

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



maidstoneshelter.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1156735



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO MCWS	2
A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN	3
OUR TRUSTEES	4
ORGANISATION STRUCTURE	5
A MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER	7
HOW THE SHELTER HAS EVOLVED	9
OUR AIMS AND HOW THEY WERE FULFILLED THIS YEAR	11
CHRISTMAS DAY MEAL	12
GUEST STORY: ROBIN	13
GUEST COMMENTS / GUEST ART	15
GUEST STORY: PAUL	16
KEY DIFFERENCES/ IMPACT OVER THE YEARS	17
OUR VENUES	18
OUR VOLUNTEERS	19
RECIPE BOOK	20
VOLUNTEER COMMENTS.....	21
WORKING TOGETHER	23
OUR PARTNERS	24
FUNDRAISING & DONATIONS	25
FINANCIAL INFORMATION	27
THANK YOU'S	28
OUR FUNDERS & DONORS	29

INTRODUCTION

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter (MCWS) first opened its doors in December 2013, following news from leading homelessness charity, Porchlight, of an almost 50% rise in rough sleeping in Kent at that time. We have been operational each winter since then.

There are many factors behind homelessness including unemployment, national austerity, family and relationship breakdowns, migration, substance misuse, poverty and debt, the struggle to return to independence after prison or care & acute shortages of affordable housing. The list of reasons is endless.

Also, a minority of people refuse help and some drop in and out of support. Others, especially migrants, have no recourse to public funds and are especially isolated.

The team making the initial plans for a Winter Shelter in Maidstone decided that the obvious response would be to find an empty building in the town centre and set it up as a shelter for the winter. Eventually it was decided that a church-based winter shelter, run mainly with volunteers, would be the way forward – and so Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter began.

MCWS brings together churches, church members and volunteers (both secular and non-secular) to provide a safe environment for Maidstone’s homeless community and also to support people who are in need of a hot meal plus additional support throughout the coldest months of the year.

Our activities over the last couple of winters have needed to change in accordance with the restrictions and guidance relating to the Covid-19 pandemic but our team of trustees, staff and volunteers have risen to the challenge and adapted accordingly. For further information about how the winter shelter has evolved over the years, please refer to pages 9 & 10.



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

OUR TRUSTEES



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.

Last year I wrote of the challenge of being in the Pandemic and not being able to do similar things to previous years. We plan well ahead for each year and therefore, when planning, we did not know whether we should be able to operate more normally, or not at all, as the Pandemic showed no signs of abating. As the vaccine roll-out proved ever more effective, we were able to operate a ninth year more like previous years, rather than the special circumstances of 2020-21.

That said, the remit from government was not to utilise 'dormitory style' overnight accommodation as we had done up to 2019/20. Working closely with Maidstone Borough Council, we decided that we would provide overnight accommodation for a small number of people who, for whatever reason, they would not be accommodating. We arranged to rent a five-bedroom house in Maidstone topped up by B&B

accommodation if required. For many reasons which I shall not go into here, the handing over of this property was delayed until really too late to use cost effectively and we therefore exclusively used the B&B facilities.

In previous years we have provided much more than just an overnight shelter. We were determined to build on that and again provide meals and opportunities for our guests to not only socialise with each other, but also with our staff and volunteers. This was done by enhancing the best of past practice. Thus, larger churches kindly provided venues (for which thanks!) for evening meals and chat and we were again able to avail ourselves of help from those who kindly volunteered to assist. Although our volunteers were less in number than pre-Covid, there was still sufficient support and thanks go to all of those who, when they volunteered, could not have been certain of the ongoing

Covid situation. We had a small number of paid staff, led by Gwyn. Further details are given elsewhere but they also deserve much thanks.

This year we also provided a place each afternoon for social chat, tea, coffee etc. This has been another opportunity to help the guests access the help they need and also to arrange training in life skills arranged by Maidstone Day Centre. With our continuing close working relationship, assistance with the life skills courses has been offered from some of our volunteers. Thus, this year has again been different to previous years. We shall be reviewing all that was done this year, as we plan for 2022/2023.

To all who have been part of this year,

Thank you so much!



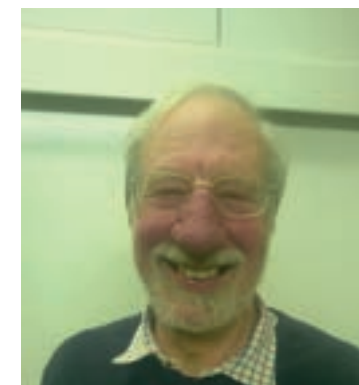
MARTIN HINCHLIFFE

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 FOSTER

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

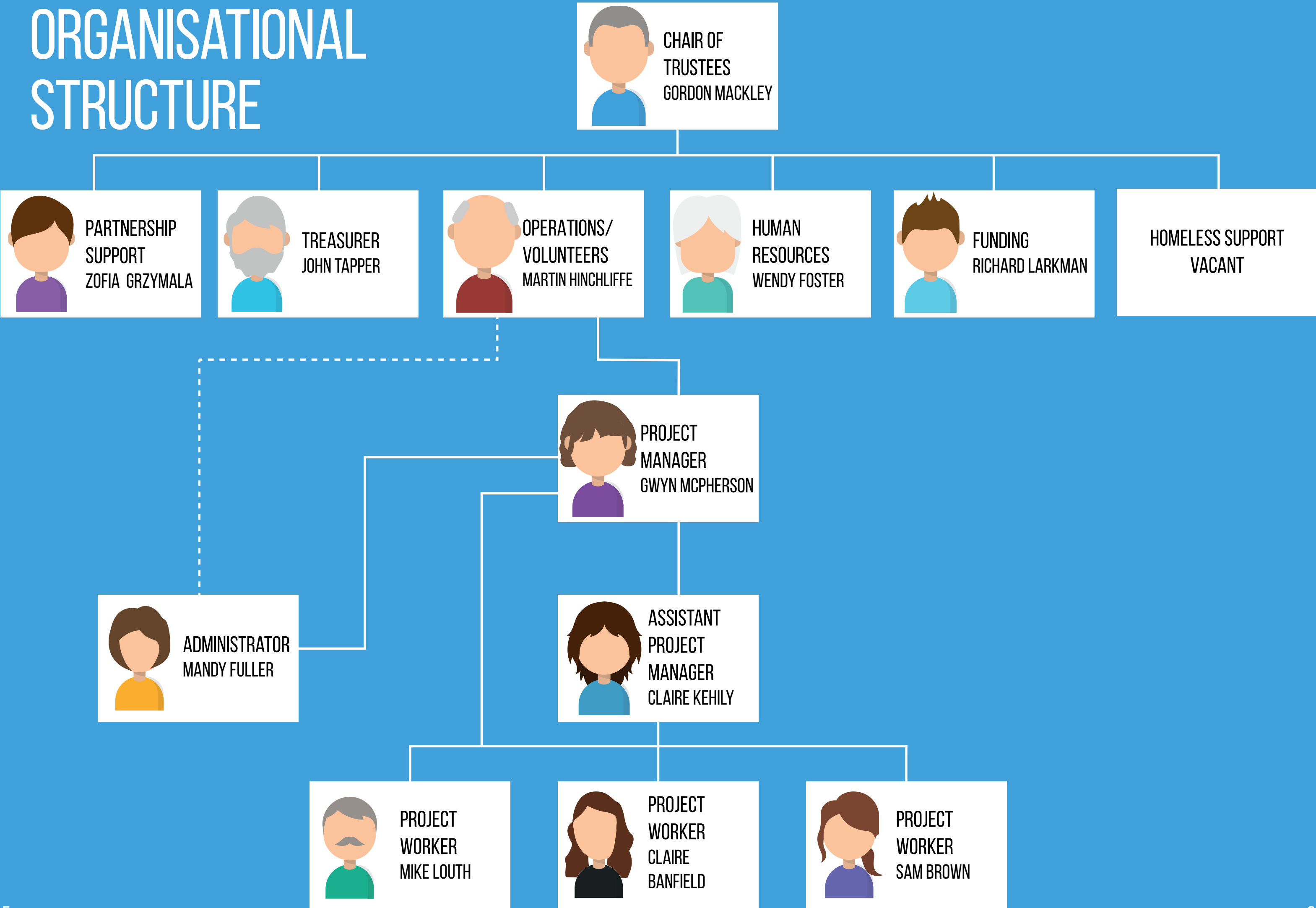
Richard has a commercial background in procurement, business transformation and property. He has volunteered at two locations within the Shelter. In addition to being a Trustee for MCWS, Richard has also been a volunteer and Trustee for Homeless Care, Maidstone Day Centre.



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 four 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 evening 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.

The following year I was asked to consider being the Project Manager, overseeing the entire running of the shelter alongside the trustees. I accepted this post and have been the Project Manager for the last 4 winters.

I feel that the shelter benefits our guests in very many ways, from providing physical support such as food and shelter, to help with their wellbeing and mental state. Each one of our guests has fallen on hard times, often through no fault of their own, and they just need someone to listen to them, ascertain their individual needs and help them seek the support they need. Everyone is unique and everyone's needs are very different.

At our evening meals sessions we sometimes also have dinner guests who've been in the shelter in previous years and just like to come back because they benefit from the company and support our volunteers provide. It's lovely to see them and to hear the stories of progress they've made.

On the whole, I feel that this year's shelter was, once again, a success, with an adapted way of running compared to pre-covid years. Within the pages of this Annual Report you will find more detailed information of our work during the winter, together with statistics showing the number of overnight stays and hot evening meals we provided.

That leads me on to thanking:

- each and every one of our volunteers. The giving of your time, energy, support and patience is invaluable to the success of the shelter and we simply couldn't run without you.
- The Sunday soup run team for their support at our registration sessions each Sunday afternoon. It's been so good being able to work together.
- Our Project & Administration team – Claire (Assistant Project manager), Mike, Claire & Sam (Project Workers) and Mandy (Administrator). Thank you all for your support, hard work, sense of humour and flexibility in adapting work hours to need.

Every evening in the shelter brought its own rewards and challenges and I won't pretend that each session ran smoothly. With the gathering together of so many people with so many different stories to tell, challenges must be expected though. The main thing is that people were fed, accommodated and supported in the ways they needed the most – and I believe we achieved that aim.

With best wishes.

Gwyn



HOW THE SHELTER HAS EVOLVED

Since the winter shelter first opened its doors in December 2013, we have adapted and changed according to experience and circumstances as follows:

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 were hosted by churches across Maidstone and operated on a 'rolling night shelter' basis, meaning the load was shared between church venues and teams. Seven churches each offered their buildings for one night per week, where our guests were provided with a hot meal, a listening ear, a bed for the night (dormitory style in the church hall) and breakfast the following morning.

An additional church building was used to register our guests each afternoon and to provide drinks, snacks and a time to just 'chill' in a warm, comfortable setting. At these sessions, our Project Team took 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.

During winter 2013-14 we offered up to 10 bed spaces each night, but this was increased to 15 bed spaces from 2014-15 up to and including winter 2019-20.

Winter 2020-21

Throughout winter 2020-21, at the height of the Covid pandemic, the Government stated that no-one should be placed in 'dormitory style' accommodation so our usual practice of setting up beds in church halls could not be used. However, Maidstone Borough Council received Government funding under the 'Everyone In' scheme, which enabled them to accommodate most of our local street homeless in hotel/B & B rooms or other types of temporary accommodation.

As much of the 'emergency' temporary accommodation lacked adequate cooking facilities and in order to continue providing support, MCWS liaised with Maidstone Borough Council and we offered hot, home-cooked meals to those people who had been placed in such accommodation, together with food parcels where required.

During this challenging period, we also offered hot meals to individuals and families in need, distributing them via the local food bank at The Salvation Army. The pandemic meant that many people were struggling to make ends meet or had lost their jobs, with the unenviable decision of whether to pay rent and bills or put food on the table. These people were potentially the future homeless, so the hot meals we distributed via the food banks hopefully helped to ease this burden in some small way.

Winter 2021-22

Although the Covid virus was still a concern, restrictions had eased somewhat by last winter. However, dormitory style sleeping was still considered to be a 'last resort' option.

In view of this, we planned to operate in a similar way as earlier years, with afternoon registration sessions and evening meals in church halls, but with our overnight guests staying in a rented house rather than in the dormitory style arrangement we had used in the past.

The house was chosen and should have been ready for our commencement in early January, but unfortunately there were problems with the lease which led to ongoing delays. Whilst these problems continued, we placed our overnight guests in a local hotel. They still came to us for registration and dinner, so had the ongoing opportunity for meals, support and company before returning to their rooms each evening.

By the time the rented property became available we only had 5 weeks left to run and both the time and costs involved in opening the property for the last few weeks were considered unviable by our trustees. This decision wasn't made lightly, but seemed the best option at this late stage. The number of guests requiring overnight accommodation was low during the winter, so we continued to accommodate them at a local hotel for the duration of the shelter.

Whilst our original plans didn't work out entirely as expected, we still provided the support, meals and accommodation that we had originally offered, but in an adapted way.

Our registration and meals sessions were held in 4 different local church buildings and we were incredibly grateful for their continued support. We used church buildings close to the town centre, so that our guests didn't have too far to travel for their overnight accommodation.

During winter 2021-22, the shelter project was led by Gwyn McPherson as Project Manager, supported by Claire Kehily as Assistant Project Manager. Both Gwyn & Claire have worked for MCWS before, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience from previous years which enhanced their ability to adapt to the ever-changing support needed for our guests. They were assisted by 3 x Project Workers: Claire Banfield, Mike Louth & Sam Brown, plus the Office Administrator and Volunteer Co-ordinator, Mandy Fuller.

In addition to our part-time project staff, we were supported by many willing volunteers who gave their time, dedication, patience and experience to enable the shelter to open each evening and to provide the help and support our guests needed. We simply couldn't run the shelter without them and we are truly grateful for the support from our volunteers each year!

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.

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter achieved its aim of providing hospitality and overnight shelter, albeit in a different manner to previous years.

Hospitality was provided at both our afternoon registration and evening meal sessions. At registration, guests were offered hot drinks, sandwiches and snacks, plus the opportunity for a chat and additional support according to their needs. At our evening sessions, guests were provided with hot meals prepared by our volunteers. The volunteers also shared meals with our guests, in a similar fashion to a family mealtime, chatting and listening as needed.

As can be seen throughout our report, our overnight guests for winter 2021-22 were accommodated in a local hotel, as the opening of our planned rental property had delays and challenges. However, although the accommodation provided differed from our original plans, we still managed to keep people off the streets and in warm, dry, comfortable accommodation overnight. There were only 4 nights where we had no overnight guests.

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.

Our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers worked together in friendly teams to extend a warm welcome to our guests, ensuring they were fed, comfortable and felt valued.

Each evening, a small team of volunteers prepared a hot meal, whilst others served the meal and sat at the table to eat with and chat to our guests.

Often the guests just needed someone to listen to them and their individual concerns. Telling someone their worries and talking it through often made the issues seem less important and also meant that help and support could be found when needed, rather than keeping everything bottled up.

Our volunteers were fantastic with all aspects of support for our guests and we are incredibly grateful for the time and commitment they each brought to their roles.

SUPPORTING HOMELESS PEOPLE TO FIND LONG-TERM ACCOMMODATION.

We collaborated closely with Maidstone Borough Council, who kept the majority of people safe and off the streets throughout the winter. The few people they were unable to support became our overnight guests, but we remained in close contact with MBC in order to obtain ongoing support for them.

We also worked closely with Maidstone Day Centre, who ensured our guests were given additional support such as information on health and housing, applying for the right benefits and obtaining any further help, according to their needs.

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

In addition to working in collaboration with Maidstone Borough Council & Maidstone Day Centre, to ensure each organisation could complement the support provided to our local homeless community, we also continued membership of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. This ensured we could 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 within our town, we also prepared a basic recipe booklet, with the aim of distributing it to clients of the local food banks and also for people going into temporary accommodation but with limited facilities or limited knowledge of cooking. Further details of this recipe book are given on page 20 of this report.

Maidstone Day Centre (Homeless Care) are planning to develop and deliver training modules to provide ongoing support and encourage guests to become more independent and self-sufficient. Many of our volunteers have offered to either deliver or support these training sessions.

CHRISTMAS DAY MEAL

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter didn't open over the Christmas period, due to the experience of previous winters where our guests have found family/sofa's etc for comfort and support over the festive season.

However, on Christmas Day 2021 we worked together with The Salvation Army in Maidstone to provide a sit-down Christmas dinner for people who were homeless or in temporary accommodation.

This offer of a Christmas meal also extended to those who would otherwise have been alone on Christmas Day. The meal was really appreciated and our guests enjoyed the company over the lunchtime period, rather than spending Christmas Day alone.

GUEST STORY: ROBIN

I am back home in the Philippines now, getting things sorted and just finished my required quarantine isolation time and luckily I was able to do it at home.

I just want to put in a few words to all of you who helped me through my ordeals I found myself in, when I arrived back in the UK from the UAE where I spent the last few years.

All was OK back then until the COVID - 19 hit the world by storm that killed not only my company I worked for but for many others as well.

I had to get out of UAE soon as I can as I was getting into financial troubles. I had no work coming in, no money, nothing. In short, I came back to the UK with the help of the UAE British Embassy for my flight ticket home. When I arrived in the UK I found myself homeless as none of my family would help me or take me in. I was like a leper to them. I put myself into a travel lodge in Maidstone for a few nights because that was all I could afford.

I then started to look for help from the Local Council and got registered as homeless. It was a bit of luck because there was a scheme that the Council was running and I qualified and many others, especially when the temperature went below a certain degree that the Council would put homeless people in a bed for the night. As for me, it was the travel lodge in St. Peters at Maidstone. That organization was called Outreach which is part of the Maidstone's Council. I was in there for a number of weeks and they kept me in-touch with another charity called the Winter Shelter [MCWS] and that's when everything changed for me. This Charity were helping the homeless to get back on their feet, and I was lucky to be a part of their program.

The help I got from them, it's very difficult to describe it in words or to show how, but what they have done for me and many others was definitely heartfelt and made me very grateful and humbled. Many people like me, found that it's the loneliness that kills you as you just feel so alone, not to mention cases of not getting a meal every day.

Again, from the time I came under wings of the Winter Shelter Charity, it all changed for me, they have helped me with the room in a Hotel [from mid-January]. I also had places to go to every day from 3:30PM to 5:30PM in the church hall for hot drinks, snacks and also have been given some clothings. The best part was talking with the staff for guidance and advises. For anyone who was in-need, their door was open and every person who came in was welcomed with a smile.

The staff and the volunteers would spend time with each one to see if anyone needs help with anything or just to talk to someone, that's what actually kept me sane, knowing there were people who cares for me every day.

There was also home cooked meals every night, and again everyone was welcome, and during those meal times, that was also a good time to talk to the charity workers or volunteers for comfort and advise because when you were in a situation like I did, anything can happen in a matter of minutes or change into worse in a day.

All I can say now is, if it was not for the Winter Shelter Charity keeping me in the hotel, feeding me, helping me in any ways they can, I really don't know what would have become of me. I don't think I would have made it if it was not for Gwyn and her team. They should get the recognition they deserve for all the hard works and dedication they give to the homeless people. This has actually opened my eyes to not take life for granted and not to look down on anyone, especially the homeless, as it can happen to anyone anytime.

To Gwyn and all of her staff, I thank you so much for keeping me sane and listening to me when I was in my most down situation. Talking, laughing and joking around with me really gave me a big good mood lift. I personally will never ever forget you all. Keep up the good works and if ever I am in the UK again, I'll make sure to pop in and see you all.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

NB – When Robin left the UAE he was unable to return directly to his home in the Philippines due to the strict Covid restrictions there at the time, so his only option was to return to the UK – the country of his birth.

We are really pleased to hear that Robin has now been reconciled with his family in The Philippines and we wish him all the best for the future.



GUEST COMMENTS

TREVOR

I became homeless due to family pressure and disagreements that affected my mental health. I have been on the streets or sofa-surfing for 3-4 years.

The Winter Shelter provided me with support and helped me find out how to access longer-term accommodation. They helped me by having meals and someone to talk to, somewhere to come, relax and socialise safely.

I am now in longer term accommodation due to having the support of MCWS, the Day Centre and the Outreach Team [Maidstone Borough Council].

ANDY

"I needed a push up the step. Now I have found work and accommodation so I'm all good. Thanks to all staff and the people that have helped me."

Great help. Really nice people.

GUEST ART

One of our guests this winter had an amazing talent for art. Whilst he didn't wish to be named, he shared this picture with us. We think he's incredibly clever and we're thrilled he felt able to share his work:



GUEST STORY: PAUL

I am a 55 year old man with a dog, who became homeless in early December. I suffer from many diseases and have some mobility issues after having an accident that nearly put me in a wheelchair.

Anyway, I have some mental health issues and get severely depressed. I got very behind in rent and was eventually evicted.

I had been staying at the Travelodge with the council's help, but that ended in the New Year and that was when I was advised to seek out the winter shelter and to see if they could help. The winter shelter took me in and made me feel human again, their love and caring attitude towards me has been one of the only reasons I'm still here.

I survived months visiting the tea room of an afternoon [our registration session] and having a lovely meal every night at one of the local churches. The meals have all been excellent and very tasty.

Q: Did your stay at Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter support you with the need to engage with other authorities, to obtain more permanent accommodation?

A: Yes, always was given good advice.

I would like to thank everyone who has been there for me and wouldn't hesitate to join a wonderful team who makes the lives of the homeless easier to bear. With love and thanks. Paul & Cali.

Sadly, Paul had still not been accommodated by the time the winter shelter closed for the season. However, Maidstone Borough Council are supporting him in a local hotel and he is working closely with the MBC outreach team and also with Maidstone Day Centre, with a view to obtaining more permanent accommodation.



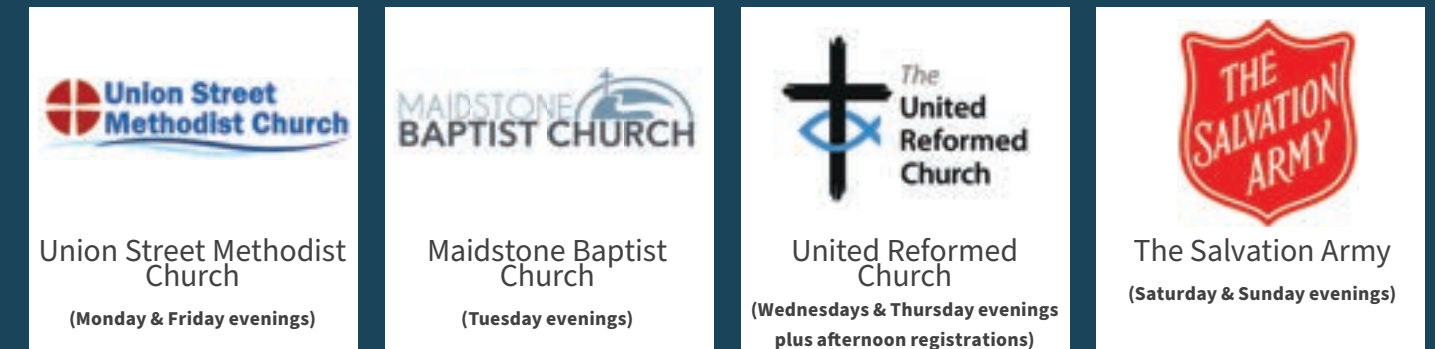
IMPACT OVER THE YEARS

	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022
NUMBER OF BEDS	15	NIL (Covid)	None in shelter. Hotel rooms used instead.
OVERNIGHT GUESTS	49	NIL	7
NUMBER OF PEOPLE ASSESSED FOR OVERNIGHT SUPPORT	57	NIL	10
NUMBER OF STREET SLEEPS AVOIDED	511	NIL	169
EAT-IN HOT MEALS	847	NIL (Covid)	1193
TAKEAWAY MEALS	23	1319	371
MEALS DELIVERED TO TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION	None	313	39
FOOD PARCELS	NIL	73	29
INDIVIDUALS SEEN FOR MEALS AND SUPPORT, INCLUDING SIGNPOSTING	57	32	130
LENGTH OF SHELTER	11 ½ weeks*	12 weeks	12 ½ weeks
SHELTER DATES	Opened: 3rd January Closed: 23rd March	Opened: 4th January Closed: 26th March	Opened: 3rd January Closed: 31st March
NUMBER OF PAID STAFF	5	3	6

*The shelter closed one week earlier than planned, due to the unprecedented effects of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) and the need to protect the wellbeing of our guests, volunteers and staff.

OUR VENUES

During winter 2022 we used 4 of our larger local church venues, to ensure we could adhere to any Social Distancing guidelines required in order to keep our guests, volunteers and staff as safe as possible from the ongoing Covid pandemic. The venues we used were:



From these venues we offered hot meals which were prepared and served by our volunteers. Staff and volunteers then sat at the tables and ate dinner alongside our guests, in a similar manner to a family meal. This gave our guests the opportunity for some 'normal' conversation and a chance to talk about any concerns they might have – which often led to additional support according to their needs.

We also offered takeaways for people who were unable or unwilling to come indoors for their meals, to ensure that nobody was left hungry.

Each year we are incredibly grateful for the support from our local churches and we would like to extend a huge thank you to each of the above venues for their willingness to open their doors and support the shelter for yet another year.

We would also like to thank other local churches for their offers of premises as shelter venues, even though we were unable to use them all. We tried to only use the larger, town-centre buildings during winter 2022, for the purposes of both social distancing and also making it easier for our guests to attend for meals without having to travel too far.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

The Trustees of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter would like to thank all our volunteers for their contribution and commitment once again during the winter. We truly appreciate the fact that they freely donate their time to show love and kindness to Maidstone's street homeless community and others in need of meals/support.

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

Our volunteers once again worked together in teams to ensure that the shelter ran smoothly. The tasks covered include:

- Serving hot drinks and snacks at our afternoon registration sessions, plus listening/chatting to our guests and ascertaining any support needed
- Setting up the evening dining area
- Cooking meals
- Welcoming our guests into the shelter and serving their meals
- Sharing meals with our guests whilst listening/chatting to them, if they wanted to talk.
- Clearing up afterwards and sanitising all the equipment and areas used.

All of these jobs are essential to the smooth running of the shelter and couldn't be achieved without the support, communication skills and teamwork of our volunteers.

Volunteering has always been a core value at Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter. Words cannot begin to express how grateful we are for the dedication, care and kind-heartedness of our volunteers who gave so much to ensure that the Shelter opened safely each night. Our successes this year would not have been possible without them!

MORNING VOLUNTEERS

We remained in regular contact with our morning volunteers whilst we were waiting for access to the rented property we had planned to use. These volunteers had offered to help with cooked breakfasts and cleaning in the property, but when we finally gained access it was too late to follow through with our plans in a cost-effective manner. Some of the morning volunteers offered to help with evening shifts instead, whilst others were very understanding of the circumstances but unable to provide evening support.

A huge thank you goes out to our morning volunteers, for their understanding and flexibility surrounding our change in circumstances and plans.



RECIPE BOOKLETS



Our Project Manager, Gwyn, had an idea to prepare a basic recipe booklet that could be handed out to clients at the local food banks, alongside their food parcels.

This idea came about after Gwyn volunteered at a food bank and realised that food donations were being distributed to clients, but that some of those clients may not know how to cook with the ingredients they were given.

We therefore asked the volunteers of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter for any easy-to-cook recipes that could be distributed with food parcels and we were fortunate to receive many lovely recipes which have been included within the booklet.

We are very thankful to our volunteers for their time and thoughtfulness in providing these recipes and we are also thankful to a further volunteer, Liam, who offered his time and design skills to incorporate the recipes into the final booklet.

Whilst the initial plan was to distribute the booklets with food parcels via the local food banks, they are also being given out to former homeless guests who have been moved into temporary accommodation but have limited facilities and minimal knowledge of cooking.

The booklet includes recipes that can be cooked either in a microwave or on a hob/oven, as not all of our guests have access to a conventional oven.

Although these booklets are being distributed to those who need them, we are also offering them for sale at a cost £4.35. The sum of £4.35 covers:

- the cost of a booklet for yourself, including P&P
- the cost of a booklet that will be given to a guest at a local food bank or in temporary accommodation.

By purchasing a booklet for yourself you are therefore also supporting a food bank/former homeless client, aiding them with the ability to cook tasty recipes from the food donations they are given and encouraging their ability to become more self-sufficient with their meals.

Sales of the original couple of batches of the book moved quickly and we have now had further copies printed.

If you wish to purchase one of these booklets, please email our office on mcwsoffice@maidstoneshelter.org.uk for further information.

VOLUNTEER COMMENTS

The volunteers are a fantastic bunch who I have enjoyed getting to know. It's been a privilege to meet some really interesting clients who are truly appreciative. I will be volunteering again when the next opportunity arises.

SAM

It is always such a pleasure to help out. Fantastic people to work alongside and lovely people to serve.

Winter Shelter for 2021/2022 was my first time of volunteering in this area and I've thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Preparation prior to start up and the induction was well organised and gave sound information and guidance. I have been lucky enough to work with some seasoned volunteers who provided extra guidance and I would encourage anyone considering this for the future to give it a go. The guests greeted on each of the nights were polite, grateful for food and a chat and often very entertaining. Thank you for allowing me to share this. Hopefully this will continue into the future.

KATHLEEN

It's been a pleasure as always meeting, chatting and feeding our guests this year at the Baptist church on a Tuesday evening. It's great to listen to them or sometimes help with some advice or just to be there for them.

GLEN & JO

We have had a ball trying to make sure that everyone enjoys what they have eaten, the challenges of creating new menu ideas, making sure they have had enough to eat and just seeing happy faces is a reward in itself. At the end of the evening people coming to say thank you and how much they enjoyed their food was humbling.

We feel we have given back time to people who normally get ignored by the general walk of life on a daily basis.

We both think the volunteers who sit and speak with them [our guests] make their day because they feel part of society and not looked down on because they have had a run of bad luck in their life.

No one knows the full story of each individual's life and should never be judged on how their life became a struggle.

TRACY-ANN & MARION (VOLUNTEER COOKS)

This was my second year volunteering with the shelter, and my first in the kitchen. I have thoroughly enjoyed my evenings with the kitchen crew, and made some wonderful friends in the process. It's been interesting and eye-opening to spend time with some of the guests too, and knowing that I'm helping those who are in more difficult circumstances than mine gives me a sense of purpose and meaning. Very much looking forward to joining the team again next year! Saturday nights will be very dull when it ends!

SHARON

I think you all do such a wonderful job and I love volunteering, I'm a little bit sad that we've only 4 weeks left!

We have loved every minute of it [volunteering]. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to be part of a fantastic organisation.

This year I volunteered to support the kitchen team on a Wednesday evening at the United Reformed Church Hall.

Things are so different this year compared to the last time I volunteered. Covid postponed last year's volunteering but with hard work, dedication and changes from the winter shelter team, the full evening meals have been able to happen this year.

It's a pleasure to be able to support this great annual event. Meeting our guests and supporting them to have a warm meal provides me with gratitude that I'm able to do this for them. It's a fun few hours: cooking, cleaning and chatting to the guests and volunteers. It's great to see everyone smile and laugh as well as eat the food that we've prepared.

This is my second year and I hope that I am able to help again next year. I thank Gwyn, Mandy and all the project workers for all their hard work. I only do 1 evening but they work so hard to support the winter shelters.

CLARE

This was my first year with you [MCWS] and I am pleased to say I enjoyed it and am sorry that 28 March will be my last shift. Everyone was helpful and we got on like a house on fire. The 3 people I worked with in the kitchen on a regular basis were fun, worked well together and my Monday evenings will not be the same. Hopefully we will be back in 2023.

PAULINE

I was privileged to help out on Wednesday evenings at the winter shelter. The volunteers are great and so friendly. I found every evening chatting and eating with the guests to be interesting and informative and the food was excellent. Well done to the chefs.

BRIAN

WORKING TOGETHER

SUNDAY SOUP RUN / DON DOEL FOUNDATION

We (The Sunday Soup Run / Don Doel Foundation) have really appreciated working together with MCWS for the past three months. It has been great to be inside during the bad weather, but more than that, it has enabled those who come to our small soup run to easily access more benefits than we can give.

I do think that working together is so important and it has been wonderful to work with the Shelter staff on a Sunday afternoon.

MARY

SUNDAY SOUP RUN CO-ORDINATOR

The team from the Sunday soup run came into our registration session each Sunday afternoon, as part of our working together initiative. They offered their usual meals, hot drinks and support but were grateful to be able to do so indoors, at our afternoon venue.

By working together in this way, the soup run guests could also be offered additional support from our Project Staff in order to help them with any longer-term needs.

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

Maidstone Area Arts Partnership, with funding support from Maidstone Borough Council*, organised a concert as a thank you to front line staff/charities for the support they gave the community during the pandemic.

There were over 300 performers from 10 performing groups. At the end of the concert there was a grand finale with all groups performing together, joined by representatives from the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Staff Choir. The Grand Finale included singers and dancers performing “Like A Rainbow” and “Peace and Hope” – a joyful participatory number.

Tickets were free as all of the performers gave their time voluntarily, but there were collection buckets to raise funds in support of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospital Charity, with donations being used to support staff wellbeing.

Our chairman and his wife, plus 3 of our part-time staff were pleased to accept the invitation to this performance. It was a lovely evening and served a two-fold purpose: to thank those who had supported the local community during the pandemic and to fundraise in support of NHS staff wellbeing at our local NHS Trust.

**The concert was funded by MBC via the European Economic Regeneration, Welcome Back Fund. This fund was designed to help communities get back together following the pandemic.*



OUR PARTNERS

During winter 2021-22 we worked alongside local agencies in developing partnerships that are so vital to the success of the Shelter and the benefit of our guests, in the same way as we have done in previous years.

The needs of our guests are complex and often require a bespoke multi-agency approach. It is therefore important for us 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 Maidstone Day Centre (Homeless Care) and Maidstone Borough Council Street Homeless Outreach Team.

In order to ensure that people who were homeless, plus those in temporary accommodation in Maidstone, were given the right information to access the support they needed, we ensured that each of these people was in contact with an outreach support worker at Maidstone Borough Council. If they weren't, we gave them the appropriate details in order to make contact with the Outreach team for future and ongoing support.

In addition to this, we worked alongside:



We also worked with:

Kent Police

Community Mental Health Workers

Lily Smith House – Temporary supported accommodation

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

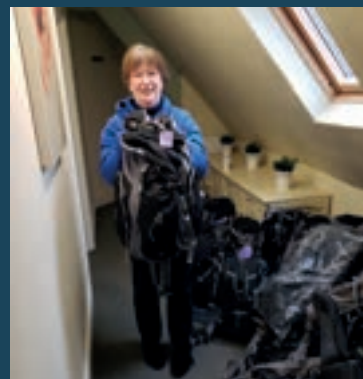
Each winter we see many examples of people's compassion and commitment to helping those in need in our community and we are incredibly grateful for their support.

The outstanding spirit of generosity that exists within the Maidstone community is clearly reflected in the donations we receive. 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!

NEPTUNE HOUSE

The staff and residents at Neptune House, Isle of Sheppey held a fundraising event to support homeless people at Christmas. Their plan was to donate filled rucksacks with things that homeless people would most appreciate, including both essential items and some lovely treats. The plan was a huge success and they delivered some of these fantastic rucksacks to us, for distribution over the Christmas period.

Thank you so much to the staff and residents of Neptune House for your kindness and thoughtfulness in collecting items, then preparing and donating these bags. They were really appreciated by our guests.



SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL

A huge thank you goes to Sutton Valence School for their generous donation of filled rucksacks. The food and hygiene donations contained within the rucksacks were used within the winter shelter and our guests have subsequently been able to leave the shelter with these amazing rucksacks in which to keep their belongings. Thank you so much!

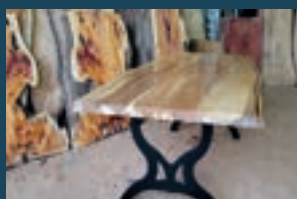
BIDFOOD

Another huge thank you goes to Bidfood, who sent many donations towards the Christmas Day dinner we were offering in conjunction with The Salvation Army. The donations included frozen turkeys, fresh vegetables, water/sports bottles for our guests to take away and some clothing. Thank you so much!



MATT'S MILLING SERVICES

Matt has a small sawmill business and decided that, rather than make a financial charitable donation, he would like to do something different to support a local charity. He therefore made a large dining table from a huge, solid single slab of wood and auctioned it via eBay. The table attracted much interest and sold quickly, with Matt donating the total proceeds to MCWS. What a fantastic fundraiser, benefitting both our charity and the lucky buyer of a fantastic hand-made table. Many thanks Matt!



HELP OUT TO EAT OUT!

During winter 2021 we launched our '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.

We continued this scheme during winter 2022 via information on our website and we were very grateful to receive continued donations which helped support our 'evening meals' service.

Thank you to everyone who supported our work in this way.



KA2 STAFF

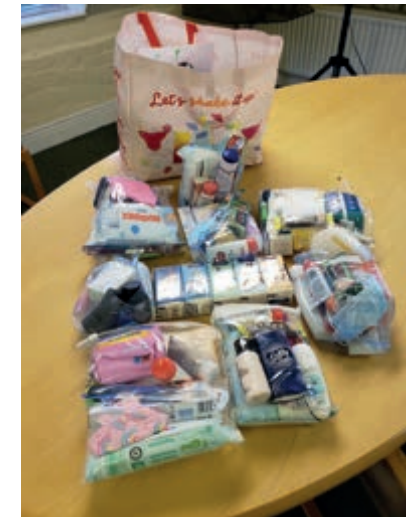
Even though many of their staff were still on furlough/working from home, the team at KA2 still managed to hold a '5 days of giving charity drive' and we were one of their very fortunate recipient charities.

We were really grateful for their thoughtful donations.



MIKE

Thank you to Mike for this fantastic donation of pot noodles, which were gratefully received by our guests when in need of a quick, warming snack!



2ND SHEPWAY BROWNIES & GUIDES

thoughtfully prepared and donated 'hygiene care packs' for our guests.

Whilst undertaking this project, the Brownies & Guides enjoyed taking time to think about the items that homeless people might need the most.



CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION

Each winter the staff at Charities Aid Foundation amaze us with their generosity and, once again, we were very grateful to receive these fantastic food donations towards the 2022 winter shelter. Thank you for your ongoing support!



SHARON & MARTIN

donated these really thoughtful gift bags, which were truly appreciated by our guests on Christmas Day.

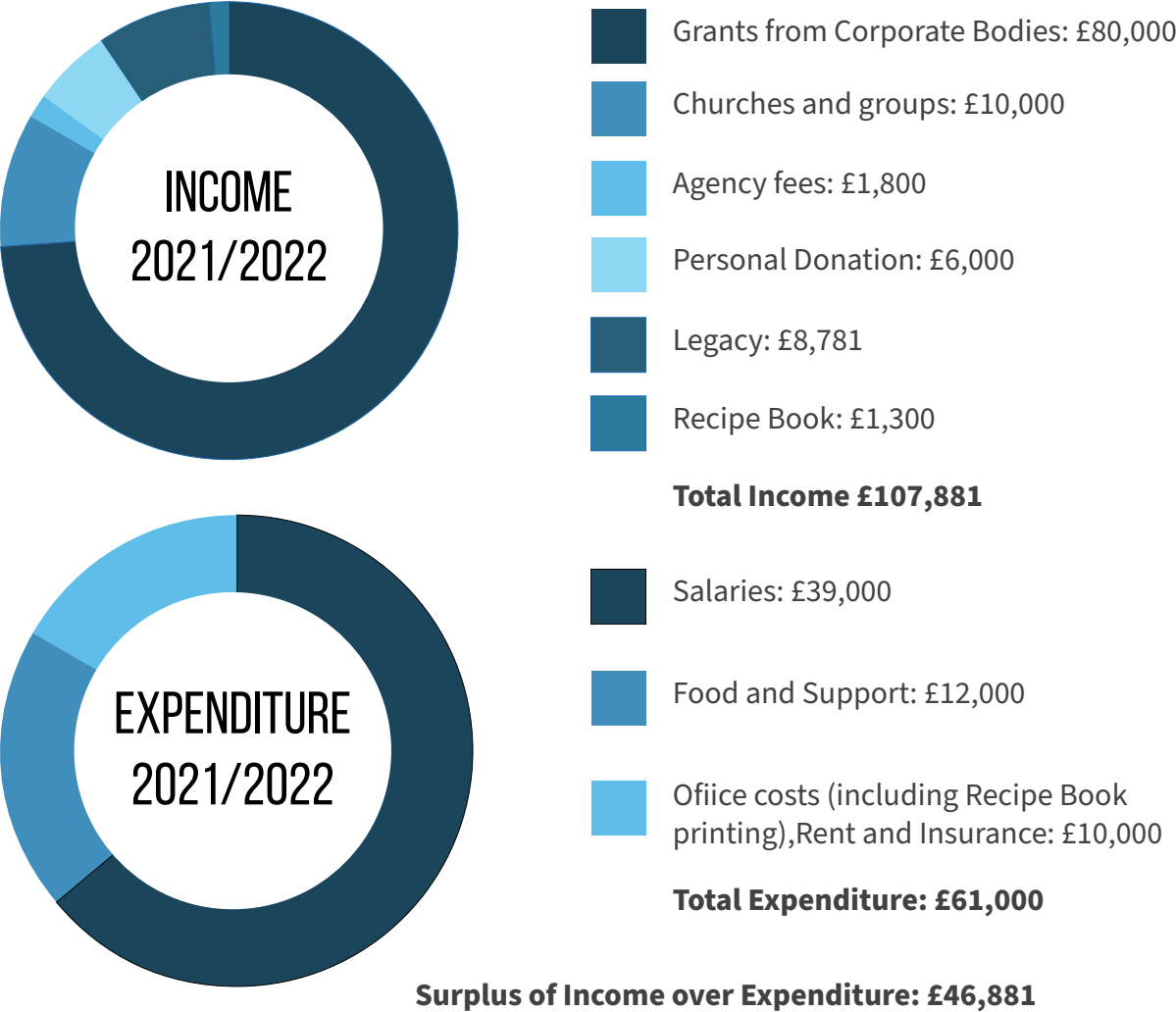


BARMING KEEP FIT GROUP

held a Christmas charity raffle/ collection and we were their chosen charity. It was lovely to meet two of their group when they popped in with a cheque towards our work this winter.

FINANCES

SCHEDULE OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION (ESTIMATED) FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MAY 2022



With an Income of £107,881 and Expenditure of £61,000, the Charity had an Estimated Surplus of £46,881 for the current year. However, the Charity does not exist to make a Surplus, but rather to meet the needs of homeless people in the Maidstone area and we trust that we have contributed to that purpose this Winter. The surplus arises from the generosity of a great many trusts, churches and individuals (including National and Local Government) who are committed, as we are, to removing homelessness from our streets. We are committed to using this surplus for the relief of poverty next Winter.

John Tapper (Treasurer)

THANK YOU'S

We hope we have thought of everyone who contributed to supporting our work last winter. We are extremely grateful for the invaluable kindness and commitment of all who support the shelter, in so many varied ways.

OUR STAFF

Our staff team this year consisted of:

Gwyn McPherson (Project Manager)
Claire Kehily (Assistant Project Manager)
Claire Banfield, Mike Louth & Sam Brown (Project Workers)
Mandy Fuller (Administrator and Volunteer Co-Ordinator)

These staff all worked extremely hard to ensure the shelter ran smoothly and that our guests were helped in the ways most appropriate for their particular needs.

All the staff worked well together as a team, both with each other and with our different groups of volunteers, to provide a positive and supportive experience for our guests.

Extra special thanks goes to Gwyn who worked tirelessly once again to ensure our ever-adapting plans ran smoothly and successfully. She worked incredibly hard to ensure we could provide support to those people who needed it most. Thank you, Gwyn!

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 (Churches), Volunteers & Staff. Thank you so much for all you have done to provide food, warmth, shelter and support to our guests this winter.



OUR FUNDERS & DONORS

2nd Shepway Brownies & Guides
 Albert Hunt Trust, The
 All Saints Church Loose
 Allington Baptist Church
 B2R, Coxheath
 Bailey, Sue
 Baker, I
 Barming Keep Fit
 Beaney, J, Mrs
 Bearsted Golf Club, Ladies Section
 Bearsted Methodist Church
 Bellamy, E, Mrs
 Bidfood
 Bole, E, Mrs
 Boodle, P
 Boughton Monchelsea PCC
 Boyle, Lucy
 Buckley, J, Mrs
 Campbell, R, Mrs
 Cardon, C
 Centrepont
 Charities Aid Foundation
 City of London Red Cross
 Clarke, A, Ms
 Clarke, J
 Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd
 Cochrane, C
 Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust
 Cox, A, Mrs
 Coxheath Advent Walkabout
 Coxheath Books
 Crabtree, E, Ms
 Cross, G, Dr
 Dillon, G

East Farleigh PCC
 Electronic Specifier Ltd
 Endersby, N
 Essex, G
 Farrington, D & Mrs F
 Feasey, A, Mrs
 Filerder Filter Systems Ltd
 Fisher, D, Mrs
 Garden of England Lodge, The
 Garrett, A
 George, S
 Gibbons, J
 Gibson, M
 Golland, R
 Green, R
 Green, Victoria & family
 Gulliver, J, Mrs
 Hand, J, Ms
 Harris, A, Mrs
 Henry Smith Charity, The
 Henson, G, Mrs
 Hitch, D
 Holland, E, Miss
 Inglis, C, Ms
 James, S
 Jenner, R, Mrs
 Joyce, C, Mrs
 KA2
 Kalimex Ltd
 Kapaj, D, Mrs
 Kingston, C
 Kent Community Foundation
 Kinnersley, K, Mrs
 Kohler, C
 Kohler, L

Lane, A
 Ledger, P
 Liberty Church
 Linton Road Free Church
 Lyth, E
 Lythgoe, P
 Macgregor, D
 Maidstone Lions Club
 Mack, P
 Maitland, A, Mrs
 Malcolm
 Marks, M, Mrs
 Martin, K
 Matt's Milling Services
 Much A Do
 Neptune House
 Oates, R
 O'Brien, R
 Osborne, B, Ms
 Owen, G
 Providence Baptist Chapel
 Quakers, Maidstone
 Rotary Club of Maidstone
 Rutter, R
 Scamp, D, Mrs
 Shepherd, G
 Shirley, K
 Slipper, G, Mrs
 Smith, M, Mrs
 Smith, P
 Spragg, P
 St Francis Catholic Primary School
 St Luke's Parochial Church Council
 St Michael & All Angels, Marden

St Paul's Church
 Sturrock, S, Mrs
 Sutton Valence School
 Tassell, P
 Taylor, R
 TESCO, London Road
 Teverson, N
 The Arts Society Mid Kent (TASMK)
 Thomson, M, Mrs
 Tovil Christian Fellowship
 Tucker, S
 Underdown, K

Valley Park School
 Viner, J E
 West Malling Baptist Church
 Wheeler, S
 Whitelegg, R G & Mrs J A
 Willmott, S, Mrs
 Wilson, M, Mrs
 Wood, A
 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 tireless and ongoing support when needed
- Involve Kent – empowering people and communities

Bequests

- Funds received as beneficiaries in the will of the late Janet Sturge

The unknown donors:

A HUGE thank you to you all!



DONORS



The
Henry Smith
Charity
founded in 1628



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CHARITY NO: 1156735

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