issues in order to try to prevent situations like these happening in the future.

A full Campaign report on these issues can be downloaded from our website www.catchinglives.org.

SWEP

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is called when temperatures are forecast to reach into zero or minus figures for three consecutive nights or more, and when it is called the council has a plan in place to accommodate rough sleepers in accommodation during these conditions. Last year Catching Lives made arrangements with the council to hold SWEP at our day centre, where we have the resources for a maximum of 27 people per night to stay, and if more than this required it they would be booked bed and breakfast accommodation by the council. This winter, there has been an unprecedented amount of SWEP nights that we have needed to organize and prepare for, on top of the winter shelter.

Dates SWEP was in force:

8th December – 18th December 2017
28th December – 29th December 2017
2nd February – 18th February 2018
23rd February – 7th March 2018
16th March – 20th March 2018

Total- **48 nights**

During this time we provided accommodation at the centre to **79 individual people**, totalling **718 bed spaces** (completely separate to the night shelter bed spaces). This was an average of 15 people per night staying at the centre.

The high number of nights that SWEP ran created an additional workload of preparing, planning and organizing staff, volunteers and the logistics of opening the centre on top of the night shelter. Included in this, is the week after the night shelter finished during which we arranged to extend the use of the churches to run SWEP to create more bed spaces (27 at the centre and 20 at the church hall) in case they were needed.

As stated before, a great deal of time during periods of SWEP this year was spent simply working out who was going to be in the shelter and who was going was accommodated under SWEP provision at the centre. Considerable time was also spent reinforcing the rules of SWEP provision and how they differed to the structure within the day centre from 9-2pm. A major task this year was the enforcement of SWEP after the Community Shelter had closed. For example, with us being unsure on how many guests to expect, organising bedding volunteers for delivery to venues proved tricky. We were fortunate that various churches offered us their venues in early March so that we could continue SWEP provision. The Impact of the current arrangement has proved logistically challenging in terms of planning, staffing and volunteering. This has meant less time being spent with guests to help them find long-term accommodation.

Discussions for SWEP provisions in the future should be had in order to find a way of efficiently finding a suitable emergency bed for all who want it when the temperature is freezing. This will allow the focus of Catching Lives' staff to remain on working with people in order to find suitable long-term accommodation before the shelter closes again. However any SWEP provision always requires a consideration of provision of food, bedding and having enough people to 'supervise' (likely a mixture of paid staff and volunteers), which necessitates close cooperation between the council and other partner agencies to work efficiently. As Homeless Link's SWEP guidance states, "SWEP often provides an opportunity to engage individuals who have been reluctant to accept support in the past. As well as saving lives, one of the key aims of offering shelter is to support people in making a transition from the streets. It is important that barriers to move on are identified early on, and that authorities/agencies work with providers to remove these barriers."

ANALYSIS

Overall we can say it has been a good night shelter, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers, and to our staff. We will forever be thankful to the many, many hours put in by those who work so hard to try and make sure the shelter runs as smoothly as possible. Feedback is always welcome, and as always we will try to work and improve it and make any necessary changes.

We continue year after year to see people who are being released from prison or hospital to no fixed abode. Campaigning on these particular issues is something one of our trustees, Kelly Napier, is working closely on, to try and improve it for future years. Many of our guests we see have complex needs. We see a large amount with drug and alcohol, mental health problems, and more often than not, those with poor physical health. We regret to say, that sadly this year one of our night shelter guests died at the centre. This will always be something that saddens us.

The shelter occupancy rate this year is lower than it has been in some of our previous years, but this is largely down to our expansion from 15 spaces to 20 spaces available which occurred in 2017 (and the average number of spaces used a night was higher than last year's). However, with an increase of rough sleepers in Canterbury the question of why the occupancy rate is 69% needs to be considered. Our understanding is that there are many reasons why some people choose not to use the night shelter. The nature of rough sleeping is often extremely chaotic, and for some the night shelter is too controlled, which although it has to, can often be a reason attributed to people not using the shelter. For others, rough sleeping is a way of life and especially with the entrenched rough sleepers; they are far more used to sleeping outside than to sharing a room of up to 20 people, for example. With an understanding of some of the reasons people choose not to use the shelter, we still have taken action on why these reasons might be, hearing from our guests themselves. Two of our social work students, along with our outreach worker Emma McCrudden and trustee Ruth Auger, created questionnaires and took these out onto the streets on outreach to get (anonymous) feedback from clients as to why they may not be using the shelter, or accessing Catching Lives. The occupancy of the shelter, and numbers of people accessing the day centre, is something we are looking into, and will continue to review.

This year we have seen an unprecedented number of SWEP nights, 48 in total. The organization and running of these nights have been mainly done by day and night shelter staff, which has taken up a large amount of time. For next year, we hope to be more prepared for such a long period of SWEP, in order to take the weight off the day and night shelter staff.

Types of homelessness

Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, and when most people think of a homeless person they tend to think of someone sleeping rough on the streets. Many people who sleep rough will suffer from multiple health conditions, such as mental health problems and drug misuse they are also in greater danger of violence than the general population.

Statutory homelessness

Local authorities have a duty to secure a home for some groups of people. This is often referred to as the main homelessness duty. Every year, tens of thousands of people apply to their local authority for homelessness assistance.

To be legally defined as homeless you must either lack a secure place in which you are entitled to live or not reasonably be able to stay. However, in order to receive assistance under the main homelessness duty, there are further strict criteria that you have to meet. Local authorities may initially provide temporary accommodation to households who might meet these criteria, mainly families with children.

Hidden homelessness

Many people who are not entitled to help with housing, or who don't even approach their councils for help, aren't counted in the official statistics.

Many stay in hostels, squats or B&Bs, in overcrowded accommodation or 'concealed' housing, such as the floors or sofas of friends and family.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2018

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018.

The Act modifies and extends existing homelessness protection in a number of key ways:

- Improved advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness

Under the Act, everyone in a local housing authority's district should be able to access free information and advice on:

- Preventing homelessness,
- securing accommodation when homeless,
- the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority,
- any help that is available from the authority or anyone else
- how to access that help.

Services providing advice and information must be designed to meet the needs of particular groups in the authority's district, for example care leavers, people 'suffering with a mental illness or impairment' and groups identified as being at particular risk of homelessness. Housing authorities will need to work with other relevant statutory and non-statutory service providers to identify groups at particular risk and to develop appropriate, accessible provision. All people found to be homeless and in priority need will be provided with interim accommodation. In determining who is in priority need, housing authorities will need to be aware that 'an applicant may be considered vulnerable because of a combination of factors which taken alone may not necessarily lead to a decision that they are vulnerable (e.g. drug and alcohol problems, common mental health problems, a history of sleeping rough, no previous experience of managing a tenancy). (1)

(1) Homeless Link, (2018): https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homelessness%20Reduction%20Act%20Briefing%20Nov%202017_0.pdf

COMMENTS FROM GUESTS /VOLUNTEERS/STAFF

As with previous years we have collected feedback from those who have been involved with the shelter, some of which is below, and we encourage you to contact with any thoughts of your own so we can consider it when planning for next winter.

One guest said: *'Having been a participant of the night shelter I have appreciated the help I've been given. For me there are two common words in the world and that is 'thank you'... Every homeless person deserves a chance'.*

A guest when asked, by a project worker who was aware that another guest was keeping him awake due to a chest infection and a hacking cough, whether he wants to move to a quieter spot in the church said: *'No I will be alright and I'm not leaving him.... he's my friend'*

One of our volunteers: *'Thanks to the staff, volunteers and clients for allowing me to volunteer with you all. I know I only played a tiny part but I enjoyed meeting everyone in December and have huge respect for what you all do to help people'.*

'I thought the winter shelter & organisation was amazing. I'm so proud to have been part of the project (even if such a small part!) I loved coming in and cooking & chatting to the clients.'

A staff member: *'Before starting my shifts I was slightly anxious I was going to handle issues not in the best way and be 'told off'. But once I started work I was delighted to find the staff really did support each other and it gave me the confidence to make what I thought was the best decisions, and this overall improved my own initiative and general handling of situations as weeks passed. It did me well to learn and make more definite decisions to avoid clients saying 'but last time we did this', or 'but this person does this'.'*

VOLUNTEERING

Thanks as always to all those who have supported us with this year's shelter, from the seven churches who provided a safe space for guests to sleep and a warm welcome for 91 nights, to all who volunteered, both at the day centre and all the overnight venues, and also those who helped deliver our vast amount of bedding in mornings and evenings.

Catching Lives is reliant on its 175 + dedicated volunteers and I am pleased that the number of people joining us increases all the time, which allows us to extend and improve the services and activities on offer at the open centre.

Total shifts completed by volunteers- **1045 (75% of all available)**

Total combined hours completed- **3, 077**

Which consisted of:

Evening Volunteer Project Worker- **153**

Bedding transportation- **344**

Client engagement at Open Centre- **177**

Cook dinner at Open Centre- **635**

Overnight shift at churches- **1159**

Venue set-up at churches- **609**

A special thanks goes out to all of those who have got involved or helped us in any way this winter shelter! We could not do it without the incredible generosity of the community and the Churches of Canterbury who so generously provided the venues. The donations, fundraising, help and constant support we get from the people from Canterbury and elsewhere far and wide is truly remarkable! The hard work of the staff, our amazing volunteers, and others who continue to support us has meant we have been able to successfully run this winter shelter and provide shelter and support to the most vulnerable in society. We thank you so much and your generosity and kindness is really appreciated.

Thank you to, also, to all the local services that have played a key role in supporting us during the operation of the shelter including, but not limited to:

-Canterbury City Council

-Porchlight staff (such as outreach worker Sonya Langridge who met with many shelter guests at the day centre every week).

- Forward Trust (Lesley Barnes) for supporting many of our guests to tackle their substance use, which plays a huge part in some of our guests finding supported accommodation to move into at the end of the shelter.

-The Salvation Army Canterbury- Provides a drop-in for people, sleeping bags, general support, travel funding and much more.

Other Winter Shelters- For information and support when needed, including Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter, Ashford Winter Night Shelter, Thanet Winter Shelter and Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter

-The Canterbury and Herne Bay Volunteer Centre, Red Zebra Community Solutions, Canterbury Christchurch University and University of Kent - Thanks to all staff for fundraising promoting our volunteering opportunities to so many people.

In addition to this, we could not provide this project without all the generous donations we receive. Thank you to all, including:

The John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust

B Inkley & AF Palmer

Community of the Presentation Trust

Bishop' Advent Justice Appeal

United Municipal Charities

Financial Statement

EXPENDITURE

SALARIES	£47,617.73
PURCHASES	£257.78
STAFF EXPENSES	£335.00
SUNDRIES	£92.87
EXPENDITURE TOTAL-	£48303.38