

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



maidstoneshelter.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1156735



**Maidstone
Churches
Winter Shelter**

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INTRODUCTION

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter (MCWS) first opened its doors in December 2013 and has been operational each winter since then.

MCWS brings together churches, church members and volunteers (both secular and non-secular) to provide a safe environment for Maidstone’s homeless community, throughout the coldest months of the year.

For the first 7 winters we operated as an overnight shelter, but we were unable to provide overnight support during the winter of 2020-21 due to the restrictions imposed over the Covid-19 pandemic.

Winters 2013-14 up to and including Winter 2019-20

During each of the above winters, MCWS opened for 3 months in order to provide a hot meal and a safe, warm overnight stay for Maidstone’s street homeless population.

Our shelters are hosted by churches across Maidstone and operate on a ‘rolling night shelter’ basis, meaning the load is shared between church venues and teams. Seven churches each offer their buildings for one night per week, where our guests are provided with a hot meal, a listening ear, a bed for the night and breakfast the following morning. An eighth church building (or sometimes one of the original 7) is used to register our guests each afternoon. During registration, guests are offered drinks, snacks and a time to just ‘chill’ in a warm, comfortable setting. At these sessions, our Project Team take time to chat with the guests and encourage them to engage with Maidstone Borough Council, The Day Centre and other services, to obtain support and advice on benefits/jobs and housing, in order to help get them off the streets for good.

We have the support of over 250 volunteers who give their time, dedication and experience to enable the shelter to open each night and to provide the help and support our guests need. We simply could not run the Shelter without them.

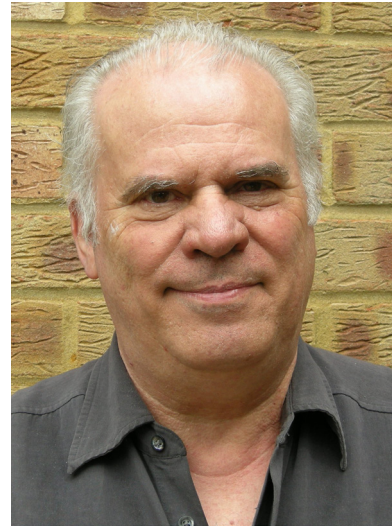
Winter 2020-21

Throughout winter 2020-21, the Government stated that no-one should be accommodated in ‘dormitory style’ sleeping arrangements, so our usual practice of setting up beds in church halls could not be used. However, Maidstone Borough Council were given Government funding to enable them to keep everyone off the streets throughout the Covid pandemic. Most of our street homeless were therefore accommodated in hotel/B & B rooms or other types of temporary accommodation, to keep them safe and off the streets.

In order to continue providing support, MCWS worked together with Maidstone Borough Council by offering hot meals to people who had been placed in temporary accommodation. Unfortunately, this meant our usual army of enthusiastic volunteers could not be utilised, with only a few needed to provide cooked meals. Hopefully we will be able to work with all our volunteers again next winter. Further details of our meals provision are given on pages 11-12.

During winter 2020-21, the shelter project was once again led by Gwyn McPherson as Project Manager, supported by Claire Kehily as Assistant Project Manager. Both Gwyn & Claire have worked for MCWS before and they brought with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. They were supported by the Office Administrator and Volunteer Co-ordinator, Mandy Fuller, who provided both administrative support and occasional help at the Friday food bank meal provision.

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



GORDON MACKLEY

Gordon is the Chairman of the Trustees. He retired from work in 2016, after a 43 year-long career in railway operational management and transport information systems. He is a Licensed Lay Reader in a Church of England church near Maidstone. Gordon served as a Street Pastor in Maidstone from the start of the scheme in October 2008 until Covid restrictions were first imposed in early 2020. He was a Team Leader for many years as well as the Maidstone Co-ordinator for a period. He became involved in Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter from the first year, serving as a volunteer.

This is the eighth year of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter. I wrote last year that it was a challenging one and as I wrote it the whole world was in the grip of the Coronavirus pandemic. Few of us thought that this would extend and indeed worsen such as to affect winter 2020/21. However, it did. The effect on what we were able to do was dramatic. We were not permitted to operate the normal dormitory style shelter provision as in past years. Maidstone Borough Council using a fund from Central government provided accommodation and, continuing our close working relationship with them, we undertook the provision of cooked meals. This was both for the intrinsic benefit of that, but also to maintain contact with those who would have been our guests in previous years and to enable them to liaise with the appropriate agencies.

We have also been able to expand our activities beyond those homeless or rough sleepers and have worked with food banks to provide hot meals to those who came to use them. There was a good take up of this facility which provided that something extra to those people, not just physically but socially as well.

Because of the government restrictions and the nature of the provision this year, we were not able to avail ourselves of the support, so generously given by our dedicated volunteers in previous years. We are now starting to discuss our strategy for 2021/22, a hopefully very different year. The provision of both shelter and food is very important and will continue to be a prime objective. Hopefully, working closely with Maidstone Borough Council, we shall be

able to provide not only more than Covid allowed us to do this last year, but also to provide an enhanced service compared to previous years. Above and beyond that, we shall strive to forge and maintain the links between our guests and volunteers, which is so valuable, and which was just not possible in the same way in 2020/21.

It only remains for me to say a very big thank you to all those who have supported us this year, as members of staff, by donations, or by raising funds and to the various organisations who have contributed financially. Thank you to those who supplied food and cooked it and our other volunteers who despite not being able to work in the same manner as in previous years maintained their interest in MCWS. We hope to be working with you all again next year.

Thank you all!

OUR TRUSTEES



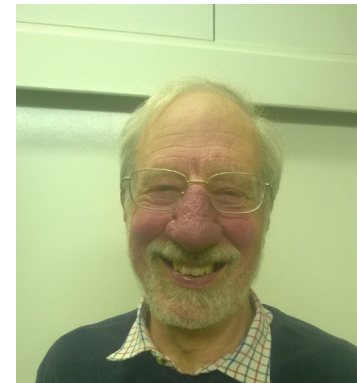
MARTIN HINCHLIFFE

Martin has a strong desire to help others less fortunate than himself. He is saddened by regularly seeing the homeless on the streets of Maidstone, London and other cities and attempts to play his part in supporting and reducing the number of street homeless. He has previously volunteered for Crisis at Christmas in London and has volunteered for eight years with MCWS. He has been a Trustee of the charity for 5 years. He has experience in managing operations and safety management, following a career in engineering and is the lead Trustee for shelter operations.



WENDY TULL

Wendy has over 30 years' experience as a senior Human Resources practitioner, mainly in public sector and not-for-profit organisations, and is the lead Trustee for this specialism. She is an active Christian and has good links with local faith-based groups. In addition, Wendy is a Trustee for Citizens' Advice Maidstone, a role that led to her increased interest in support for the homeless in Maidstone.



REVEREND JOHN TAPPER

Rev Canon John is a Chartered Accountant and is the charity's Treasurer. John has assisted the Shelter both as an overnight volunteer and also collecting items for the guests.



RICHARD LARKMAN

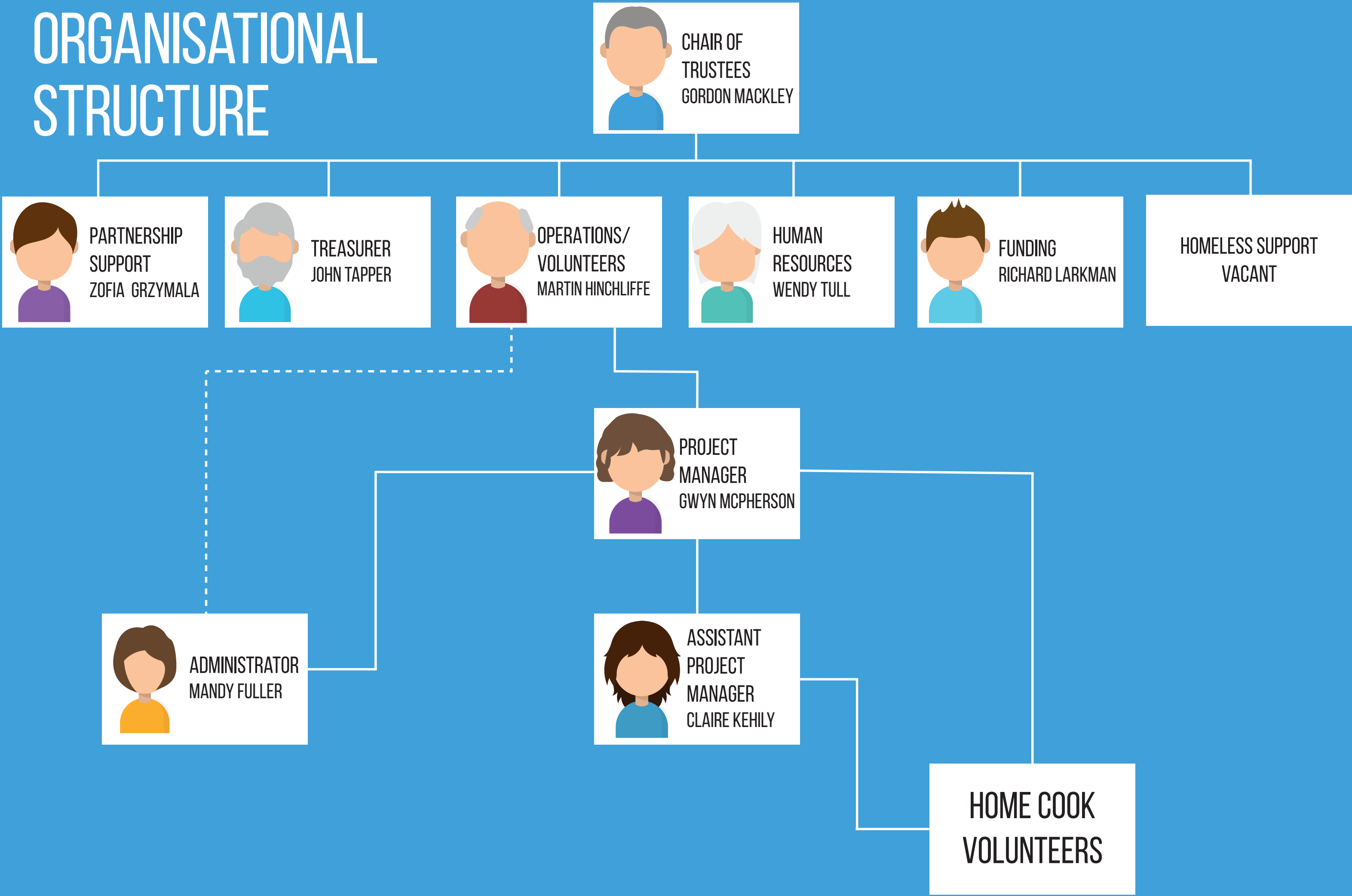
Richard has a commercial background in procurement, business transformation and property. He has volunteered at two locations within the Shelter. In addition to being a Trustee for MCWS, Richard is also a volunteer and Trustee for Homeless Care, Maidstone Day Centre.



ZOFIA GRZYMALA

Zofia is well known for her passion and dedication to helping homeless people and influencing change in the services provided. She has a substantial knowledge of the homeless and housing sector. Her professional experience includes managing Homeless Care charity (supported accommodation, day centre and food bank) as well as her roles within the Origin Group and Sanctuary Housing. Through many years in the sector, she has developed a deep understanding of what it really means to be homeless and the support homeless individuals need the most. Zofia is currently working as General Manager of Kent Supported Housing.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



FROM OUR PROJECT MANAGER



GWYN McPHERSON

Gwyn has been Project Manager for Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter (MCWS) for the last three winters. However, she has been involved with MCWS since its inception and has undertaken roles as a Volunteer, Venue Lead (volunteer in charge of the venue), Project Worker and then Project Manager. Gwyn is an authorised Lay Minister in a Church of England church in Maidstone and has served as a Street Pastor in the town since 2011.

I have been involved with MCWS since it first began in December 2013. I volunteered at the Quakers meeting House in Union Street for 2 years covering evenings and overnight shifts, then became Venue Lead there for the next 2 years.

I found this experience very rewarding and eventually applied to be a Project worker for MCWS, a role which I undertook during the winter of 2017/18.

Following on from this, I was asked to consider being the Project Manager for 2018/19, a post which I accepted and I have been the Project Manager for the last 3 winters.

As Project Manager, my job was to oversee the entire running of the shelter, along with the Trustees, to ensure it could open on time with sufficient volunteers and that everything was in place to enable the whole project to run smoothly.

During winter 2018/19 things did run smoothly, but then the Covid-19 pandemic arrived. This meant we had to close the shelter a week early during winter 2019/20, due to the national lockdown imposed. It also meant our plans for winter 2020-21 were significantly impacted.

Our initial plans for winter 2020-21 were to work alongside Maidstone Borough Council, who had funding from central Government to enable them to keep everyone safe and off the streets throughout the pandemic. However, much of the accommodation was temporary, for example a room in a hotel or B & B. We therefore offered to provide hot sit-down meals each evening, with the support of our volunteers.

Unfortunately, the pandemic continued and we moved back into a second and third lockdown. At this stage, our Trustees decided it wouldn't be safe for us to host sit-down meals in church halls. Their main priority was to ensure the safety of our guests, volunteers and staff, but also to make sure our anticipated guests didn't go hungry.

I therefore decided that the best way forward would be to provide hot, home-cooked takeaway meals. Full details of our 'meals only' service are detailed on pages 11-12, under the heading 'Winter 2020-21'.

Initially, the meals were cooked by myself and Claire, the Assistant Project Manager. However, as we got busier, some of our volunteers also offered to cook meals from home and drop them off at our Venues, which helped significantly. I would like to thank each and every one of our home cooks for your tireless support. The giving of your time, energy and cooking skills was invaluable

to the success of our 'meals only' shelter throughout the winter.

Thanks also go to Claire (Assistant Project Manager) and Mandy (Administrator), for their ongoing support, hard work, sense of humour – and the cooking of meals!

I won't pretend that things ran smoothly this winter. Our plans were constantly changed in order to meet the restrictions imposed due to the Covid pandemic and also in order to meet the greatest need in our town. It was certainly a challenging time but, after much consideration (and sleepless nights) I believe we managed to meet the local need in the best way possible.

On the whole, I feel that this year's shelter was a success, albeit very different from the way we usually run. The following pages of this report provide more detailed information of our activities during winter 2020-21 and also contain statistics showing the number of meals and food parcels we distributed.

Thank you to the Salvation Army team and Homeless care for their support. It's been so good being able to work together.

By now, I hope that many if not all of our readers will have had their Covid immunisation and, as we emerge from the lockdowns, we look forward to supporting our local homeless community once again next winter.

With best wishes.

Gwyn



OUR AIMS AND HOW THEY WERE FULFILLED

PROVIDING HOSPITALITY AND OVERNIGHT SHELTER FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE WINTER MONTHS.

Shelter /'ʃeltə/

(noun) A place giving temporary protection from bad weather or danger.

Due to the ongoing Covid restrictions, Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter achieved its aim of providing hospitality in the form of takeaway home-cooked meals, a listening ear and advice on finding additional support.

Unfortunately, we were unable to provide overnight shelter throughout Winter 2020-21 as our 'shelters' usually operate from church buildings, in dormitory style arrangements. As such sleeping arrangements were banned during the pandemic, we were unable to open on this basis. However, Maidstone Borough Council did an amazing job in keeping people off the streets, mostly in temporary accommodation/rooms but with a view to finding longer term accommodation.

MCWS provided the hospitality part of its first aim due mainly to the persistence of our Project Manager in seeking the areas of most need and moving our operations in order to meet that need. Whilst distributing our hot takeaway meals, we also gave advice, support and encouragement to those who attended for a meal, either in person or by way of an information leaflet signposting them to other services where they could seek the individual support they needed.

ENGAGING MEMBERS OF CHURCHES IN MAIDSTONE AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS IN BUILDING SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE IN MAIDSTONE, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUNDS OF RACE, GENDER, DISABILITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR RELIGION.

Although we had lots of willing volunteers this winter, the Covid restrictions meant we were mainly unable to accept their offers of support. As we were unable to open our overnight shelters, there wasn't the usual opportunity to build relationships with our local homeless community.

However, a few of our volunteers offered to supply home-cooked meals for distribution at The Salvation Army food banks and we were very happy to accept these offers. The meals were gratefully accepted by those who received them.

We continued to stay in touch with all of our volunteers and we hope they will be willing and able to help in our shelters in the future.

SUPPORTING HOMELESS PEOPLE TO FIND LONG-TERM ACCOMMODATION.

During the Covid-19 pandemic we were unable to open as an overnight shelter and were therefore unable to support our local homeless community in our usual way. However, Maidstone Borough Council received funding from central Government in order to keep homeless people off the streets throughout the pandemic. They did an amazing job and most of our current and new homeless community were offered temporary accommodation/rooms for this purpose.

During our takeaway meals service we provided information to new homeless guests, referring them to the Council's local outreach team for support. We also prepared information leaflets that were handed out to our guests and at the local food banks, giving details of the Council's housing department, including the emergency 'out of hours' number and of their outreach team.

By working together in this way we ensured that everyone had access to information, including contact details, of services available to support them with health and housing, applying for the right benefits, food banks and soup runs etc.

UNDERTAKING SUCH OTHER PURPOSES IN RELATION TO THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AS THE TRUSTEES MAY FROM TIME TO TIME DETERMINE

MCWS worked closely with Maidstone Borough Council once again this winter, with meetings held to ensure that both organisations could support each other and complement the support provided to our local homeless community. We also continued membership of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce to maintain our links with local employers with a view to seeking future support, both financial and physical (volunteers).

In order to continue providing ongoing support, we are preparing a basic recipe booklet which can be given with food parcels and to those going into temporary accommodation. The booklet includes recipes that can be cooked either in a microwave or a hob/oven, as not all of our guests have access to a conventional oven. The recipes used have been provided by many of our volunteers and we thank them very much for their support with this project.



WINTER 2020/2021

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to offer our usual 'dormitory style' accommodation to Maidstone's street homeless during the winter of 2020-21, but we were assured that Maidstone Borough Council would be able to offer temporary accommodation/rooms in order to keep everyone off the streets during the pandemic. We therefore worked alongside Maidstone Borough Council in order to offer hot meals to those who had been placed in such accommodation.

We originally planned to offer sit-down meals in 4 local church buildings, but the ongoing Social-Distancing restrictions made this impossible. In view of this, we decided the best way forward would be to offer hot, home-cooked takeaway meals instead. We were also able to offer a listening ear plus provide advice and support to those who needed it, at some of our sessions.

Firstly, we started opening on 3 afternoons per week at Union Street Methodist Church, offering a hot home-cooked meal for the day plus one to reheat for the following day. (Most of those in temporary accommodation had access to a microwave, to heat their meal for the second day). We also offered food parcels to anyone who needed them. At these sessions, we took track & trace contact details from our guests and we were also able to speak to them and ascertain any additional support needed (e.g. outreach, housing, benefits etc). However, these sessions weren't as fully attended as we had anticipated, so Gwyn (Project Manager) decided to reach out into the wider community and ascertain the areas of greatest need.

After some discussion, Gwyn established that many of our potential guests were attending the Food Banks at Maidstone Salvation Army. In addition to our expected guests, the need at the Food Banks had increased significantly as many people were placed on furlough or had lost their jobs. Individuals and families were struggling to pay rent and bills, leaving little money to buy food. On top of this, people with savings started to run out of money too, so there was an increasing need for food parcels.

MCWS therefore offered to attend the food banks at The Salvation Army on both Wednesdays and Fridays, to offer hot, home-cooked takeaway meals to those attending for food parcels. This offer was accepted and so the joint collaboration began. Working together seemed the best way forward to help people in need during the winter months of the pandemic and the majority of the Food Bank guests were very grateful to also be offered home-cooked meals.

However, at the food bank sessions our staff had no opportunity to chat to the guests, so we continued our afternoon sessions at Union Street Methodist Church, reducing these to 2 afternoons per week.

Once this pattern of support had been established, we were operating as follows:

MONDAY AFTERNOONS - UNION STREET METHODIST CHURCH

Takeaway meals & opportunity for a chat/support offered. At these sessions, guests were offered a food parcel containing a hot meal for the day plus another for the following day, together with any other essential food items required.

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS - THE SALVATION ARMY

Takeaway meals were offered at the foodbank from 10am – 12pm. MCWS staff were in the kitchen serving meals, so there was no opportunity to chat to the guests. However, we prepared information leaflets to advise guests of the help and support available from Maidstone Borough Council, plus other available services to those in need.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS - UNION STREET METHODIST CHURCH

Takeaway meals & opportunity for a chat/support offered. At these sessions, guests were offered a food parcel containing a hot meal for the day plus another for the following day, together with any other essential food items required.

FRIDAY AFTERNOONS - THE SALVATION ARMY

Takeaway meals were offered at the foodbank from 1.15pm – 3.15pm. MCWS staff were in the kitchen serving meals, so there was no opportunity to chat to the guests. However, we prepared information leaflets to advise guests of the help and support available from Maidstone Borough Council, plus other available services to those in need.

FRIDAY AFTERNOONS - UNION STREET METHODIST CHURCH

For the first 3 weeks of opening, we offered takeaway meals and food parcels from this venue on Friday afternoons. However, once we started offering meals from The Salvation Army foodbanks on Friday afternoons, our guests were advised to come there to collect their meals and any other items needed.

Whilst the above activities differed greatly from our usual winter service, we felt this was the best way we could help people most in need of support during the winter of the Pandemic, whilst adhering to the strict Covid guidelines.

BOXING DAY MEAL

Over the Christmas 2020 period, one of the local soup runs provided hot meals on Christmas Day, but there was no provision for Boxing Day. Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter therefore offered hot takeaway meals for Boxing Day, for anyone in temporary accommodation to collect and enjoy. Sadly, we were unable to offer our usual Festive sit-down meal due to the ongoing Social Distancing restrictions.

GUEST COMMENTS

PETER

"The wife threw me out 11 years ago. I was using the Day Centre until I got my flat in Maidstone. I knew nothing about MCWS until about 3 years ago".

PETER CAME TO SEE US REGULARLY THROUGHOUT THE WINTER FOR A HOT MEAL, HOT DRINKS AND A CHAT.

KYLE

"The ladies (at MCWS) helped myself out so much, I was so thankful. They are welcoming and will not turn anybody away. They helped me with food to information with the council and without them I wouldn't have taken the steps to be properly housed. They were great".

WHEN KYLE FIRST CAME TO MCWS HE HAD BEEN SLEEPING IN A TENT AT LEYBOURNE LAKES. WE WERE ABLE TO ASSIST HIM IN TALKING TO THE COUNCIL AND HE HAS SINCE BEEN HOUSED.

PHILLIP

"I have been off work since an injury in 2018. I don't have any family locally. I struggle to support myself on my monthly payment of Universal Credit and with rent arrears. MCWS provided a hot meal and general help. It was just nice to have a chat and speak to a few people"

PHILIP USES HIS UNIVERSAL CREDIT TO KEEP A ROOF OVER HIS HEAD AND PAY HIS BILLS, SO WE WERE ABLE TO SUPPORT HIM WITH HOT MEALS AND SOME SOCIAL INTERACTION.

SCOTT

"I was a drug addict and alcoholic, who spiralled out of control and got kicked out in 2019. MCWS have been fantastic and always been so helpful.

WE WERE ABLE TO SUPPORT SCOTT WITH HOT MEALS, HOT DRINKS AND A CHAT WHEN HE NEEDED THEM.

SHARON

SHARON IS HOUSED BUT HAS APPRECIATED REGULAR HOT MEALS TO HELP WITH HER BUDGETING AS SHE FINDS THAT THINGS FINANCIALLY ARE DIFFICULT.

STATISTICS

During winter 2020-21 we were unable to offer any overnight accommodation, due to the Covid restrictions. However, we offered hot, home-cooked takeaway meals on Boxing Day and then for the period from Monday 4th January until Friday 26th March. The figures for this 'meals only' service are provided below:



203

Hot take-away meals distributed from Union Street Methodist Church



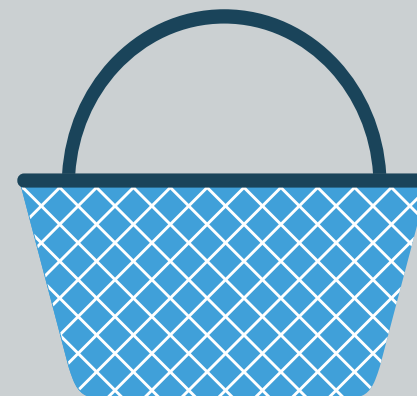
1116

Hot take-away meals distributed from The Salvation Army



313

Meals delivered to temporary accommodation



73

Food parcels/top up bags distributed



32

Individuals seen for support and meals



6

Street homeless referred to Council Outreach team

OUR VOLUNTEERS

The Trustees of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter are very grateful to all our volunteers for their willingness to support the shelter again this winter. However, our main priority was to ensure the safety of our guests, volunteers and staff throughout the Covid pandemic and we hope our volunteers understand the reasons why we were unable to accept their support during winter 2020-21.

We sent regular email updates to our volunteers, so they remained aware of how things were going with our 'meals only' provision and some of our volunteers offered to cook meals from home to assist with this provision. We are very grateful for this support.

To all our volunteers, we thank you for your continued support and hope you will be able and willing to support us again in future years. We truly appreciate the fact that you freely donate your time to show love and support to help Maidstone's street homeless community.

There is no kinder act than helping someone less fortunate than yourself and our volunteers bring their own uniqueness and energy, for the benefit and success of the Shelter

OUR HOME COOKS

A huge thank you goes out to those volunteers who offered to prepare and deliver home-cooked meals, to support our takeaway meals service throughout the winter. Thank you so much for the time and effort that went into the preparation of the meals.

Your thoughtfulness in preparing such lovely meals was invaluable and the individuals/families who received a hot meal were very appreciative of this support!

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT – THANK YOU!

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we found ourselves in need of additional support to cover a period of sick leave for one of our part-time staff. We were very fortunate that one of our experienced volunteers, Cara, was on furlough at the time and she became aware of our need. Cara very kindly volunteered to help with our 'meals only' service each Wednesday, covering most of the weeks we were open, at both of our Wednesday venues. We would like to offer a huge thank you to Cara for her willingness to offer her time, energy and enthusiasm to help in this way. Thank you so much, Cara!



VOLUNTEER COMMENTS

I just wanted to congratulate everyone for meeting the current need 'on the ground', so to speak. It is not always easy to make changes to long standing practice, and certainly not easy to do so at speed! So, congratulations and thank you to all who must have worked really hard to do so.

LIZ

MCWS is to be congratulated on being flexible and doing a great job meeting need in such adverse circumstances. Well done!

WENDY

{We} feel very humbled to think this service has been adapted to still reach out to those people who desperately need food and a daily chat, keeping spirits up. It is a shame that the original plans had to be set aside and all any of us can do is pray that this will soon be able to resume to the service of its former brilliance. Well done all of you for this great achievement.

TRACY-ANN

It's wonderful the work that is taking place behind the scenes to keep the service provision going, albeit at a reduced level due to Covid19. I am very proud to be a volunteer for the project and would still like to be involved in the future.

ANGELA

I would dearly love to volunteer again this year as I thoroughly enjoy my time at the shelter. I will most certainly be volunteering next year!!

JAMES

So pleased that meals are still available and, importantly, contact being made available to these people. You're doing a wonderful job.

SANDRA

Can I thank you, the Trustees, and all involved in this wonderful initiative which is so important for the vulnerable amongst us, and so highly respected by the community. It has been a privilege to be part of it.

ALAN



HOME COOKS

I have volunteered for MCWS for 4-5 years now, first at St Luke's then at Union Street Methodist Church and it has been a highlight of the winter months. This is due to both the camaraderie of the team that builds over the weeks and the sheer pleasure of seeing our guests, who usually sleep rough, really relish the meal we have prepared for them. If only the people in my house were always as appreciative!

This year there were extra hoops to go through as a volunteer, online training on Covid Awareness as well as the Food Safety for Catering Certificate which I hadn't previously taken, so when MCWS announced that it was unable to run as a night shelter, and would be providing hot lunches and takeaway food only, it was disappointing. The thought of people who had hit a crisis (and there are a few more of those likely this year than any normal year) and found themselves living on the street having to struggle through winter nights without a hot meal or safe, warm place to stay here in Maidstone is distressing.

When I found out that Gwyn and Claire were preparing and cooking lunches for these people 3 days per week, it seemed a lot to ask of them, given the rest of their jobs trying to support and guide these people into more suitable accommodation. In the end, I wrote to the office and asked if there was anything I could do to support, thinking perhaps I could fundraise through my church or collect tinned and dried goods. I was quite surprised when I was asked if I would cook from home for 9-15 people at some point, but very pleased to be able to support in this way. So, every Friday lunchtime since January I have been dropping off desserts at the Salvation Army. It's sad not to have been meeting up with other like-minded people each week, and not to be able to have any contact with or feedback from the beneficiaries, but at least I have been able to make a tiny contribution, and it's good to see Gwyn and Claire briefly at drop-off. With rough sleeping forecast to rise over the coming months, it is so important to help wherever and however possible.

WENDY

As someone who has enjoyed a range of voluntary work throughout my adult life, I was pleased last year to become a volunteer with the Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter. I was able to do both evening and overnight shifts before Corona Virus interrupted us and, being over 70, I had to give up before the end of the programme.

Like many of us, I have spent this year more than ever before feeling grateful that I have a lovely home and garden in which to be confined. This has made me reflect and be even more concerned for those who do not have a safe and secure home at this dreadful time.

Hearing that MCWS was not able to function as normal during the pandemic was of course understandable but none the less dismaying. When they kindly accepted my offer to prepare a few hot meals, this was an opportunity not to be missed.

It has been a joy – choosing simple, nutritious dishes that I thought might be suitable was something I looked forward to weekly. I enjoyed the preparation and cooking whilst thinking about who might be eating the meals later and hoping they found them tasty. Even delivering them was a treat - apart from a weekly Click and Collect for groceries, a trip to the Salvation Army was the only time the car came out of

the garage! And I appreciated the chance to exchange a few warm words with people I had met last year. I am grateful to MCWS for keeping me updated and informed throughout – it was nice to be kept in touch. Thank you also, organising for me to complete the Food Safety Certificate which I intend to put to good use next year when hopefully the shelter will be able to run at full capacity again.

MARGARET

As a family, we felt we wanted to help with the Winter Shelter, helping those that are less fortunate than ourselves. Since the first year, we have enjoyed meeting our clients on a Sunday evening and it made us realise very early on, how lucky we are - having a warm home and enough food to eat. We have always enjoyed the tea party in May (apart from 2020) when some clients came and, over the years, we have heard lots of success stories. Reading the Annual Report makes it all worthwhile.

We look forward to having dinner with our clients on the last Sunday of the Winter Shelter at the Methodist Church, Tonbridge Road. It has always been lovely to meet up and chat with everyone. Let us hope that we can do this again.

This winter, we were saddened that we could not help with the Winter Shelter due to the pandemic, but were so pleased that for the last few weeks we have been able to cook a meal at home on Friday mornings, and bring it to the Salvation Army for distribution at lunch time. I feel we owe Gwyn and her helpers a huge thank you for all their hard work. We are just a small cog in a very big wheel, but we are so pleased that we can help. We look forward to helping clients, less fortunate than us, in the future.

PAT, DAVID AND JAYNE RAFFILL

I really enjoyed being part of the team at Maidstone Family Church when we did the Winter Shelter there: it helped me to see the guests as they were, people in need, rather than slightly scary strangers huddled in shop doorways.

This year I have enjoyed the challenge of producing Take Away Puddings and again, glad to be of help.

HEATHER

I have thoroughly enjoyed baking cakes at home this year for the Salvation Army food bank. Normally I am part of a team that provides a cooked meal once a week in Knightrider Street Churches winter shelter.

It has been a great pleasure to be part of something so needed in this awful pandemic. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be part of the virtual team.

KAREN



OUR VENUES

This winter we had planned to use only 4 venues instead of the usual 7 or 8, to ensure we could adhere to all the Social Distancing guidelines at each location. Our original plan was to use the following venues:



However, as the Covid restrictions continued and tightened it became apparent that we wouldn't be able to follow our original plan to offer sit-down meals, but would need to offer takeaway meals instead.

For this purpose, we decided to run our takeaway meals service solely from Union Street Methodist Church, as it was easier to follow all the Social Distancing and hygiene regulations by using just one venue.

As stated previously, we also offered hot, home-cooked takeaway meals from The Salvation Army Food Banks on both Wednesdays and Fridays.

Each year we are incredibly grateful for the support from our Venues, for the purposes of providing support for our guests.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to each of the above venues, for your willingness to open your doors and support the shelter for yet another year. We are sorry that we weren't able to use all of these venues in the ever-changing Covid circumstances, but we wish to extend our heartfelt thanks for the offer to use your premises.

We also wish to say a huge thank you to Union Street Methodist Church for allowing us to use your premises on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (initially) afternoons and for allowing us to store the produce for our food parcels. Your support with our plans, which changed a lot at the beginning of the year, was amazing.

Thank you also to The Salvation Army for your willingness to work together with Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter, which enabled us to distribute our hot meals to those in need, via your very busy Food Banks. This ability to 'work together' enabled us to reach those most in need of support during increasingly challenging times for many people.

WORKING TOGETHER

IMPACT OF HOT FOOD PROVISION BY MCWS.

The last year has been difficult for everyone in so many ways, but for those who have found themselves needing the support of food banks it has been especially difficult. The reasons why people might find themselves in this position are varied and often complex, but it is our experience that many who were just about managing financially before the pandemic have been hit hard by further loss of income over the last twelve months.

For a year now The Salvation Army Maidstone has consistently supplied food to between sixty and eighty households per week (a rise from a pre-COVID weekly high of seventeen). We applaud the governments 'Everyone In' initiative and the work of Maidstone Borough Council which has seen many who were homeless being placed in accommodation, but we know that the reality of that is still challenging. A lot of people who have been placed in temporary accommodation, and therefore many of those who attend our food bank, do not have the facilities to cook for themselves.

We were pleased to learn that MCWS were willing to provide hot food to those who needed it over the winter and it was logical that this should be distributed through our food bank. It has been a pleasure to host the team and to help facilitate this work. We have had much good feedback from those who have visited the food bank more than once – the cheese and vegetable pie and fruit crumbles come highly recommended and cottage pie has been a definite favourite, with someone who had tried it describing it as "lovely"! It has been a pleasure to see the faces of people light up when they are offered some hot food to take away, particularly those who have found themselves back on the street or without cooking facilities. For families with children, being able to go away with a homemade meal and dessert has made a real difference. Personally, I was pleased to know that people were leaving with something nutritional and balanced to eat.

People who are struggling financially and emotionally need more than just food, but it is a start. Thank you to the MCWS team and the amazing volunteers for your hard work and effort, and for the blessing you have been to many this winter.

CAPTAIN MARION ROUFFET
MAIDSTONE SALVATION ARMY



FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

Last winter we, once again, saw many examples of people's compassion and commitment to supporting people in need in our community and we are incredibly grateful for this ongoing support.

The donations we receive are such a reflection of the incredible spirit of generosity that exists within the Maidstone community. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated to the Winter Shelter, both financially and otherwise. Your donations enable the shelter to keep running each winter and they are all very much appreciated!



ELLEN & ALFIE RIDLEY

Had a huge cake baking session and donated lots of delicious home-made cakes, in memory of Jamie-leigh.



EASTBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thank you for collecting items to support our work and for the fantastic donations!



HERNEWELL FARMSHOP

Thank you for your generous donations of fresh fruit and vegetables, which enabled us to provide healthy meals for many people.



TESCO

The Customer Fulfilment centre in Aylesford kindly donated a gift voucher to be spent on food items needed for our shelter.



CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION & ROTARY CLUB OF KINGS HILL

Both of these organisations collected food items that were very kindly donated in support of our work over the winter months.



BIFFA

The staff at BIFFA waste services in Parkwood kindly collected and donated food items to be used in support of Maidstone's homeless community over the winter.

HELP OUT TO EAT OUT!

Although we were unable to run our normal overnight shelter last winter, we still provided a hot meal and a listening ear for rough sleepers in Maidstone. To support this work, we launched our Facebook 'Help out to Eat out' scheme, whereby people could support our work by donating £10 to pay for a home cooked meal and a takeaway breakfast pack during the winter. Thank you to everyone who supported our work in this way.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

As in previous years, we have worked alongside local agencies in developing partnerships that are so vital to the success of the Shelter and the benefit of our guests.

The needs of our guests are complex and often require a bespoke multi-agency approach. Although our work during winter 2020-21 was very different to most years, it was important to maintain contact with other local agencies in order to continue with the joined-up approach for support, both now and in the future.

Pivotal to the success of the Shelter is the work of our Project Team in building trust with our guests and providing additional support through our operational partners, such as the Maidstone Day Centre and Maidstone Borough Council Street Homeless Outreach Team.

In order to ensure those in temporary accommodation, plus any new homeless people in Maidstone, were given the right information to access the support they needed, we prepared a leaflet giving all necessary contact details for Maidstone Borough Council's Housing department and Outreach team, including their 'out of hours/emergency' numbers.

In addition to this, we provided a full list of all local support including contact details for:

- Maidstone Homeless Care (Day Centre)
- Local food banks
- Porchlight
- Soup runs & Hot meal provision in Maidstone
- CGL (Change, Grow, Live) – West Kent Drug & alcohol wellbeing service
- MADM (Making a difference, Maidstone)
- Citizens Advice, Maidstone
- Kent Community Helpers

We also worked with:

Kent Police

Community Mental Health Workers

Kent County Council

Lily Smith House – Temporary supported accommodation

We love because he first loved us
1 John 4:19

FINANCES



Our costs were reduced this year as we could not provide overnight accommodation, but income was also down as fund-raising events were impossible and many Churches were not able to make their usual contributions.

The Surplus will be carried forward to be used next winter, when we expect the level of rough sleepers to increase due to the pandemic and we anticipate that our usual offer of hospitality and overnight accommodation will be needed once again.

THANK YOU'S

OUR STAFF

Our staff team this year consisted of Gwyn McPherson (Project Manager), Claire Kehily (Assistant Project Manager) and Mandy Fuller (Administrator and Volunteer Co-Ordinator), who all worked extremely hard to ensure people in need of support were reached and helped, albeit with home-cooked meals and food parcels this winter, rather than our usual overnight support.

Extra special thanks goes to Gwyn who worked tirelessly to ascertain the areas of greatest need in our town and to ensure we went out to meet that need. Life during a pandemic was very different to usual, but she worked incredibly hard to ensure we could provide support to those people who needed it most. Thank you Gwyn!

When one of our staff was unfortunately taken ill, additional support was provided to cover her shifts by Cara (volunteer), Richard (Trustee) & Mandy (Administrator). Thank you to all of you for stepping in to support Gwyn throughout this challenging time.

OUR TRUSTEES

To our Trustees, thank you for your passion, commitment, and leadership!

All of our Trustees are volunteers who generously give their time and a high level of dedication behind the scenes. Some of them also volunteer at various venues, to provide additional support to the work of the charity.

THANK YOU FROM OUR TRUSTEES

The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to highlight the fantastic support from our host Venues, Home Cooks & Staff. Thank you so much for all you have done to provide food and support to all of our guests this winter.

Thank you also to everyone who volunteered to help in our shelters last winter. We are sorry we were unable to accept your support due to the ongoing Covid restrictions, but we really do appreciate your willingness to volunteer and we hope to see you in our shelters as volunteers next winter – and beyond!



OUR FUNDERS & DONORS

Albert Hunt Trust, The
Allington Baptist Church
All Saints Church Loose
All Saints Church, Loose Youth Group
Ashley, P, Mrs
Awuah-Asamoah, P
Bearsted Methodist Church
Biffa Waste Services, Parkwood (staff - food donations)
Bole, Mr C & Mrs E
Bradshaw, L, Mrs
Broadhurst, A
Bryden, D
Buckley, J
Chalk, M
Charities Aid Foundation
Clark, R
Cobtree Charitable Trust
Cochrane, A
Cochrane, C
Cole Charitable Trust, The
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust
Cooke, G
Coregeo Ltd
Cotton, E
Cranmer, M
Crowe, S, Mrs
Cuerden, P
Curtis, J
Daodu, Folajimi
Davis, L
Detling Community Shop
East Farleigh PCC

Eastborough Primary School
Elliot, C & Mrs C
Endersby, N
English, G
Farrington, D & Mrs F
Fox, M
Garrett, M
Gibbons, J
Gill, P
Golding Homes
Gould, C R
Hales-Reed, R
Henry Oldfield Trust
Henson, G, Mrs
Hernewell Farmshop
Hipkins, P
Hitch, D J
Hooper, S M, Dr
Infra Safety Services Labour Ltd
J & C Findlay Charitable Foundation
Jackson, D
James, S
Joyce, C, Mrs
Judd, T, Mrs
Junction (the church plant of St Peter's at Boughton Monchelsea)
Kent Community Foundation
Kingsley, T
Kingswood Christmas Trees
Ledger, P
Lie Detectors UK
Linton Road Free Church
Loose Primary School

Lythgoe, P
Macgregor, D
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone Lions Club
Marden PCC
Marsh Christian Trust
Marks, L
Martin, A
Martin, K & Mrs K
Monday Badminton Club, Marden
Mowbray, T & Mrs J
Neary, M
Notley Family, The
Nuttall, A
Oates, R & Mrs S
O'Brien, R
Owen, G
Palace Wood Primary School
Parkes, D
Picken, A
Pointon, P
Powell-Chatfield, A
Prior, S
Reeves, A, Mrs
Revnell, S
Rice, C
Ridley, Ellen & Alfie
Rogers, K
Rolfe, D
Rosemount Mortgage Planning
Rotary Club of Cranbrook & Hawkhurst
Rotary Club of Kings Hill, The
Rotary Club of Maidstone

Rutter, R, Revd
Schalburg, J, Mrs
Shirley, K & Mrs S
Slipper, G
Smith, M, Mrs
South African Congregation, The
St Dunstan's Painting Group
St Luke's Church gifts for Mission
St Luke's Parochial Church Council
St Martin of Tours Church, Detling
St Nicholas Church, Allington
St Peter's Church, Bearsted
South African Congregation, The
Spragg, Peter
Stick, C
Taylor, Dr M

Tesco Customer Fulfilment Centre
Thom, J
Thomson, S & Mrs M
Tovil Christian Fellowship
Tubman, N
Tuck, A
West Kent Rehabilitation Service
West-Sinclair, L
Whitworth, N
Wickham, J
Winek, S
Worrall, P
Worley Day Trust, The

...and for many individuals who have given online and in other ways.

Those Who Supported In Other Ways

Among those who have supported in other ways are the following:

- Carol Hemmings – for her continued and tireless support.
- Insight magazine – Maidstone Borough Council publication

Donations received in memoriam

- Donations received in memory of the late Margaret Costen

The unknown donors:

A HUGE thank you to you all!



DONORS

Rotary



COLYER
FERGUSON
CHARITABLE TRUST



the **cole**
charitable trust



THE
ALBERT HUNT
TRUST

MARSH
Christian Trust



Maidstone
Churches
Winter Shelter

MAIDSTONESHELTER.ORG.UK

01622 296450

CHARITY NO: 1156735

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