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Introduction

The Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter has now been in operation for the past five years offering shelter for the homeless in Folkestone over the coldest months of the year. This winter, although not a cold as previous years, proved to be the wettest and windiest. The shelter ran for a total of 84 nights from the evening of the 2 December 2013 until the morning of the 24 February 2014. An army of volunteers totalling 171 provided 5270 volunteer hours which enabled the smooth running of the Winter Shelter for 42 guests. Guests, volunteers and staff sat down together and enjoyed over 1000 hot meals.

Each year volunteers come forward to offer their services, many for the fifth year in succession, and are joined by new recruits. The volunteers are the real force of the winter shelter.

I returned as project Manager for the third time and was joined by four part-time Project Workers, Lorraine Burley, Katie Janman, Stephen Ridgwell and Eric Brooks and Theresa Fowler returned as Project Administrator. I was blessed with their dedication and each brought their individual skills to the fore.

The Rainbow Centre and its staff, Jon Wilson (CEO), Richard Bellamy (Centre Manager) and John Burgess (Project Worker) have provided us with their continuing support which has been invaluable to the Winter Shelter as has the Winter Shelter Steering Group who provide us with their leadership, administration and governance.

The generosity given by the Churches, their leaders and volunteer co-ordinators remains a constant and once again has provided our guests with a warm welcome and in turn offered shelter, warmth and food. The humanity shown to our guests and the way volunteers relate to our guests is inspiring.

The community of Folkestone have again rallied around to lend their support with fundraising and we are extremely grateful. An organised Big Sleep Out in October 2013 was hugely successful.

We hope that our guests, during their time with us, have managed to achieve positive, sustainable progression in their individual circumstances and that the winter shelter has played its part in enabling these changes, however small, to happen.

Thank you all

Charlie Oakes
Project Manager

Shelter Culture

• To provide an evening and night shelter for homeless people in Folkestone using Church buildings and members through the coldest period of the winter 2012–13.

A

• To help homeless people move on to appropriate accommodation, resisting dependency on the shelter.

I

• To engage church members and local people with some of the most vulnerable people in Folkestone without discrimination, expressing Christian compassion in building supportive relationships.

M

• To establish the funding and administrative support necessary to enable the provision of such a shelter to continue in future years.

S

Christian Ethos

The Winter Shelter is one of the many Christian led community inclusive projects of the Folkestone Rainbow Centre:

'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Matt 25:35-36

Housing Justice Night Shelter Quality Mark

This year we elected to take part in a pilot scheme for a new Night Shelter Quality Mark, being awarded by Housing Justice (HJQM) set up with the aim to promote safe practice and a standard of excellence. Night Shelters holding the Housing Justice Quality Mark will assure funders, local authorities, insurers and the local community that the shelter is run to the highest standard.

*I could not speak highly enough
of the work they are achieving*
Jamie Nalton (HJQM)

FCWS received a very good feedback report from the assessor which will stand us in good stead for achieving the Quality Mark next winter.

How are we Funded?

FCWS funding for the entire project is raised through applications for grants from Trust and Community Funds, our annual sponsored event 'Big Sleep Out' and donations from individuals, churches, local organisations and the wider community of Folkestone.

We have received support in a variety of ways from a massive 35 local churches. They have provided venues and volunteers, they participated in our Big Sleep Out, and they have fundraised and made donations of both money and clothing items for the guests. Churches Together in Folkestone has also helped with awareness and communication.

It is our duty as a project to use these resources in a responsible and accountable way. To this end the Folkestone Winter Shelter has not only sought value for money but also purchased durable products of good quality in order to provide the basis of a Winter Shelter.

Transport and the delivery costs of the shelter on a nightly basis were again helped by the kind loan of an individual who donated his vehicle for the duration of the Shelter, meaning FCWS incurred only fuel and insurance costs.

Staff wages are always going to be the biggest cost but that is balanced by the value they represent in achieving the aims and objectives of the project. Outside the contribution made to the physical shelter, their advocacy work is essential to successful outcomes for our guests (see page 5).

Churches and individuals provided most of the food and refreshments at their venues throughout the 12 weeks, an impressive commitment to the project. A vast amount of toiletries, socks and other items were directly given to the FCWS staff at the Rainbow Centre or in church venues in support of the shelter and were received gratefully by guests who often arrived with virtually only the 'shirts' on their backs.

We are also very blessed to receive donated services from local organisations.



Podiatry Care



Provided 60 meals

peppermint
Marketing Expertise

F J Fullick Ltd
Boxes for Sleep-Out

 **BLUESKY PIE**
Event Organising

BOOKER
Folkestone
Boxes for Sleep-Out



Washed Bedding

Host Churches

We would like to thank everyone from the venues that we have had the privilege to work with this year, from caretakers to church leaders, all of whom have helped make the process of running the shelter an easier one.



South Kent Community Church



United Reformed Church



Harbour Community Church



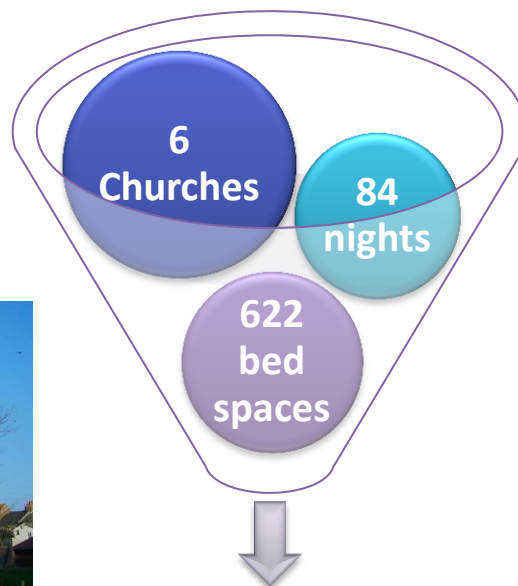
Folkestone Methodist Church



St Saviour's Church



St John's Church



1 Winter Shelter

One of the best things about the Shelter was seeing the guests smile Shelter Volunteer 13/14

Special thanks also go to Bill Regan who has again completed the fire risk assessments for all 6 venues; your hard work is much appreciated.

A Day in the Life of a Project Worker

64
Registrations

A Project worker's day does not stop at the delivery, set-up and management of each night's shelter. Project workers are involved in registration and risk assessment of new guests to the shelter.

185
One to One
Meetings

They liaise, on a daily basis, with the appropriate venue co-ordinators to ensure that they are informed of numbers and dietary considerations to be catered for. The project workers' remit goes far beyond these responsibilities and indeed one of the main roles of a project worker is to offer help and support to those guests whose circumstances have led them to becoming homeless.

55
Appointments
arranged

Our guests have a wide range of issues that have led to their current predicament. These include long-standing drug /alcohol problems, mental health (often combined) issues, financial difficulties and relationship breakdowns. Through sign-posting, project workers aid our guests in accessing help from relevant external agencies in order for them to turn their lives around.

14
Appointments
accompanied

7
Community
housing
applications

They also act as advocates and identify guests' needs and encourage them to transform their lives by addressing their housing issues, their addictions, mental health, relationships and life skills alike. Guests have been helped with registering with housing, local doctors, dentists, mental health professionals, life skill services and drug and alcohol agencies.

Homelessness
registration
with SDC

Housing
applications
with SDC

To say that a project workers' work-load is not varied would be a severe understatement and their work ethic and diligence, afforded to each one of our guests, should not go un-noticed but indeed applauded.

Project Workers also liaise with...

Mental
Health
Services

Optician

Dentist

Bank

Courts

Job
Centre
Plus

GP

The project workers make many referrals

We would like to thank all these wonderful organisations who the Winter Shelter team have referred guests to, for specialist help during their stay with us.



The shelter takes referrals from other agencies and organisations

The 64 referrals made to the Winter Shelter were received from: Folkestone Rainbow Centre(31), self-referrals(11), Porchlight(9), SDC(2), Job Centre Plus(2), Probation(2), Millfield(2) and 1 each from KASSH, Age UK, Magistrates court, Crisis and Lydd Airport!

Our Guests

Dynamics within the shelter change year by year, however the issues that lead to homelessness remain constant. Guests present with issues of addiction and mental health problems (often combined), eviction, financial difficulties and relationship breakdowns.

How our guests told us they felt when arriving at the shelter...

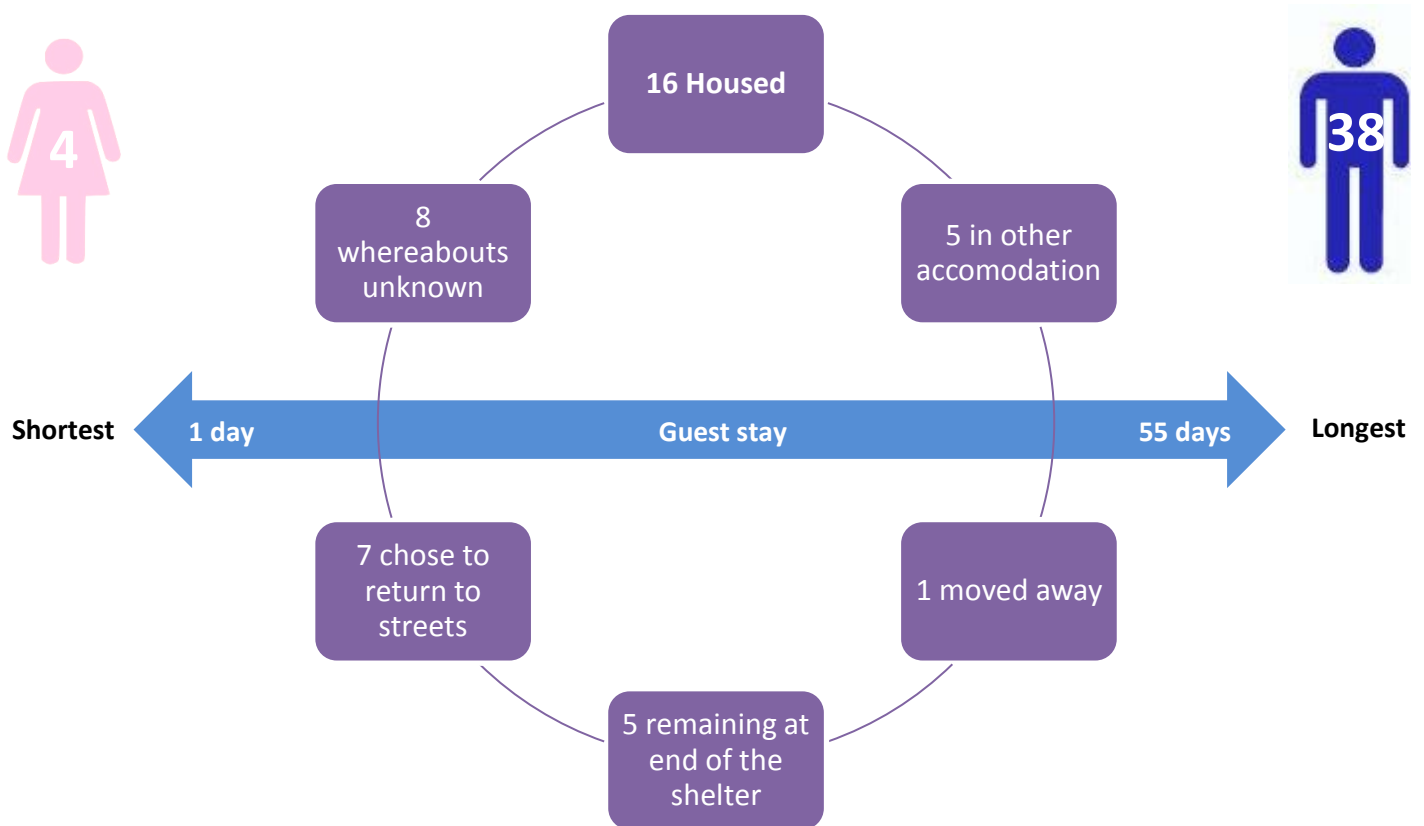


The feelings of 'safety' and 'welcome' featured in the majority of the guests' feedback. Many people may take these things for granted, but for someone living on the streets they may not have experienced either of these things for a long time. Those with feelings of nervousness and being unsure said they subsided during their stay. Feeling wanted and part of a community can have a hugely positive effect on guests' self-esteem and self-worth. These are just a few of the intangible but important things our guests receive whilst at the shelter.

I cannot recommend any improvements to the shelter as they do all that they can do
Shelter Guest 13/14

We have few but firm boundaries at the Shelter, the safety of our guests, volunteers and staff remains our number one priority. If we are inconsistent this can not only lead to potentially dangerous situations but can also cause conflict among guests and safety concerns for staff and volunteers. The boundaries not only help to make our guests feel safe, they can also provide an important first step back in to societal norms for entrenched rough sleepers.

We saw guests with a range of different and sometimes extremely complex issues and the project workers took an individual approach to each guest and tailored a plan on their specific needs and requirements with the following outcomes.



Jamie Nalton (HJQM) said of the guests he spoke to "without any prompting they were quick to remark on how well supported they were and how the shelter has been a positive experience."



Our Volunteers

Our volunteers are simply amazing!

Our many volunteers took on a variety of roles for our guests, from setting up, socialising, cooking, and staying overnight to preparing breakfast, cleaning the venue and packing away the shelter.



My highlight was ever time someone asked for seconds at dinner; our cooking was OK! Shelter Volunteer 13/14

The volunteers have each brought different skills and life experiences to the shelter and have served some of the more vulnerable members of our community, whether that be by cooking, serving, listening, chatting or playing games.

The generous heart of the Folkestone community and their willingness to volunteer should not be underestimated in the overall success of the shelter. There have been new and returning volunteers, some of whom have been involved since the first shelter five years ago.

The staff and volunteers are a highly dedicated team creating an atmosphere of both professionalism and warmth
Jamie Nalton (HJQM)

This year we encouraged all volunteers to sit down with guests to share a meal on a daily basis and this was done at every venue. Eating together is such a good leveller and really helps build relationships.

Heading up the seven nights this year we have again been blessed to have our wonderful Venue Co-ordinators who take on the responsibility to make sure the venue is ready to receive guests. This includes scheduling the right amount of volunteers on the appropriate shifts, liaising with cooks, overseeing (or delegating) the set-up of the venue and completing the Fire & Safety checks nightly. Venue Co-ordinators are instrumental in gelling together the team of volunteers and are also the main communication link between the venue and the project team.

*..I think staff and volunteers have gone above and beyond their duty to look after the guests
Shelter Guest 13/14*

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Bill Regan | Rosemary Siebert |
| Jamie Houghton | Ruth Horton |
| Mark Hodgson | Gemma Vernon |
| Howard Palmer | Maureen Palmer |
| Vikki Moran | Luke Moran |
| Francoise Lloyd | Graham Coombs |
| Vincent Oliver | |

It is recognised by shelter staff that a huge amount of time and effort has been put in by the VCs to ensure the effective running of the shelter and that without this huge undertaking the shelter would simply not be able to run. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who took on this vital role.

Thank you to all our volunteers who have made the shelter a warm and welcoming place for our guests during a difficult time in their lives. It is a very important part of the guests' experience, to be treated with the respect and kindness that everyone deserves and our volunteers have been fantastic at this.

Volunteers

- The Shelter gives hope to those who find themselves homeless
- There is a real sense of care for our guests
- What the shelter does is brilliant; we want to make sure this work continues
- Was a real pleasure to do the shelter again this year
- I am humbled every year
- Without the Shelter & Rainbow Centre many of these beautiful people would suffer much more hardship
- It has been a privilege to work with your team [shelter] and the volunteers

Feedback



The Post-Implementation Review (feedback meeting) was attended by a cross section of people including: guests, staff, Housing Options Manager, CAB, church leaders, venue coordinators and volunteers.

Highlights

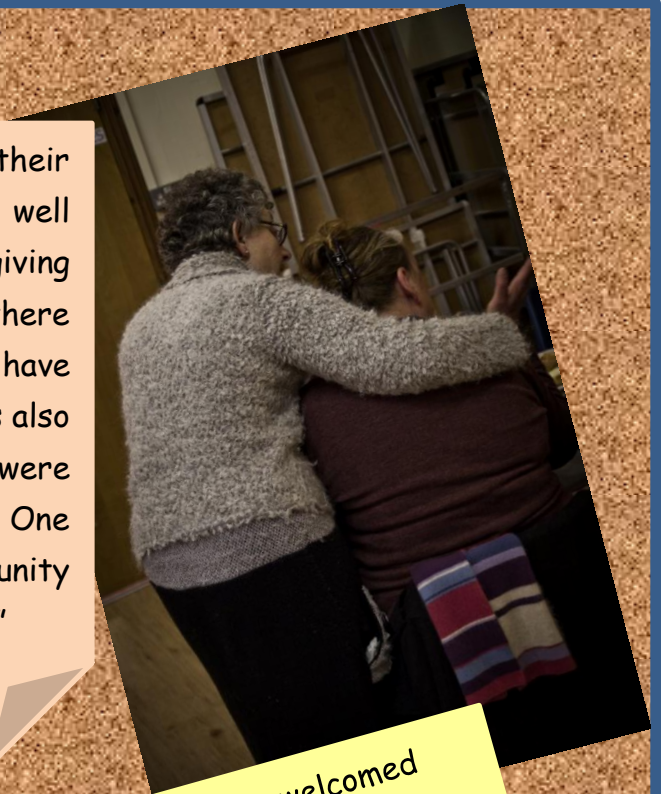
It was noted that great teamwork and improved relationships with housing options and other agencies was evident this year. The unity of people from different churches helping and covering shifts for each other was clearly felt. It was also remarked upon that there was good communication with FoodStop, Rainbow Centre & Millfield.

Volunteers remarked that this year guests showed great care and support for each other, were very appreciative and presented few behavioural issues. Sharing meals, games and social time with guests and seeing them interact with volunteers was also mentioned. One guest said "It was a welcoming experience and good to have something to rely upon"

The feedback given about the Staff was that they were an excellent team, who worked proactively, were always reliable and timely, they engaged effectively and showed real care and concern for the guests. Other highlights mentioned were their expertise, good communication with volunteers and were always willing to go that extra mile. They appreciated the continuity of staff and ensuring the shelter ran smoothly.



The volunteers were commended for their application, enthusiasm and ability to work well together and create a feeling of belonging, giving a great sense of purpose. The fact that there are lots of experienced volunteers who have worked for the shelter in previous years was also seen as a highlight. Venue Co-ordinators were praised for their hard work and dedication. One person commented "What a wonderful community we have. What wonderful Churches we have"



An extra bed space per night this year was welcomed and people were encouraged by the number of people accommodated and guests housed. There was also much appreciation for the well-cooked healthy meals and all the chefs and helpers.



Other highlights included the MP visit, the efficiency of set up, the provision of podiatry, the welcoming nature of the shelter, times of fun and laughter, good atmosphere, application of rules, the desire to continue developing the shelter evidenced by participating in the pilot Quality Mark scheme. One remark simply said "Best Winter Shelter yet".



Shadows



There was a concern that the churches were often overheated and not dark enough during sleeping hours, that rules may be too strict particularly the escorting of guests when smoking outside, guests are rushed to leave in the morning and that overnight volunteers and 'night owl' guests were not always quiet whilst others were sleeping and snoring remains a problem. One person felt there was a strained atmosphere and a guest suggested it would help if things were normalised i.e. guests making tea, washing up and watching TV etc.

Things that would enhance the guests' experience were voiced as provision of showering facilities and ability to wash clothes in venues, Wi-Fi, dispensing of cold & pain medications, luggage store for during the day, somewhere to chat for 'night owl' guests and somewhere to hang rain soaked clothes.

Anger and frustration about those not accommodated was aired and concern for those still out on the street, questions were asked as to why this was the case. It was noted that guest morale fell towards the end of the Shelter.

Frustration was vented regarding difficulties finding more accommodation in Shepway and a lack of secondary services e.g. CMHT, drug/alcohol services, floating support etc. Some people feel there should be more agency involvement and another point of view was that the Shelter could be more proactive and not rely too heavily on other external agencies. One volunteer implied there is a lack of transparency about how the local council determines priority need.



A major concern this year has been the perceived lack of provision to avoid the inclement weather upon leaving the shelter at 7.30am, weekends and public holidays especially the Christmas period.

Comments were made suggesting there was little staff involvement during the evening and the need for more staff knowledge of the local area and partner services. A project worker suggested a different focus on initial training would be helpful.

Disappointment was expressed at the low take-up of beds at the beginning of the shelter and it was queried whether we are meeting the needs of the homeless. There was also frustration concerning guests not turning up for beds that they have booked. Deadline for accessing shelter referral was questioned.



The only issues raised regarding food were the repetition of menus on consecutive nights and the need for a less substantial dinner but a more substantial breakfast. more practical training for volunteers.

The two main issues voiced around volunteers are some churches having loads of volunteers and others not having so many which can be overwhelming for the guests and the shortage of overnight volunteers. Additional requests included hairdressing volunteer, midway meeting for VC's, a meeting for all cooks and more practical training for volunteers.



Some suggestions for the future were; info cards inviting homeless individuals to seek help, book lights available to guests who want to read without disturbing others, provision of a guest exit pack at close of shelter containing info on organisations, phone numbers, FoodStop, coping strategies, help to focus on life after the shelter.

Requests were made to: lengthen the shelter perhaps using other churches, have a full rota from the beginning of the shelter, fast-tracking system for late-coming volunteers' DBS checks, reduce the amount of overnight volunteers or send 2 home during the night, one person could work at funding sponsorship/donations in kind, highlighting the need to keep noise down during sleeping hours emphasised in volunteer training.

The Future

We are constantly considering and planning for the future of the shelter, with improvements and funding applications already underway for the 2013/14 shelter. As well as taking the management of the shelter forward year on year, we also have to consider what bearing outside influences will have on the services we provide, so that we can plan effectively.

With this in mind the steering Group will be completing a five year review of the Shelter, asking evaluative questions, for example: does this model fit the current need in Shepway? The potential impact of this evaluation is expected to be mainly seen in the winter 2015/16.



It was decided that an Administration and Fundraising Co-ordinator would again be employed during the summer months to progress the administrative work of the Shelter as well as to procure the necessary funds to run the Shelter next year.

We are also very aware that with the rise in homelessness coupled with the reduction in available homes, more work will need to be done to help people after the 12 weeks of the Shelter. With this in mind the Winter Shelter is employing a Homelessness Support Worker between March & October 2014 to work alongside the Crisis Drop-in working specifically on housing issues.

Our Thanks

The Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter is extremely blessed that it receives so much help and support from a wide variety of organisations and individuals including: paid professionals in their line of work, professionals who volunteer their services in their own time, charitable trusts, fundraisers (both individual and organisations) and so many more people who contribute to the shelter.

We would like to acknowledge that our heartfelt thanks go to all the supporters mentioned in our report and also to the following people and organisations:

- The Churches of Folkestone (and surrounding areas)
- Folkestone Herald
- Folkestone Express
- Housing Justice
- The Police and CSOs
- Millfield Drop-in
- Foodstop
- Albert Hunt Trust (The)
- AllChurches Trust
- Beatrice Laing Trust
- Cole Charitable Trust
- Co-op Community Fund
- Coutts Charitable Trust
- Folkestone Town Council
- Godington Charitable Trust (The)
- Hilden Charitable Trust
- Kent Community Foundation
- Lloyds Bank Community Fund
- Rotary Club of Folkestone
- Souter Charitable Trust (The)
- Tory Family Foundation (The)
- Mark Lamb
- Mr Bird and St Mary's Primary Academy
- Neil Gibson
- Googies Art Cafe
- Carole Avery
- Terry Cooke-Davies
- Candice Watson
- Julie Johnson
- Phillipa Grant
- Angela Fudge
- Robert Showan
- Dawn Kellers
- All the Drop-in volunteers
- And everyone who has fundraised for us this year!



Shadows 2012/13 - Revisited

Relations with officialdom

Ignorance still remains when dealing with doctors' surgeries. Some surgeries have very restrictive opportunities for guests to book an appointment. Good relationships have been established with SDC and the project manager has met with SDC Housing options every two weeks during the shelter.

The priority housing criteria continue to be related to pregnancy, dependent children, homelessness due to flood/fire or other disaster, vulnerable person (because of old age/physical or mental illness or disability, over 18 care-leaver, leaving the armed forces or prison, domestic violence, facing harassment because of gender/ethnic origin), aged 16-17,

Whilst unable to bypass the councils' deposit funding it was agreed that the Steering group would look at exceptional cases on an individual basis. Turning Point has been commissioned to provide an integrated set of addiction services which are still bedding in, drop in sessions have been suggested but this has not come to fruition as yet.

Responsiveness to weather

The length of Shelter (including severe weather provision) was discussed at Steering Committee level and it was decided that the Shelter should remain at 12 weeks, the Shelter Manager released a statement to that effect explaining the reasons for this decision.

Overnight issues

It remains a big ask to volunteers to commit to an overnight shift especially if they have work commitments. The shelter remains pragmatic and will provide project staff cover if required.

This year overnights were asked to arrive by nine o'clock for the overnight shift, which happened in most cases. Volunteers have been asked to make sure that noise to be kept to a minimum and to respect guests wishing to sleep. As it remained a slight problem again this year we will highlight this during training next year.

To have Project Workers on overnight could be considered by volunteers as overkill and indeed de-skilling for volunteers. It was felt that Project Workers' time is better spent working with the guests during the day. The cut off period for an evening meal has been introduced and set at 8.30pm

Volunteer competence

Basic Drug and Alcohol awareness training was given to volunteers at the four training sessions before the shelter opening.

A 'Big Sleep Out' was organised by The Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter and The Friends of the Winter Shelter prior to the opening of the shelter, where people could experience sleeping out and raise money for the shelter: very successful all round.

Uptake

Such is the nature of homelessness there will always be the possibility of no-shows. Guests at registration are made fully aware that if they do not show we cannot guarantee bed spaces thereafter, guests are always sat down for a one-to-one with project staff before being allowed re-entry to the shelter.

Out-of-hours facilities

Day time and weekend daytime provision remains a concern. If it is decided that this is something the Winter Shelter can provide, careful planning will need to be implemented in order for this to happen. Venues and management of both guests and volunteers will need to be established and monitored.

Other shadows

Project Manager has met with all VCs prior to shelter opening and contact details for all VCs were issued (with their permission) and we encouraged good practices to be shared.

We are always looking to encourage more craft activities, but unfortunately that has not been possible this year and where possible private space for Podiatry treatment has been afforded.

A full briefing was not deemed necessary for the breakfast shift, with any urgent issues being handed-over by overnighters.

IDEAS

Post Shelter transition support is being provided by the creating of a new summer post: Homelessness Support Worker (see The Future p16). Guests would be encouraged to apply as volunteers should they show an interest, provided they have resolved any issues they may have presented with.

Register your interest for our

Big Sleep Out 2014

taking place in September by emailing info@wintershelter.org.uk
and we will send you an application pack in July

Keep a Look Out



for information on this and other dates for your diary

Web www.wintershelter.org.uk



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