



**CATCHING LIVES WINTER
PROVISION - REPORT 2020/2021**

INTRODUCTION

During the winter of 2020/21 Catching Lives worked alongside other agencies, such as Canterbury City Council to offer a form of emergency accommodation under Winter Provision to as many rough sleepers as possible, giving opportunities to work with such individuals to try and find more permanent housing options for those who wanted it.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that this winter we were unable to operate our usual Canterbury Community Shelter, as clients staying would have been sleeping in a church hall, sharing the airspace, and therefore at risk of catching and spreading the covid-19 virus. We explained to Canterbury City Council at an early stage that we would not have the funds to secure a venue at which all those staying would have their own rooms.

The outcome was that Canterbury City Council were able to negotiate a licence to occupy all the rooms at the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) building on New Dover Road from 14th December 2020 to 27th February 2021, meaning that 17 rooms were available for rough sleepers to occupy. This included their own shower and toilet facilities so they did not have to share with anyone else.

Assessments for rooms were carried out by Catching Lives Project Workers at the Canterbury Open Day Centre on Station Road East. Those allocated a room were able to keep it until they either found other suitable accommodation to move into, or had to leave due to serious behavioural issues that would have put the safety of others at risk.

The YHA was staffed by two catching Lives Project Workers in the evening, who welcomed the clients in and provided them with evening meals prepared by Catching Lives volunteers earlier in the day. Two staff members were on duty overnight (one Catching Lives Project Worker and one Serveco staff member). As with previous winters, the funding for the Catching Lives staff members came from usual sources, namely generous donations from Charitable Trusts and individuals within our community.

Those staying in the YHA could access from 5pm and had to leave at 8am the following morning.

They were provided breakfast and lunch, and access to other facilities such as phone, computer and washing machine use, at the Day Centre every day of the week. Art and activity packs were put together by Catching Lives' Art Coordinator Miriam Ellis, with the support of local artists, for those staying to do in their rooms.



Catching Lives Project Workers, and Outreach Workers operating under Canterbury City Councils' Rough Sleeper Initiative, provided ongoing support to help clients take steps towards finding housing.

This included, but is by no means limited to, help registering with a GP, referrals to mental health services, looking for work, applying for benefits, referrals for supported accommodation and signposting to the adult drug and alcohol support service run by Forward Trust.

As well as the rooms available at the YHA, Canterbury City Council also offered people temporary placement in a variety of B&Bs, hotels and shared houses (both in and outside of Canterbury). The decision whether to offer one of these locations instead of a room at the YHA involved several factors such as their level of support needs, including physical and mental health considerations.

Those placed out of area were supported by the outreach workers, including two taken on by Catching Lives on a temporary contract funded by the MHCLG Winter Transformation Fund.

As always we would like to thank our local community for supporting us by donating items such as money, food and clothing, and also to those who organised fundraising events for us. We'd also like to thank all our volunteers, such as those who prepare meals for clients at the centre, and our bookshop volunteers who bring in a substantial income whilst also spreading much needed awareness of our work, for their valuable donation of their time.

This is especially the case over the last year as we are aware that many of our supporters have been effected by the pandemic themselves yet have still been able to show us such tremendous support.

Thank you also to all staff at the Youth Hostels Association for use of their building, and for their cooperation in making this particular part of the local winter provision possible.

Catching Lives staff-

Terry Gore -	General Manager
Maria Summerson-	Catching Lives Winter Provision Coordinator
Graeme Solly -	Project Leader
Charlotte Hill-	YHA Project Worker
Davinia Downey-	YHA Project Worker
Gill Key-	YHA Project Worker
Iwona Waligora -	YHA Project Worker
Niki Reynolds-	YHA Project Worker
Richard Hopker -	YHA Project Worker
Zo Defferay-	YHA Project Worker
Emma McCrudden -	Outreach Worker
Megan Johnson-	Outreach Worker
Paul Wardell-	Outreach Worker
Dorota Witczak -	Project Worker
Paul Todd -	Project Worker/YHA on call
Stephanie Hagen-	Mentoring Coordinator/ Project Worker
James Duff-	YHA on call/ Trustee/ volunteer
Miriam Ellis -	Arts Coordinator
Karen Baxter -	Mental Health Outreach
Denis Tweedie -	Mental Health Outreach
Luana Ali -	Client Data Coordinator
Simon Rice-	Volunteer Coordinator
Paul Willoughby -	Administrator
Michael James-	Fundraiser

Comparison statistics

During winter provision:

27 different people stayed in the **YHA** for at least one night, with an average of **7** staying per night.

14 people in **B&Bs** were supported by Catching Lives

Ethnicity

YHA	
Austrian	1
British	20
Canadian/Polish	1
German	1
French/Italian	1
Hungarian	1
Lithuanian	1
Romanian	1
Clients supported with immigration status queries-	5

B&Bs	
British	12
Lithuanian	1
Sri Lankan	1
Clients supported with immigration status queries-	2

Gender:

YHA	
Male	23
Female	4

B&Bs	
Male	10
Female	4

Age range:

YHA

18- 30	4
31- 40	6
41- 50	15
50- 55	2

B&Bs

18- 30	2
31- 40	4
41- 50	5
50- 55	3

Registered with GP:

YHA

Yes	17
No	10
Clients supported to access GP -	3

B&Bs

Yes	14
No	0
Clients supported to access GP -	4

Receiving benefits:

YHA

Universal Credit-	16
UC and PIP-	3
ESA-	2
No benefits in place-	6
Clients supported to access benefits-	5

B&Bs

Universal Credit-	9
UC and PIP-	4
No benefits in place-	1
Clients supported to access benefits-	5

Clients reporting physical health issues:

YHA	
Cluster headaches	1
Joint issues/ arthritis	3
Alcohol related brain injury	1
Asthma	2
Hemiplegia	1
Sciatica	2
IBS	1
Clients reporting no physical health issues-	16

B&Bs	
Damaged foot	1
Joint issues/ arthritis	2
Epilepsy	4
Head trauma	1
Abscess	1
Autoimmune disorder	1
Hep C	1
Clients reporting no physical health issues-	6

Clients reporting mental health issues/ learning difficulties

YHA	
Depression	8
Anxiety	3
Bipolar disorder	1
Paranoid delusion thoughts	1
Self-harm	3
Schizophrenia	2
Dyslexia	3
Emotionally Unstable PD	1
no reported issues-	10

B&Bs	
Depression	10
Anxiety	10
Bipolar disorder	1
Suicidal thoughts	3
Self-harm	3
Schizophrenia	1
Psychosis	1
PTSD	3
no reported issues-	1

Substance use:

YHA	
Alcohol	12
Cannabis	5
Heroin	2
Cocaine	1
None	11

B&Bs	
Alcohol	8
Cannabis	3
Heroin	4
Misuse of prescription drugs	1
None	3

Offending history:

YHA	
Yes	16
No	11

B&Bs	
Yes	11
No	3

Last accommodation before sleeping rough:

YHA	
Private rented	14
Social housing	3
Family home	3
Supported accommodation	3
Unknown	4

B&B	
Private rented	7
Social housing	1
Family home	4
Supported accommodation	2

Area of local connection:

YHA	
Canterbury	13
Dover	2
Maidstone	2
Sittingbourne	1
Gillingham	1
London	2
Stoke-On-Trent	1
Leicester	1
Wales	1
France	1
Unknown	2

B&Bs	
Canterbury	9
Thanet	1
Swindon	1
Sittingbourne	1
Shropshire	1
Devon	1

Reason for homelessness:

YHA	
Relationship breakdown	6
Loss of work/ moved for work	6
Eviction- Antisocial behaviour	8
Sale of family home	1
Issues with other tenants	3
Discharge from hospital	1
Passed tenancy to relative	1
Unsure	1

B&Bs	
Relationship breakdown	3
Feeling domestic abuse	3
Eviction- Antisocial behaviour	2
Eviction- could afford rent	2
Release from prison	4

ACCOMMODATION OUTCOMES (as of 20/03/2021)

YHA

- 3 moved into private rented accommodation
- 2 moved into Porchlight supported accommodation
- 2 placed in further Winter Provision temporary accommodation by Canterbury City Council **in Canterbury**
- 7 placed in further Winter Provision temporary accommodation by Canterbury City Council **outside of Canterbury**
- 1 refused further temporary accommodation due to it being out of area and returned to rough sleeping
- 1 refused temporary accommodation due to it being out of area and currently sofa surfing
- 4 rough sleeping. Unable to contact to offer accommodation
- 1 sofa surfing. No offer of temporary accommodation made
- 5 unknown. Loss of contact since end of YHA
- 1 in prison or custody

B&Bs

- 3 moved into private rented accommodation
- 7 remain in winter provision outside of Canterbury
- 4 currently sofa surfing

WINTER PROVISION ROOM ALLOCATION PROCEDURE

Prior to the activation of winter provision, Canterbury City Council devised a tiered room allocation policy hinging on a client's assessed risk factors, which is set out below:

Tier 1 - Those deemed to be high risk or within the definition of being Clinically Vulnerable

Self-contained accommodation primarily in temporary accommodation with support provided by the RSI and Catching Lives Winter Transformation Fund support workers.

Tier 2 - Low/Medium Risk Clients

YHA accommodation evening provision only with daily support provided by the RSI through Catching Lives. The Project will be staffed by two waking night staff from Catching Lives and Serveco. Clients must be able to adhere to the rules and engage meaningfully with the support on offer.

Tier 3 - New Entrant Rough Sleepers

New entrant rough sleepers referred to the Housing Solutions team for a standard assessment and should they meet the criteria they will be provided with accommodation under s.188 of the Housing Act with support offered through an RSI worker.

Canterbury City Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) if activated will accommodate anyone who is not accommodated under any of the tiered criteria. Placements are offered wherever CCC are able to identify a vacancy. Due to this winter's extended provision, when SWEP was activated placements were not taken up in as great a number as in previous years as a greater number of clients had been accommodated in either the YHA, or the B&Bs.

Client data obtained for both the YHA and B&Bs allow for some useful comparisons to be made:

- A greater number of women were accommodated in B&B placements than in the YHA.
- A similar number of clients in both the B&B and the YHA were listed as having physical health issues; a greater number of clients placed in the YHA were reported as having no physical health issues. A similar pattern is evident in

relation to clients with mental health issues, more of whom were accommodated in the B&Bs. These statistics align with the tier criteria, with clients identified as being clinically vulnerable assigned to Tier 1.

- All clients in the B&Bs were registered with a GP; this may be because more of the clients staying in the YHA were newly arrived foreign nationals who had yet to make contact with local health services.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In contrast to the conditions at the rolling night shelter, clients at the YHA had their own room, including their own bed; shower; and toilet. There were several positive outcomes of this, which are summarised below.

In the rolling night shelter there have been issues with clients snoring; clients have informed us that they do not want to access the rolling night shelter because their sleep is disturbed by others snoring, or making other noises during the night. Conversely, some clients have chosen not to stay at the night shelter as they themselves snore and have experienced hostility from others as a result of this. The benefit of better sleep extends beyond the night-time and reaches into other aspects of clients' lives. Crucially, better rested and safer feeling clients are better able to access support in the Day Centre. Further, some clients are working, or seeking work, and find the conditions in the rolling night shelter un conducive to securing, or maintaining, an employment position.

The sex aspects of homelessness wherein more males than females present as rough-sleepers, means that the number of female clients accessing previous rolling night shelter provision has been consistently small. On occasion, the rolling night shelter provision has seen one female sleeping in a communal area with up to nineteen male clients. Thus, for females, the communal nature of the rolling night shelter has constituted a very real barrier to their accessing the provision. One female client who had terminated her place at the rolling night shelter the year before, as the communal arrangements had escalated her anxiety to an intolerable degree, told us, "*I'd rather sleep in my car*". For her, the YHA provided a safe and accessible space, in which her only objection was the lack of a TV in the private rooms, as this would have provided something for clients to occupy themselves with in the evening. The importance of developing sensitive policy responses to women's homelessness has become a central theme in the recent research literature on homelessness, therefore these aspects of accessibility in relation to the rolling night shelter deserve further consideration.¹

¹ <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/assets/files/2017/07/Gendering-Womens-Homelessness.pdf>

Further to this, both male and female clients may have experienced domestic and/or physical abuse; moreover, individuals who are homeless are at increased risk of physical assault, including sexual abuse, whilst sleeping rough.²

In addition to these factors, clients often present with a history of complex childhood abuse and trauma and therefore, may feel disinclined to share a small space with other rough-sleepers.

Both clients and staff felt that the conditions in the YHA were more dignified than with the rolling night shelter. Staff observed that for many clients, this may be the first time in a long period that they had slept in their own private room: the YHA *“was ten times more dignified than clients sleeping on a cramped floor, often within a foot’s reach of each other.”*

One Project Worker observed that the pandemic meant that socialising with the clients was reduced and it was *“a lonely experience”* for both clients – who are the main concern – and also for Project Workers. Another commented that it would have worked better if the overnight workers could have begun earlier, at 9pm, for instance, so that they could spend time with the residents, getting to know them, *“making them a last drink or something to eat. You don’t see anyone until the morning when it’s all rushed and you’re rushing them through the door”*. This arrangement, *“would benefit clients as it would give them extra human beings to talk to”*.

Other key Points are:

- The task of managing and resolving conflict was enhanced as people had their own private spaces to withdraw to in the event of disagreements, or arguments.
- Having a centralised location meant that bedding did not need to be transported daily therefore this aspect of the night shelter provision was less labour intensive than is usually the case.
- We must continue to ensure all rough-sleepers are fully aware of the winter shelter and how it operates to hopefully alleviate any concerns some may have about accessing it.
- To ensure ongoing training in how to de-escalate conflict is provided for Project Workers and staff from outside agencies who are to be involved in facilitating the night shelter, to make sure all boundaries are clear and maintained consistently.

² https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2018/03/22/fifth-of-young-homeless-women-suffer-sex-abuse-says-report_n_19397380.html; <https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/crisis-reveals-scale-of-violence-and-abuse-against-rough-sleepers-as-charity-opens-its-doors-for-christmas>

- If winter provision is carried out as a partnership in future years it is vital that all services are aware of how the referral procedure, and access arrangements work, including Out of Hours Canterbury City Council, so that communication is swift and clear.
- Some staff at Catching Lives reported difficulties in communication with Canterbury City Council: *“the council were frequently unresponsive to emails or phone calls, and generally did not respond in a timely way. When this happened, it impacted on our ability to provide the highest level of support for our clients.”*
- For Project Workers to be provided with a synopsis of each client - their current circumstance, history, if known, and particular needs - in particular, for those working on the overnight shift.

Catching Lives are incredibly grateful to the Churches who have demonstrated huge generosity in providing use of their halls during previous winter night shelters, and also the volunteers who have supported people by providing activities and food preparation. The experience from both our own perspective and also our clients' is that the model in which they have their own self-contained rooms is beneficial for clients in the ways that we have discussed. An ideal scenario going forward would be to continue involving the community, providing volunteering opportunities where we can, as the support of our community is vital for us to be able to keep doing what we do, but to also secure an arrangement whereby it is possible for clients to be able to access their own room or space, which would be a better model for allowing a greater number of people to access the shelter, with or without a pandemic. We are keen to have discussions with the churches who have supported us in the past, and also Canterbury City Council in order to find a model for the coming winter that best meets the needs of our clients.

Feedback from clients

When clients were asked for feedback about what could have been better with the provision, one central theme emerged. This is that the YHA could have been opened in the day for clients to use, *“it was pukka, but the only thing was that they kicked you out between 7-8am and you couldn't go back until 5pm”*. This same client pointed out that if a client presented with a temperature, they would be barred from accessing the provision due to the pandemic, but that *“you're [clients are] more likely to catch a cold outside in cold and freezing temperatures”*.

Other comments echoed this: *“I wish it was open longer”*. Given that places such as cafes, and the library had to remain closed, in very cold weather of snow and ice clients struggled

to find dry places to sit down whilst waiting to return to the YHA in the evening. For clients who were self-sufficient with an income, the situation was slightly more manageable. For one weekend clients were able to stay at the YHA during the day, and we would like to express gratitude that the Council and the YHA enabled this. Moving forward, we would like to extend this arrangement across the entire period within which the night shelter operates.

One client came up with a useful suggestion that evaluation forms be left in clients' rooms on the last night so that feedback can be given anonymously. More generally, clients often expressed thanks and appreciation for the service.

Generally, feedback from clients about the YHA was positive, with comments such as *"it was better than what he had before"*; and *"it was very good"*. A few clients expressed appreciation that their views on the provision were being sought. Other feedback includes, *"staff were helpful"*; and *"it was good that it gave me structure to my day"*.

Feedback from Project Workers

A couple of Project Workers highlighted the importance of clear and consistent communication from the outset, from both Catching Lives and Canterbury City Council.

Generally, feedback was positive, with one Project Worker commenting that the night shelter, *"was brilliantly run by Catching Lives"* and that staff at the day centre were *"knowledgeable about almost everything I needed to know for the job"*.

The benefits of positive teamwork amongst the Project Workers were also highlighted with one worker stating that, *"I think we pulled together well when we needed to [...] covering sickness, etc.!"*

Case study of a client's experience of winter provision

-written by Megan Johnson, Project Worker supporting clients in B&B's

Usually during the winter months churches open their doors and provide overnight shelter for people with no home to go to. The need for social distancing during the pandemic means this has not been a viable option this winter. The government issued funding to enable local authorities to address this and provide emergency winter provision.

Canterbury City Council has done so by accommodating people in hostels, B&Bs and studio

flats. In some cases people could stay only overnight, in others, they could stay 24/7. For those provided with a room available day and night, they have had a time of relative security and stability, this has laid the ground for people to cope better with the challenges they face, engage consistently with our support and potentially change their situation of homelessness. Thanks to additional government COVID19 funding Catching Lives has been able to temporarily employ additional staff and spend more one-on-one time building relationships and supporting clients to progress with their recovery.

One notable example of this is a woman who lost her cleaning job due to COVID19, with the stress of being unable to pay her rent and the rampant fear during the height of the pandemic, she experienced a mental health breakdown. English not being her first language she didn't know who she could reach out to or what statutory support was available and she ended up sleeping on the streets for several months. Canterbury City Council accommodated her in a B&B and Catching Lives have been working with her for several months now. We have been able to support her to make a successful application for the Right to Remain in the UK, a new requirement due to Brexit. Not only did this mean she could access public funds, it was a huge relief for her to know that she will be able to stay in the UK where her grown up children are living.

Once her Right to Remain was confirmed we were able to support her to apply for universal credit and she was able to buy a mobile phone which meant she could access the internet and search for jobs. She had also applied for a current account with a local building society but initially been rejected due to her lack of fixed abode (which is a common experience for many who are homeless). However we were able to advocate on her behalf, which resulted in an investigation leading to this decision being overturned, so she now has a working current account again.

We accompanied and supported her for an assessment with her Mental Health Social Worker and they found that her mental health had improved significantly since the previous summer when she had been hospitalised several times. They agreed she was fit to work and so we supported her to prepare a CV and start applying for jobs, which she was able to do from her accommodation using her mobile and the wifi of the B&B. We began searching for private rented accommodation, she wanted to stay in Canterbury where she has lived for the last seven years. During our house search a potential landlord who couldn't offer a room but was highly empathetic to her situation gave us a lead on a cleaning job. We contacted their recommendation and she was offered work to start once she was living back in Canterbury. Within a week we had found a room in a shared house where she felt safe and welcome.

We successfully applied for a grant from the Vicar's Relief Fund to help her pay her deposit and first months' rent. Though happy to offer a room, the new landlord wanted ideally to

see a contract of employment first. We hurriedly arranged a trial shift at the cleaning company and provided transport to and from her first day in her new job. She worked hard and successfully secured a contract which we were able to show to the landlord and we helped her move in to her new home a few days later.

Things are slowly getting back on track and for the first time in a long time, she is starting to think about the future and building the life she hopes for. We have been supporting her to improve her English with a free online English Language course so that she will be able to apply for a variety of different roles in the future and we remain her first port of call if anything starts to go wrong.

Without the safety and stability of a room available to her 24/7, things might have turned out differently. The emergency winter provision has provided many of the homeless people we are supporting a safe place to rest, and also a base from which they can take the first steps towards recovery.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who provided financial donations towards our Winter Provision, and thank you to all our volunteers and other members of the community who have supported us, not just during the winter but for the duration of the time we have spent in lockdown, including everyone at St Paul's church for the generous weekly food donations that were dropped off for those staying at the YHA which were gratefully received!

Thank you also to all of our staff members, for pulling together and really making a difference.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
DONATIONS	£45,000.00	SALARIES	£44,946.80
GRANTS	£22,921.00	PURCHASES	£201.81
		STAFF EXPENSES	£686.41
<u>INCOME TOTAL</u>	£67, 921.00	<u>EXPENDITURE TOTAL</u>	£47,645.02