
WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

20TH DECEMBER 2021 - 28TH FEBRUARY 2022

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Paul Todd, Becky Heatman &
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INTRODUCTION

Catching Lives is an independent charity based in Canterbury, Kent, supporting rough sleepers and the vulnerably housed within the Canterbury & East Kent area. Our vision is of a society where **all are included** and everyone, no matter how disadvantaged, can make a contribution. We're working towards ending the harm caused to individuals and families by homelessness, rough sleeping and insecure housing.



CANTERBURY COMMUNITY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

Canterbury Community Shelter Winter Night (CCS) began life as a community project led by Catching Lives in partnership with churches in Canterbury of various denominations. The charity developed a "rolling" shelter with the burden of accommodation shared between the multiple church halls and volunteer groups.

The Churches provide a warm, safe space and refreshments alongside volunteers from the parish who ready the venue and create a warm welcome. For its part, Catching Lives provides Project Workers, a Coordinator and a Deputy who work with volunteers to ensure that CCS is professional, bounded and safe for everyone involved. The charity also has an 'on-call' system of off-site support that is responsive and helpful.

The rolling night shelter provides up to 21 spaces for clients who sleep on mattresses and sleeping bags. Our clients use our centre during the day, taking supper at the Day Centre and walking to the sleeping venue. All clients must, as a condition of entry, undertake a mental health assessment with our Mental Health Specialists, and their admission to the shelter is conditional on this.

The Catching Lives definition of homelessness is broad and includes rough sleepers, other roofless persons and anyone who does not have their own home, as well as persons with no right to reside where they are staying, so-called sofa surfers, or a person who is unable to return to their own home. Guests present to CCS with a variety of issues affecting their circumstances. They could be individuals that are prison leavers, people suffering with their mental health, drug users / alcoholic dependence, or those with family breakdowns. Indeed many of our guests had more than one issue, making their situation even more difficult. Some of our guests this year were not entitled to public funds due to their issues or immigration status.

Paul Todd was reassigned as **Coordinator** from within Catching Lives, and **Becky Heatman** recruited as **Deputy Coordinator**. The coordinators designed and arranged a **traditional church hall-based dormitory style Night-Shelter** based on their assessment of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department of Health guidelines. Accordingly, staffing and volunteers were sought and engaged, several training sessions arranged and delivered, and logistics and goods bought in preparation for delivering the Shelter in this form.

On 27th November 2021, CCS received a directive from the Association of Public Health Directors which 'strongly recommended that the **dormitory model of Night-Shelter was unsafe**, with particular regard to the Covid-19, Pandemic Flu virus and Respiratory System Virus (RSV) heavily present in the general population and endemic within homeless populations. There followed a visit from DLUHC on Monday 1st December echoing this sentiment, essentially barring Catching Lives and all other Night-Shelter providers from using dormitories. Consequently, staff were disengaged, volunteers stood down and alternative provision sought, to fulfil the instructions of the board.

Lynda Desmarais, a long-time supporter of Catching Lives, was approached as she had a number of local hotels and **kindly allowed Catching Lives the use of Peregrine House (the Shelter), a six-bedroom Guesthouse, for the winter period at cost**. CSS opted to use these as single occupancy rooms per DOH and DLUHC guidance, meaning significant remodelling of staffing, catering and accommodations. No volunteers were required, and with six residents at any one time, the provision of lone workers within the parameters of the Catching Lives Lone Worker Policy.

A significant difficulty facing CSS was that Catching Lives' usual insurers declined to cover the service as set out above, and it took several days to find alternative provision. Hence, CCS did not admit its first Guests until 20th December 2021.

INNOVATIONS

Once coordinators had secured single room occupancy for guests, we could not offer as many bed spaces as in previous years. **This change had the unforeseen effect of making it easier to work with individuals with chaotic and unstructured lifestyles.** Some of the traditional night shelter policies and procedures had to be adapted to accommodate the situation. Shelter rules previously applied through the rolling shelters were found not to fit.

The screening processes described above were stringently applied, with several applicants turned away as being unmanageable or, in the case of couples, unwillingness to separate into two rooms which would have nullified the agreed insurance arrangements.

Catching Lives' Lone Worker Policy was introduced and a change in the CCS philosophy instituted. The Project Workers were steered towards guests with a holistic, person-centred approach in mind. The dividends of this approach were initially anticipated to be identified at the end of the Project. However, the benefit began to show through within a few days of opening.

Guests were expected to do their own housekeeping, to ensure their rooms' cleanliness and do their laundry, including bedclothes, regularly. This engendered a certain house-proudness in the Guests and added to the sense of comfort and wellbeing.

Another significant change in the service delivery was in the way CCS managed Guests and Covid19. Guests were encouraged to wear masks in the communal areas and take frequent LFD tests, and were asked to wash their hands with increased frequency and to report illnesses as they arose.

Those Guests who tested positive for Covid19, could not be satisfactorily isolated in CCS and were accommodated by Canterbury City Council other locations. This relocation consequently limited the work we could do with them at that time and meant we had empty rooms for a period until their return. This was justified by a need to quarantine the rooms for 72 hours and then disinfect them. Since this process took a considerable portion of the time the guest was absent, Coordinators deemed it reasonable that the rooms were held back from re-letting.

Another rule change focused on respecting the autonomy of Guests, who now had access to the building from 5pm to 9am every day. No admittance was to be given outside of these hours. A newly instituted curfew of 9pm was emplaced^[1] – however, this was negotiable on a needs-must basis upon request and subsequent discussion with the Coordinator or their Deputy. The shelter placed the enforcement of rules on the individual rather than on a group dynamic, an imposition that was largely successful.

[1] In previous iterations of CCS, guests were admitted between 5-6pm and once at the Centre were barred from leaving until 7am the next day or even leaving the sight of Project Workers. Failing to comply with this rule meant that the guest was unable to return to the Shelter and their bed space was placed in jeopardy. The rationale of this was that if guests were to consume drugs and /or alcohol, they would be significantly more difficult to manage on their return. This rule caused some debate amongst guests.

DELIVERY

CCS Accommodated **15 Guests in total for 71 nights**. These Guests were required to submit to a Needs and Risk Assessment and a mental health worker interview before admittance. CCS offered each Guest an en-suite room for their exclusive use. There were tea and coffee-making facilities in all the rooms, as well as access to a simple kitchen space for coffee/tea/sugar refills and access to a microwave and fridge upon request. Provided alongside this were beverages and a light supper of soup and sandwiches. Guests were free to augment this to their satisfaction.

Breakfast, lunch and laundry facilities were offered during the day at Canterbury Open Centre (the Centre). It was agreed at the outset that **each Guest would be supported with a homelessness application** where one was not already in place, as part of the Project Worker Support Sessions. Guests were encouraged to make full use of the Centre for their daytime activities and support, and to join in with classes and activity sessions provided there.

The Coordinator undertook to hold a weekly meeting with relevant Council Officers, to promote the interests of the guests throughout the Shelter period.



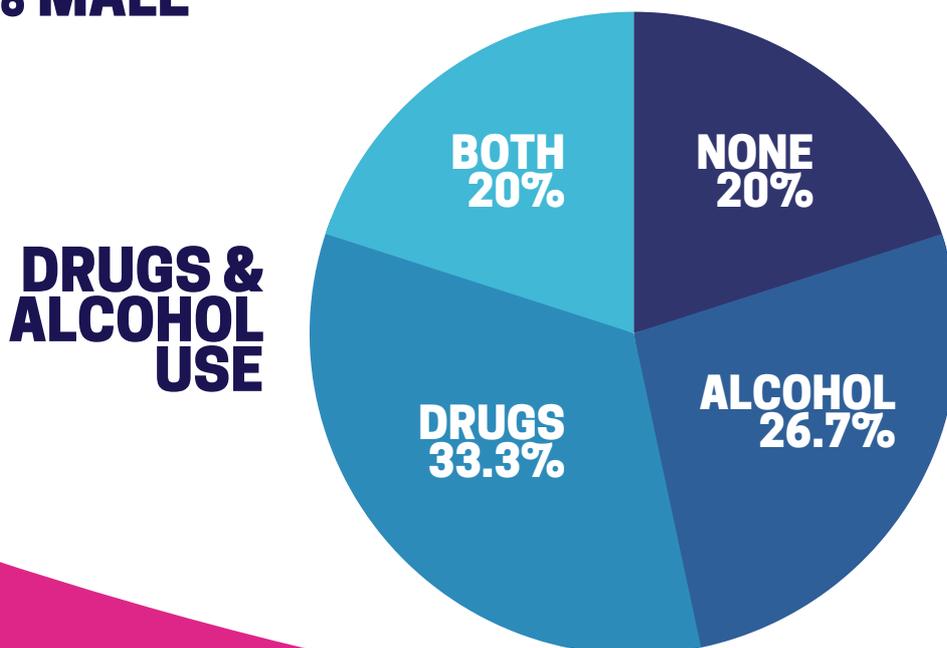
BREAKDOWN OF GUESTS

In line with local and national trends noted by Catching Lives in its monitoring of persons accessing the Centre, the majority of guests were men over 30. Only two women attended, around 14% which is somewhat lower than Catching Lives assessed as in the general homeless population, but in line with current local and national trends. Significantly, these two guests had both been victims of domestic violence and had several failed attempts at resettlement.

Two clients were non-UK Nationals with no recourse to public funds, one a woman the other a man. Support was offered by project staff both at CCS and the Centre to address this by making applications for settled status and in claiming ancillary benefits to which non-UK nationals were entitled, further support was sought from Migrant Help where necessary.

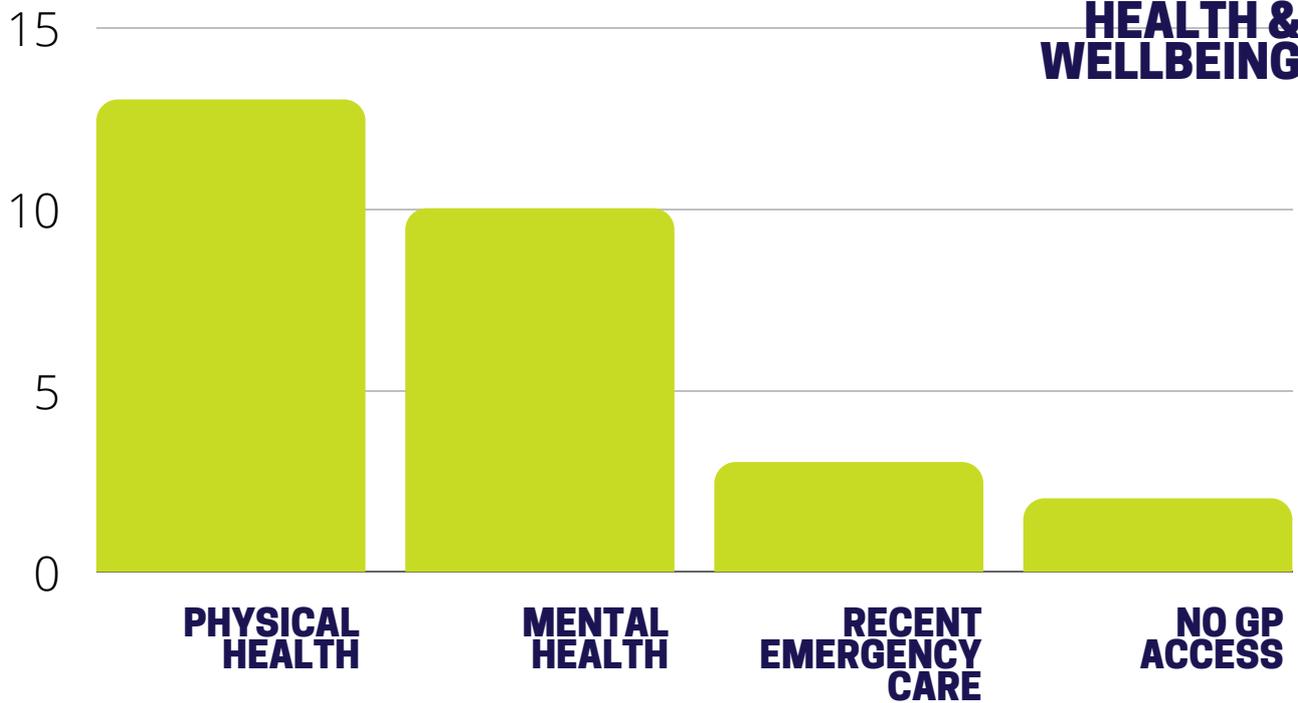
Almost every client described mental health issues (see Appendix 2) ranging from depressions and anxieties supported by GPs to serious and on-going psychosis. One client required further input from Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and went missing on two occasions the last of which merited a full intervention by mental health services under the Mental Health Act.

Most guests reported extent or historical substance and alcohol problems. These guests were signposted to Forward Trust support.



**FULL BREAKDOWN:
APPENDIX 1**

HEALTH & WELLBEING



HOUSING SITUATION IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO CCS



**FULL BREAKDOWN:
APPENDIX 2**

OUTCOME ANALYSIS

This year saw an 89.25% occupancy rate across the entire offering, which is a vast improvement on previous years. For example, the 2019/20 Shelter reported a 57% occupancy rate. **Guests have reported feeling happier and more dignified this year**, having their own rooms, compared to sleeping in a church hall. This has led to the highest occupancy rate CCS has seen, as guests felt more empowered by the environment we fostered for them.

This year also showed **66.6% of Guests leaving with a positive housing outcome**, compared to 37% in 2019/20. (The last time CCS operated an independent Night Shelter).

The majority of nights we operated, we did so at either full or near to full capacity. We never had fewer than half the spaces filled. 85.9% of the time, we had either 5 or 6 rooms filled. This was an average of 5.4 bed spaces per night.

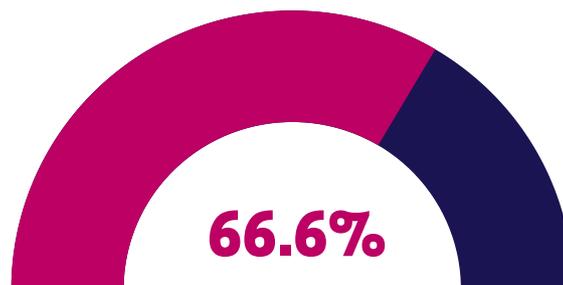
We also saw a large uptick in engagement with activities at the day centre by the Night Shelter Guests, compared to before the Night-Shelter opened. **Significantly 100% of the Shelter occupants also engaged with the Canterbury Open Centre by day**. This meant we were able to provide stronger, more consistent support. We feel this showed in the levels of engagement we saw with the Night Shelter guests and the ways in which they engaged with the Centre's services. We believe this was a factor in the strong positive outcomes observed this year.

The hope is that we can take these outstanding outcome numbers and scale them to a larger offering, while maintaining the level of consistency of support that we were able to offer guests this year.



OCCUPANCY

POSITIVE OUTCOMES



3 ROOMS OCCUPIED 

FULL BREAKDOWN: APPENDIX 3

ACTIVITIES AT CANTERBURY OPEN CENTRE

A positive aspect of the support offered in this year's Shelter was the invitation and encouragement to attend activity sessions at the Centre. All guests availed themselves of these opportunities and this in turn led to a more complete experience in the Shelter. Miriam Ellis, Arts & Sustainment Coordinator, has offered the following insight.

"Through the various activities we run at the centre, we hope to improve the self-esteem of our homeless and vulnerably housed clients as well as improving the basic skills (communication, working with others, decision-making, functional skills and fine motor skills) needed to help them take the first steps towards personal recovery and independent living.

Many lead chaotic lifestyles often driven by alcohol/drug dependency so even getting them to attend the activities should be viewed as an achievement. Over the last few years, the numbers who participate has increased and we have found that even when housed they continue to attend.

Once housed clients struggle with the isolation. Being able to offer them activities that they can attend in an environment they are comfortable with is essential for their continued progress towards independent living.

From our experience, we have seen clients transform dramatically in terms of their confidence and self-esteem after attending just a few activity workshops. The afternoon activities offer a relaxed, safe space, which often allows clients to open up more about their experiences giving us a greater idea of how we can support them further as well as connecting them to other services.

It is so important to be able to continue to offer activities that might help to alleviate some of the stresses and worries that come when you find yourself on the street, especially during the winter months."

Miriam Ellis, Arts & Sustainment Coordinator



CASE STUDIES

There follows a series of in-depth appreciations of the Guests as observed by Project Staff during the period of the Shelter:

GUEST 1 - CHARLES:

Charles is a middle-aged man who has spent time sofa-surfing, sleeping rough and living out of his vehicle entered the Shelter on the first night of operation. Charles had previously lived in East Sussex and had come to Canterbury seeking respite from violence from his ex-partner's family who he described as taking against him.

Prior to the opening of the Shelter, Charles had made an application to CCC and the Guest considered a priority only if he had returned to his locally connected authority. This being the case CCC declined to assist and his homelessness continued.

Charles had prior engagement with the criminal justice system both as an offender and as a victim of crime. Indeed, it was his being victimised that drew him to Catching Lives and to CCS. During his stay at the Shelter, Charles was arrested by police, interviewed and released without charge, being accused of a stalking offence.

On first and subsequent assessment of Charles, it was clear that his ability to manage activities of daily living was highly developed and that his homelessness situation indicated that he needed no/low support. A referral was made to Canterbury Local Link, an interview took place and an Assured Shorthold Tenancy offered to Charles, that he accepted and is now resident in.

GUEST 2 - BARRY:

Barry is a British man in his mid-forties. Barry is a person who has spent a considerable portion of his life in jail and shows signs of institutionalisation. Barry is distrustful of rules, authority figures and can be uncooperative in his dealings with support workers.

Barry was proposed for a room by the Deputy Coordinator, Becky, who made a case for him based on his engagement with her, his engagement with Forward Trust and continuing abstinence from drug use and his stated desire to change his personal circumstances.

Whilst Barry was free from drug use throughout his stay, he was still suffering the effects of alcohol addiction and consequently found the curfew difficult to manage and sometimes left the shelter early in the morning or did not return, as his cravings affected him. Nevertheless, Barry engaged with staff positively and with purpose, his being to find follow on accommodation that more properly suited his needs. He received support for this from Project Workers and continuing support from RSI and Forward Trust.

Barry eventually found the restrictions necessary for the successful operation of The Shelter too restrictive and chose to leave, finding accommodation through work with CCS Project workers and the RSI.

CASE STUDIES - CONTINUED

GUEST 3 - NANCY:

Nancy, a woman in her early 40s, who was formerly a habitual drug user, has been in and around homelessness and rough sleeping for some 8 years. Throughout that time, she has endured periods of habitual alcohol drug use, violence both domestic and other. Nancy has had multiple arrests and convictions with some serious offences. Nancy has some learning difficulties and suffers from the ill effects of traumatic brain injury. She is a Canterbury local and has family with whom she is in touch. She has several children from whom she is estranged and who are in care due in some part to her repeated patterns of negative behavior.

Nancy has had several attempts at resettlement, which have not yet translated into permanent stable accommodation. Nancy was at the time of the shelter's opening engaging with Canterbury City Council's homelessness team and continues to bid on potential properties. She was and remains supported throughout by Outreach and by RSI workers. Nancy is very determined to have a successful future and is generally optimistic in demeanor

During her stay at the Shelter Nancy was comfortable enough to be able to talk to Project Staff freely and express the fact she wanted to go and use drugs. Our Project Worker was then able to talk Nancy through the initial cravings until they passed and advise on coping strategies. Nancy benefited significantly from this and did not relapse at that time.

GUEST 4 - ROGER:

Roger, who is 50 and has a long history of homelessness, offending and problematic substance misuse, returned to COC after a period of incarceration and who was released from prison to rough sleeping. He presented in quite a distressed state, with considerable red flag warnings evident as to his sobriety and mental well-being. Roger is well known to project staff, who found this behavior unusual and felt that the Shelter would be of benefit to Roger at least as a temporary measure, to stabilize his substance use and see how his mental health was after a period of sobriety. Roger rigorously screened and after thorough risk, needs and mental health assessments Roger was allocated a room at the Shelter to rest and recover, with warmth, food, and active support from project staff.

In very short order, Roger felt much better. Noticeably, his apparent psychosis had subsided and his drinking and drug use had reduced enormously. His personal and physical appearance also improved immensely during this time. He was cleaner and he was clearly more at ease with himself. About halfway through the Shelter, Roger was offered a live-in job, Project Staff advised him that he did not have to take the job and because of the necessary quarantine/disinfection period of turnover for the room, it was agreed that he could try the job and he would keep his place if it was unsuccessful. Roger took us up on our offer and tried the job for two days, calling us on the second to say he did not feel comfortable and would be returning. At the end of the Shelter, project Staff felt able to refer Roger into more secure accommodation, he has since found private accommodation out of district.

GUEST INSIGHT

Paul Todd discussed the Shelter with one of the longer-term Guests Roger, who ultimately went on to supported accommodation. We chose this guest as he has had experience of previous years' shelters as well:

Roger said it was a pleasant surprise to get a private room, and was not what he was expecting at all. He reported an excellent level of care from the staff at the Shelter, whom he found knowledgeable and approachable.

He didn't mind the rules around not congregating once inside, as there was more flexibility to go out and come back in later (referring to the 9pm curfew). So by the time he was in for the evening he was ready to sit quietly and watch television in his room, anyway. Roger much preferred having his own room to sleeping dormitory-style, as in previous years, and felt this year's Shelter presented a wholesale improvement on previous years.

Roger said that he didn't expect to be accommodated as quickly as he was and felt that the Shelter had provided a great 'stepping stone' for him and sped up the process of being accommodated compared to what he was expecting.

As described in the case study above, there was an opportunity during the period in which he was accommodated at the Shelter to take an old live-in job as a roofer that he had previously held. He got a haircut and was excited about it. CCS project staff were concerned it may have been the beginning of an old cycle of poor-quality accommodation, short-lived and under-paid hard work. This was his decision to make and we supported him in his decision and wished him luck. He then returned to the Shelter having decided for himself that it would be a step backwards and that he would like to move forward.

We at CCS were delighted that he had made this decision. It demonstrated that he felt sufficiently well supported to decide for himself. When asked about the reason for this decision, he said that having the Shelter to fall back on made him feel like he had the power to say no. Roger described the accommodation offered, a caravan, as cold and noisy and by being in the Shelter he had come to realise he wanted a permanent home where he can seek peace and quiet when he needs it.

He enjoyed the structure that the Shelter brought to his day and reported feeling happier and more positive now, than at the end of previous Shelters.

SUMMATIVE CONCLUSIONS

The 2021-22 Winter Night-Shelter has been a measurable success.

Notwithstanding the public policy issues described above which meant the offering was substantially different to the usual model that CCS uses, it was clear from opening the resource was needed, and delivered effective and consistently successful interventions and ensured that our Guests, the most at risk members of the Canterbury rough sleeper population were given safety, respite and support.

We have demonstrated clearly that our Guests seized the opportunity we provided with both hands and took an active and constructive part in bringing lasting change to their lives.

The one entirely negative element of CCS 2021-22 is that in common with 2020 due to the pandemic Covid19 regulations we were unable to make use of our established volunteer base. Shelter coordinators noted this concern in the initial stages of the Shelter. We sought to address this by supplying information and updates to Parish coordinators.

CCS 2021-22 has demonstrated the on-going and pressing need for winter night-shelter provision within the district. Our close working arrangement with Canterbury City Council, the RSI team and other services has led to some fine outcomes, which, whilst not necessarily following on from the Shelter have given guests the confidence in Catching Lives services more generally. The CCS management team were satisfied that our offering was the best it could have been in the circumstances. Furthermore, that whilst we could not attend to the needs of every rough sleeper in Canterbury, our offering had the impact for which it was designed and that CCS remains a viable and integral part of homelessness provision in the Canterbury District.

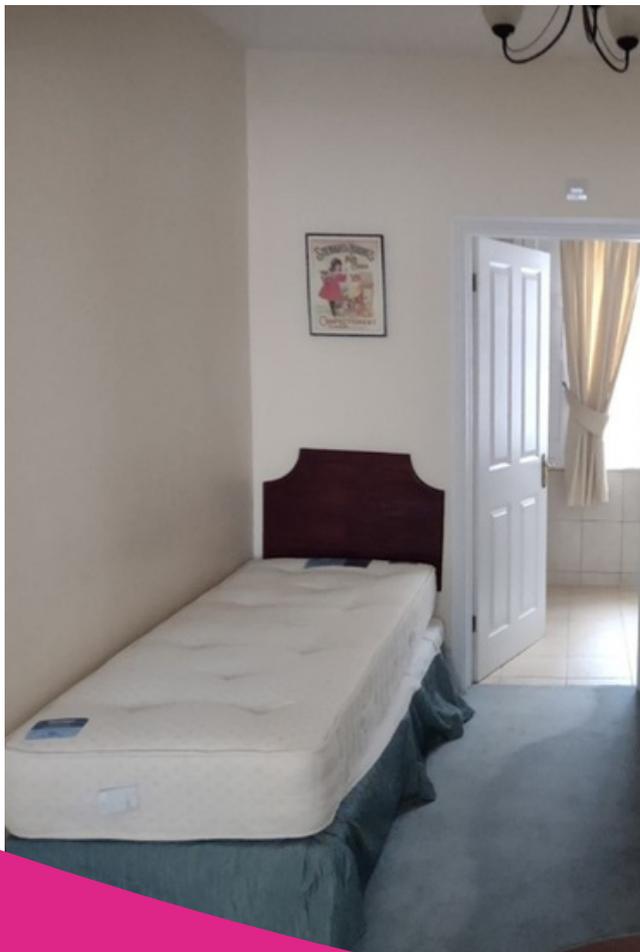
Paul Todd
CCS Coordinator

Becky Heatman
CCS Deputy Coordinator

Ruth Akehurst
CCS Administrator

APPENDIX 1: BREAKDOWN OF GUESTS

Age	Gender	Nationality	Ethnicity	Care leaver?	Ex Service?
41	F	British	White British	No	No
55	M	British	White British	No	No
57	M	British	White British	No	Yes
50	M	British	White British	Yes	No
60	M	British	White British	No	No
46	M	British	White British	Yes	No
30	M	Latvian	White Other	No	No
33	M	British	White British	No	No
45	F	German	White Other	No	No
34	M	British	White British	No	No
51	M	British	White British	No	No
42	M	British	White British	No	No
42	M	British	Mixed Race: White And Black African	Yes	No
50	M	British	White British	Unsure	No
30	M	British	White British	No	Yes



APPENDIX 2: GUEST INFORMATION RELATING TO STATUS, HOUSING, MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

Housing situation immediately prior to CCS:

Rough sleeping prior to access:	13
Sofa-Surfing/no right to reside:	2
Extent homelessness application:	10
Release from prison/hospital/psychiatric institution, (immediately prior to CCS engagement):	4

Substance/alcohol issues:

Alcohol:	10
Drug use:	10
Engaged with drug services/prescribed:	4

Benefits issues:

Benefits claim in place:	13
No recourse to Public funds (At time of CCS engagement):	2

Health and wellbeing:

Physical health issues, recent emergency access:	13
Mental health, recent emergency healthcare:	10
No access to GP:	3
Literacy:	2
	4

Engagement with Criminal justice system:

Criminal record:	11
Bail:	3
Probation/licence:	5

Immigration issues:

Pre-settled status:	2
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APPENDIX 3: OUTCOME ANALYSIS

No of Guests: 15

Dates that CCS ran: 20th December 2021 – 28th February 2022

Number of night available across the entire offering: 71

No of bed spaces in total across the entire offering: 428

No of bed spaces used in total: 382

Percentage occupancy rate: 89.3%

No of Guests entering accommodation from the Shelter: 6 (40%)

No of Guests referred or bidding: 2 (13.3%)

No. of Guests returned to family: 2 (13.3%)

Total positive outcomes: 10 (66.6%)

No of Guests returned to rough sleeping: 5 (33.3%)

Guest engagement:

All 6 rooms full: 36 nights (50.7%)

5 rooms full: 25 nights (35.2%)

4 rooms full: 10 nights (11.3%)

3 rooms full: 3 nights (2.8%)

2 rooms full: 0 nights (0%)

1 room full: 0 nights (0%)

0 rooms full: 0 nights (0%)

Average of 5.4 beds filled per night.

APPENDIX 4: FINANCIAL REPORT

The costs of this year's Shelter are unique and representative only of the CCS offering of 2021-22.

Income	£
Donations	45,000.00
Donations brought forward from 2020/21	<u>27,401.50</u>
	Total 72,401.50
 - Cost	
Staffing	39,000.00[1]
Consumables	355.43
Utilities	792.00[2]
Insurance	7,144.00
	Total spend <u>47,291.43</u>
	Residual Total 25,110.07

[1] Presumes fairly static staffing costs

[2] Estimate awaiting final invoice

APPENDIX 5: SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Guests liked it
- Felt dignified compared to a church
- Felt more empowered
- Led to stronger positive outcomes

Weaknesses

- The Venue wasn't big enough
- No communal space (this was a statutory issue due to the pandemic, but something the Guests lamented often)
- No opportunities for volunteer involvement
- Not long enough (march nights very cold)
- No workable kitchen for meals

Opportunities

- Provide additional support services increasing likelihood of positive outcomes
- To have the setting and at Canterbury Open Centre continuously available throughout the day. Meaning that Guests are not simply walking the streets, in hope of a bed space.

Threats

- Public Policy and further pandemic conditions.
- Unavailability of church halls
- Losing connection with parishes, parishioners and volunteers due to inactivity.

APPENDIX 6: PERSONNEL

Night Shelter Coordinator - Paul Todd

Deputy Coordinator - Becky Heatman

Administrator/Project Worker - Ruth Akehurst

Arts and Activities Coordinator - Miriam Ellis

Project Workers -

Gill Key,

David Morgan,

Patrick Wanstall,

Anna Robinson,

Zoe Defferary

On-call Support - James Duff (CL Trustee)

Hotel Manager - Simon Roberts