



Canterbury Community Shelter

Interim Report

October – December 2018

The Shelter:

During 2018, targeted funding for local authorities with high levels of rough sleeping had been made available by government through the Rough Sleeper Initiative. Canterbury City Council had received a proportion of this funding and approached Catching Lives to extend its winter shelter, as part of the government's plan of action to reduce the number of people sleeping rough.

With part-funding from Canterbury City Council, it was agreed, together with seven local churches, to run a six-month shelter from 1st October 2018 to 31st March 2019; using the same rolling shelter model as in previous years.

Our Guests:

We continue to offer up to 20 bed spaces per night, with a total of 1840 spaces available for the October to December period. 1127 spaces were taken up during this period; an occupancy rate reflecting the transient use of the shelter, with guest numbers fluctuating from the low teens to capacity. This trend has resulted in an average of 13 guests per night over 92 nights the shelter has been in operation.

During the October to December period, we assessed and registered 78 clients, of whom 62 became guests of the shelter. Again, occupancy figures are lower than assessment figures due, in part, to Catching Lives' policy to refer clients on to statutory agencies, if we believe a duty of care is owed or more specialist support is required.

Out of the 62 guests who have used the shelter, 51 were men and 11 women. This 17% of female rough sleepers in Canterbury who have used the shelter, is higher than the national average of 14% for female rough sleepers, according to Homeless Link figures for 2017 (Homeless Link is a national membership charity for organizations working directly with people who become homeless).

Campaigning Issues:

We continue to work in partnership with Campaign Kent, a campaign team working for positive improvement to the policies and practices affecting people who are released from prison or discharged from hospital, directly to street homelessness. Thus far, we have had 6 people discharged from hospital, and 7 people have been released from prison to street homelessness in the Canterbury area, who have registered with the shelter. Campaign Kent endeavor to shine a light on these issues to bring about positive change.

Outcomes:

The shelter provides a secure and stable base from which people can begin to address the issues which have led them to sleeping rough. People experience street homelessness due to a variety or combination of reasons, and some will experience multiple disadvantages; so addressing all the issues may be a lengthy process and positive outcomes cannot be easily achieved in a short space of time. However, during the first half of this season's shelter, we have had 20 positive outcomes; with 14 people going into various forms of accommodation, 2 reconnections to countries of origin and 4 people have found employment whilst using our services.

One guest said after being accommodated, *"Just wanted to thank you. People don't normally have time for me but you helped me and let me stay in the shelter, so thank you."*

Changes to CCS:

The biggest change, of course, is the length of this shelter, having doubled from previous years. We are learning and growing with the experience of opening the shelter 3 months earlier than any other shelter in Kent; and we are adapting and changing our practices accordingly.

The October to December period saw a decrease in volunteer numbers from previous 3-month shelters, with 120+ people actively volunteering. One reason for the drop in numbers may be due to the early start of the shelter, with people not expecting to volunteer for a winter shelter in mild, sunny October! Also, as the academic year had just started, students were still returning to campus, which resulted in low student volunteer numbers at the start of the shelter. We had the greatest shortage of volunteers overnight, who support the project workers during the overnight shift. It was then decided by our board of trustees and

management, after risk assessing the situation, that 2 paid and trained staff members would be on shift per night for the remainder of the shelter.

Volunteers:

We are enormously thankful to all our volunteers who have dedicated their time and effort, without their involvement we would not be able to run the shelter. Thank you to all who have put in an amazing 1800 hours of volunteering!

A volunteer said of the shelter, *“A warm, friendly and supportive environment that does the best for all their individuals.”*

Another volunteer summed up how beneficial community involvement is to both our guests and volunteers when she recounted what a guest had said to her, *“I enjoy spending time with you in the shelter; you bring some light to my dark days.”* She said, *“I realized that the time I give is appreciated and does help in my community.”*

SWEP:

In addition to the Shelter, Catching Lives run an extra provision on behalf of the council when severe weather is forecast; our Day Centre is then used to accommodate rough sleepers who would not normally use the Shelter. Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (or SWEP) had been called by the council over a 5-day period in mid-December, with a total of 21 clients using the service from 12 December to 16th December 2018.

Thank You!

The shelter exists fundamentally to provide a warm, safe space for our guests during the coldest months of the year. As we go into the second half of this extended shelter, we continue to find ways in which the shelter can create a breathing space for our guests; where wellbeing, recovery, housing and employment can be worked towards from a foundation of safety and stability.

CCS remains a collaboration of Catching Lives, churches, the Canterbury Diocese, volunteers, fundraisers, donors and local agencies working to meet the diverse needs of our guests and improving the plight of those experiencing homelessness in and around Canterbury. We cannot provide this much needed service without the help of all our supporters and volunteers. A heartfelt thank you to all, we are very grateful for the dedication, hard work and support we receive from all in this community and beyond.

Aziza Kilmister – CCS Coordinator