



Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter



Project Report 2017-18
www.maidstoneshelter.org.uk

Contents

Introduction to MCWS	2
A message from the Chair	3
Our Trustees	4
Organisation Structure	5
The Shelter Aims and How they were fulfilled this year	6-7
The Shelter in numbers	8-9
Key differences from previous years	10
Our Guests' Stories	11
Our Volunteers and their Stories	12-15
Our Venues	16-17
View from a Venue Lead	18-19
Our Partners	20-21
Fundraising	22-24
Financial Information	25
Thank You	26
Our Funders & Donors	27-28

Introduction

Once again, Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter has brought together churches, church members and other volunteers to provide a safe environment for Maidstone's homeless. The Shelter along with its volunteers provided overnight hospitality, a bed for the night, a hot meal and support to the town's street homeless population.

This year, the Shelter was opened for 93 consecutive nights with 1,395 beds being allocated over the period, our highest to date.

There has been a noticeable increase on homelessness in Maidstone, which is echoed in the number of vulnerable people living on the streets, sleeping in shop doorways or pitching a tent on the banks of River Medway. This year over 300 volunteers supported the Shelter by giving their time and dedication to helping the town's homeless community. We simply could not open the Shelter without the support of our volunteers and Venue Leads who give their time so generously.

This winter saw the arrival of a new project team, led by Andy James as Project Manager and Aziza Kilmister as Senior Project Worker. Also joining the team were Rebecca Crosbie and Gwyn McPherson as operational Project Workers. Gwyn was one of our volunteer venue leads in previous years. Farzaneh Lotfi joined us as Trainee Project Worker. For the third year running, the project team benefitted from the administrative and volunteer support of Ophelia Orr, our Administrator.



A Message from the Chair



This year marked our fifth consecutive and successful year as a winter shelter, and our fourth year as a registered charity under the name of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter (MCWS). Although, we operate under the MCWS banner, the Shelter is very much a collaboration of staff, volunteers and partner organisations within the Maidstone area and not all of our venues are churches.

Rev Bill Miller, who was one of the founding members of the Winter Shelter resigned as Chair of the Trustees in November 2017 and I held the role of 'Acting Chair' until a new chair could be appointed. I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to Bill for the spirited contribution of time, knowledge and support that he has given to the Shelter over the years.

We had a new addition to our Board of Trustees when Gordon Mackley joined us in December 2017, and was appointed Chair in March 2018.

At the end of each winter, we take time to reflect on what has worked particularly well and what could be improved or changed to meet the diverse needs of our guests. The fundamental provision of sustenance, hospitality and overnight accommodation remains the same. In particular,

we are proud to maintain our ethos of the guests being central to what we do. We have a strong belief that the Shelter is an opportunity for guests to build their self-respect and confidence whilst they are with us, and the caring way in which our staff and volunteers work with our guests, proves to be the winning formula that supports this year on year.

Once again, we had a time of reflection and thanks at the end of the Shelter which finished on the last Sunday in March. One guest spoke on behalf of the many who have accessed this year's Shelter, to give thanks and read from the bible. He read from the book of Luke chapter 15 which tells of the parable of the lost sheep. A wonderful passage that left all of those present moved to tears. Another guest, Tony, led us in singing and there was truly a feeling of joy and warmth at the Shelter.

A big thank you to all of you who have supported us this year; whether it has been as a member of staff, volunteer, donations, or raising funds for the success of the Shelter. Without all of you, we would not be able to provide this vital service on an annual basis. We have had many Venue Leads and volunteers returning to support us and we are very grateful for the invaluable experience that you now have in helping us to operate the Shelter.

Wendy Tull
[Acting] Chair of Trustees

Our Trustees

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter - Trustee Members



Gordon Mackley

Gordon retired in 2016 from 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 in Maidstone and also serves on Maidstone Deanery Synod. He has served as a Street Pastor in Maidstone since the start of the scheme in October 2008 and is currently a Team Leader. He became involved in the Shelter from the first year serving as a volunteer.



Martin Hinchliffe

Martin has a strong background in business and is the lead Trustee for Operations. He has volunteered for the Shelter and other homeless charities including Crisis at Christmas.



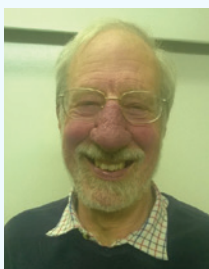
Michelle Peirce

Michelle started her involvement with the Shelter as a volunteer and is now a Trustee with the lead responsibility for fundraising which includes grant applications and corporate giving.



Wendy Tull

Wendy has over 30 years' experience as a senior Human Resources practitioner and is the lead Trustee for this specialism. Wendy also volunteers at the Shelter providing overnight assistance. She is an active Christian and has good links with local faith-based groups. In addition Wendy is a Trustee for Maidstone Citizen's Advice Bureau a role that has particularly raised her interest in support for the homeless in Maidstone. Wendy held the role of 'Acting' Chair for MCWS between December 2017 and March 2018.



Rev 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.



Kerry Faulkner

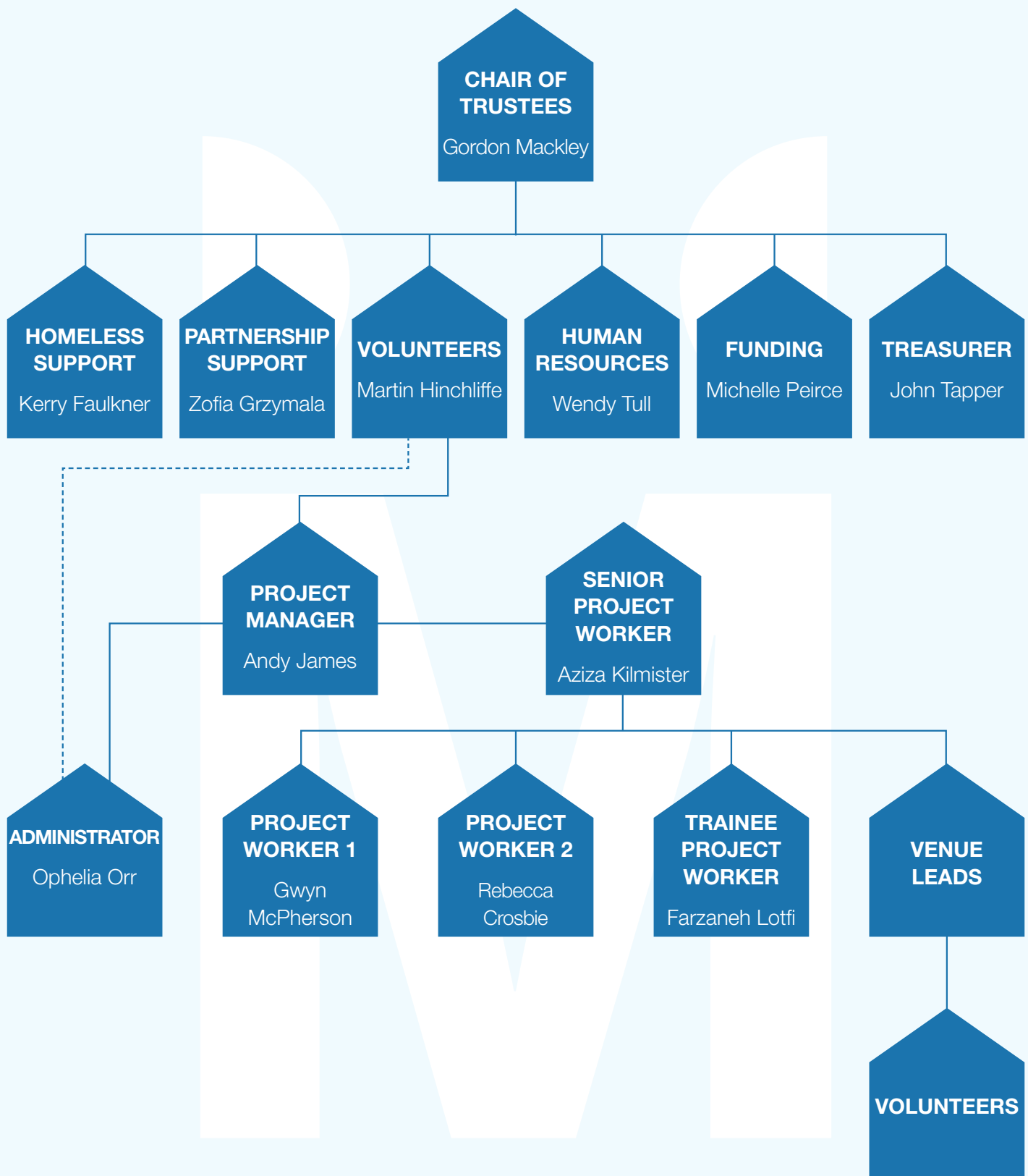
Kerry has, until very recently, been working for a homeless charity and is now studying Mental Health Nursing PgDip. She has worked as a Project Worker for the Shelter in previous years.



Zofia Grzymala

Zofia has substantial knowledge of the homeless sector and brings this to her role as Trustee. She is currently the Manager of Homeless Care Maidstone Day Centre which is one of the Shelter's key partners.

Organisation Structure 2017/18



The Shelter aims and How they were fulfilled this year

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter was planned on the foundation of four aims:

1

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.

Once again, Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter went way beyond the definition of shelter by ensuring our guests were treated as individuals with varying needs, likes and interests.

MCWS met its first aim in many extraordinary ways thanks to a team of passionate and enthusiastic volunteers and Staff who went above and beyond the call of duty. The Shelter supported 58 homeless people, 46 of whom became overnight guests. MCWS provided a service which included more than just evening hospitality and a bed, with assistance and encouragement that led to access to housing and employment opportunities.

2

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 church members, and volunteers alike extended a warm welcome to guests as friendships were made, volunteers humbly listened to the hopes and aspirations of our guests.





3

Supporting homeless people to find long-term accommodation.

Collaborating with Maidstone Borough Council, Golding Homes, the Greenlight Charity, Porchlight and Maidstone Day Centre, we were able to support our guests with accessing services including health and housing, applying for the right benefits, contacting and reconciling with family.

4

Undertaking such other purposes in relation to the needs of homeless people as the trustees may from time to time determine.

This year, we have focussed on strengthening our links with other agencies and local businesses in the Maidstone area, all with a common interest in supporting homeless people. MCWS also collaborated with local employers to explore various ways in which they would be able to support the work of the Shelter. We have formed many new and successful relationships and it is our intention to continue building on this as we co-work with partner organisations to address the issue of homelessness in Maidstone.

The Shelter in numbers

93

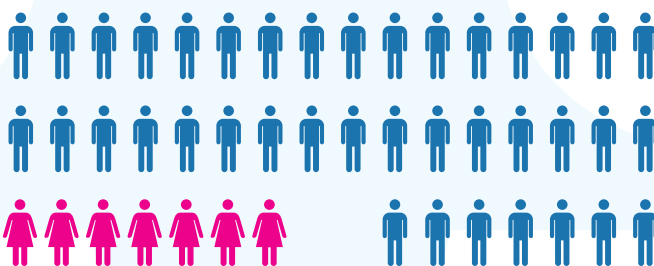
Number of nights.

58

Number of people assessed for a winter shelter bed.

46

39



25

Number of guests booked-in for a bed. Out of 46 guests 25 were regulars.

1395

Number of beds allocated over the Shelter.

968

Number of beds slept in over the Shelter.

14

12

2



Number of guests going into accommodation.

14

Number of guests only staying for 1-2 nights.

13

Number of guests returning from previous years.

11

Number of long term rough sleepers.

4

Those who have been homeless for over a year staying in the Shelter for the first time.

9

Number of EU guests

1

Number of non-EU guests.



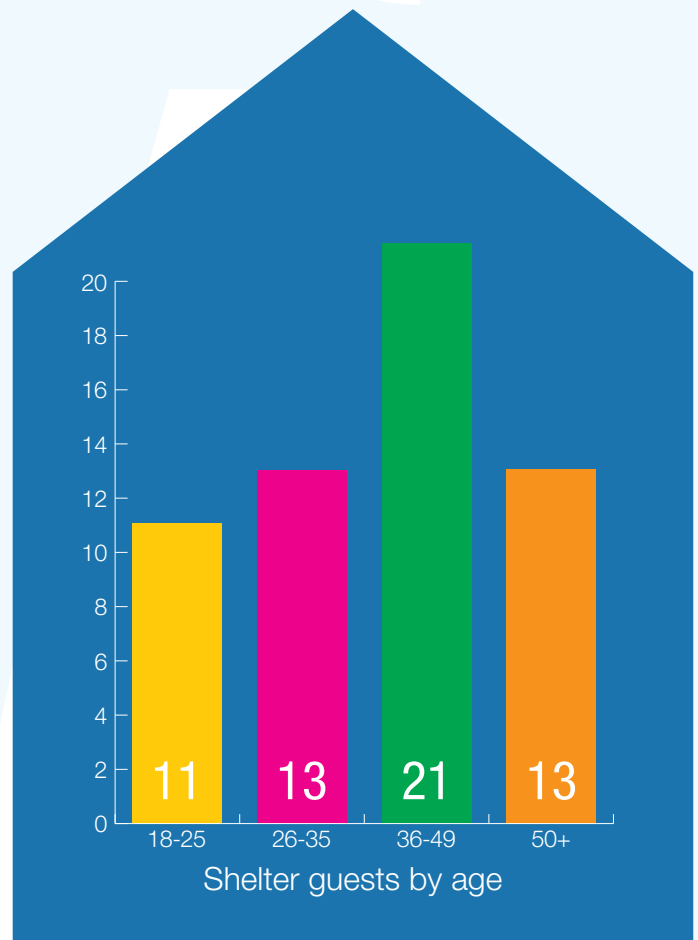
Mental Health

Largest Cause of Homelessness for this year's guests



Addiction

Second largest cause of homelessness for this year's guests



Key differences from Previous Years

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
15 Beds	15 Beds	15 Beds
11 female guests	11 female guests	7 female guests
Number of returning guests from previous year 3	Number of returning guests from previous year 9	Number of returning guests from previous year 13
53 assessed for a winter bed	50 assessed for a winter bed	58 assessed for a winter bed
28 Overnight guests	43 Overnight guests	46 Overnight guests
17 out of 28 guests in long/short term housing through engagement with the Shelter	17 out of 43 guests in long/short term housing through engagement with the Shelter	14 out of 46 guests in long/short term housing through engagement with the Shelter
Largest age grouping of guests were 36-49	Largest age grouping of guests were 36-49	Largest age grouping of guests were 36-49
12 week shelter	3 night Christmas Shelter plus 12 week Shelter	13 week Shelter
Opened early December over the Christmas period and closed early March	Opened 3 nights for Christmas. Opened 3rd Jan and closed on 28th March	Opened 23rd December and closed on 26th March
5 paid staff involved	5 paid staff involved	6 paid staff involved

Our Guests' Stories

I REMEMBER ABOUT 15 YEARS AGO, WHEN MY THEN WIFE AND MYSELF WERE DRIVING OVER MAIDSTONE BRIDGE. WE HAD DEVEN FROM OUR £250,000, HOUSE IN LOOSE, AND WAS CROSSING THE BRIDGE, IN OUR BRAND NEW CITROEN XSARA PICASSO. I NOTICED A GROUP OF HOMELESS PEOPLE SITTING AROUND THE TOILETS ON THE RIVER. ALL DRUNK. I SAID TO MY WIFE "LOOK AT THOSE DRUNK JOSSERS".

WITHIN SIX MONTHS, MY LIFE, AND CIRCUMSTANCES, CHANGED SO DRASTICALLY, THAT I WAS HOMELESS, AND SITTING THERE WITH THEM. "GOD NEVER PAY DEBTS IN MONEY".

THERE ARE MANY THINGS I COULD SAY ABOUT THE STRUGGLES AND HARDSHIPS OF LIFE ON THE STREETS. YET TODAY I TELL YOU IT ACTUALLY HAS BEEN THE MOST REMARKABLE THING THAT I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED. I CAN ONLY SAY THAT I ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE.

THE PEOPLE, CHARACTERS, STORIES, FRIENDSHIPS. THEY ARE MY FAMILY, AND OUR HOMELESS FAMILY SHARE A FELLOWSHIP, THAT I PERSONALLY WOULD NOT TRADE TO ANY "OUTSIDER".

WHEN PEOPLE ASK, HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED OVER THE YEARS, WELL I HAVE HAD SUPPORT IN MANY AREAS. DAY CENTRE, NIGHT SHELTERS, SOUP RUNS, CHARITIES, AND EVERY HUMAN BEING WITH THE BIGGEST HEARTS WHO RUN THESE ORGANISATIONS. BUT I ACTUALLY HAVE A TRUMP CARD. MY BEST MATE'S NAME IS JESUS.

LAST WORD - THE GOVERNOR
PSALM 23 THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.



"Thank you everyone that has volunteered at the Winter Shelter. If it wasn't for all of you, I don't know what I would have done, and the best part of it is you made me feel normal and wanted. Thank you so much ... all my love and kind thoughts."

Tommy

"Would just like to thank everyone, all volunteers and venue leaders for all you have done for me. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Shelter. Again, I appreciate all you have done for me."

Antony

"I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who helped with the night shelter. The venue leaders, volunteers and cooks. It is well appreciated by all of us that use the Shelter. Everyone has been friendly and helpful and made me feel welcomed at every venue. God bless you all."

Matt

Our Volunteers and their Stories

Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter would like to thank you for your contribution and support. We appreciate and respect that you put your own time aside to help Maidstone's homeless. There is no kinder act than helping someone less fortunate than yourself. You are great role models and you bring your own uniqueness and energy to the benefit and success of the Shelter.

Our volunteers have 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 307 volunteers who have given so much to ensure that the Shelter opened every night of winter. Our successes this year would not have been possible without you. There is no "I" in team but we sure are happy that there is "u" in our volunteers!

307 volunteers gave an estimated 9,572 hours

"It was a worthwhile and enjoyable experience."

"Thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience at the Shelter, just a shame it had to end"

"The kitchen ran like a well-oiled machine"



"I'm glad that we've made a difference to people"

"Well organised, superb team, great team leader"

What did our volunteers say

"I am incredibly humbled and touched by the way so many people come together from different walks of life for the benefit of our guests"

"So happy to help!"

"It was a pleasure helping people who really needed it!"



"This has touched so many lives in a positive way."

"Once again, it was very positive having additional guests in for dinner who were not staying!"

"I have meet some lovely people whilst being a volunteer"

"the goodwill of so many people is evident"

Our Volunteers' Stories

Chris, Volunteer

"For a number of years I followed the plight of the homeless seeing them on the streets in towns and like many people walked straight passed them and thought to myself, why do they not have a home etc. and thought I really must do something to help, but again like many chose to do nothing.

Then I stumbled across a book called Street Cat Bob, for those of you not familiar with it. It is a true story about a homeless man called James Bowen, who was also on a drug rehab programme, had a little ginger cat come into his life, who he names Bob, and together the 2 of them saw each other through some dark times, something I can relate to as I also had a cat come to me in what was a very bad time in my life. Together James and Bob have become famous worldwide and whose story has since been turned into a film. Reading James's books and seeing him being interviewed on TV really opened up my eyes to the suffering and abuse homeless people encounter every day, and their feelings of being invisible and feeling worthless truly touched me.



With that, I googled Maidstone homeless and applied to volunteer at the winter shelters. I had no idea what it was all about but just knew I wanted and needed to do something to help. This is my second year of volunteering at the Salvation Army. I, like all the volunteers work together, putting up the beds, laying tables for dinner, and together with the 3 lovely ladies in the kitchen who always provide a wholesome home cooked meal make a great team and I know the guests appreciate it.

"It truly is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done"

I only wish there was a way for people with dogs to also be allowed in the Shelter. Whilst I do not like it, I learnt from James's books that homeless people will often go without themselves and stay on the streets to ensure they are together and that their pet is ok. The companionship they have is often what gets them through the day. There is a line in one of the Street Cat Bob books, where James says that there is no doubt he saved Bob but Bob saved him, something I also understand with the experience of my own beloved cat.

So, what have I learned about the homeless....

... I have learned that a simple act of offering a hot drink and a hello can do wonders and that they are in the main a close knit community looking out for each other.

... I have definitely learned how easy it could be any one of us.

... To anyone sitting here today or if you know anyone who thinks/talks about helping the homeless, my message to you today is this – why wait? Explore the avenues with what will fit in with your lifestyle and do something to help, homelessness is unfortunately on the increase and not likely to end anytime soon, people need us to help them. They are human beings like all of us here today and they deserve our help and support.

It truly is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done and makes me feel that I am making a difference for those few short hours each week."



Sarah and Anne, Volunteers

Thoroughly enjoyed every minute – even if that sounds odd. Such a great group of people to volunteer with and the guests were a delight – privilege to walk alongside. Will definitely be volunteering next year.

Anonymous Volunteer

The main reason for volunteering is because I really care about our guests and knowing that our guests are cared for during a real time of need. For me, I am so blessed by being part of the team. Getting to know some lovely people and actually being blessed by giving a little time and lots of love.

Anonymous Volunteer

I had a great time, as ever. It was so lovely to be at the Shelter again. I enjoyed interacting with the guests and I hope that we made a difference.



"Thoroughly enjoyed every minute – even if that sounds odd."

Our venues

Each year it simply would not be possible to open the Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter without the incredible commitment of our Venue Leads and our wonderful team of volunteers. For a 13 week period, our volunteers gave their time and commitment to ensure that MCWS open its doors to the street-homeless population of the town, through one of the coldest winters on record.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our host venues for opening your doors and supporting the Shelter for yet another year.



United
Reformed Church
(Christmas period and
Mondays in January)



St Luke's
Church
(Mondays in
February and March)



Maidstone
Baptist Church
(Tuesdays)



The Quaker
Meeting House
(Wednesdays)

We all recall the sub-zero winds and freezing snow that appeared overnight at the end February. Kent appeared to grind to a halt for a week, with the roads and public transport being hit particularly hard. Across Maidstone and the surrounding area, the vast majority of shops and public buildings had no choice but to keep their doors closed as staff simply could not get in to open!

But the Shelter's Venue Leads and volunteers were not going to be beaten by the 'Beast from the East' and made considerable efforts to ensure that their respective night Shelters opened.

Driven by their care and compassion for our street-homeless guests and their knowledge of what would happen to such a vulnerable group in awful weather, night after night they made an incredible effort to drive and walk miles in the endless snow and freezing rain not only get to the Shelter, but to make sure no one in need of a warm bed and hot food, was turned away.

The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to highlight the fantastic response by our Venue Leads and volunteers to the dreadful February weather, and on behalf of our many grateful guests give them a wholehearted 'thank you' for all that they did.



Maidstone
Family Church
(Thursdays)



Maidstone
Day Centre
(Fridays)



The Salvation
Army
(Saturdays)



Tonbridge Road
Methodist Church
(Sundays)

View from a Venue Lead



"The highlight of the Shelter has to be giving people on the streets a bed for the night with a hot meal and breakfast. While it is little enough, the guests are very grateful for the help. Some other high points at the Shelter include when our volunteers made the extra effort in the snow to open on time, being flexible enough to stay on after the normal finishing time, and much to our surprise some of our guests had cleared a path in the car park. Also, one evening our cooks managed to produce 8 extra meals as takeaway for the homeless who were unable to access the Shelter.

In little over an hour every Tuesday, the church premises were transformed to provide a dining room and up to 15 beds. After a hot meal cooked at the venue, guests and volunteers interact to watch television, play games and even sing karaoke, four willing volunteers spend the night, two resting two awake. On a Wednesday morning while breakfast is served to our guests more volunteers clean, put away beds and sort out sleeping bags for washing. Our 'Laundry Angels' collect the sleeping bags and return them washed ready to do it all again next week. Yes, a lot of work and hours by volunteers but for 13 weeks some people without accommodation have been given shelter and warmth, that's thanks enough!"

**John Gurnett, Venue Lead
Maidstone Baptist Church**

"The Quaker Meeting House is the smallest venue in size but our volunteers have the largest hearts.

Volunteers are made up of people from various churches on the outskirts of Maidstone and some non-Christians. It was a good year and our team was made up of many volunteers returning from previous years and a number of new volunteers. We are a team from across the ages, and many volunteers young and old, moulded together to face any challenge.

We tend to be the health and beauty venue, with a hairdresser and pedicurist. All challenges including the worst of the snow were met with the help of the great 3 Project Workers. Our small team are already pledging to return next year.

Our thanks to the Quakers for opening the Meeting House to host the Shelter each week."

**Chris Hutchinson, Venue Lead
The Quaker Meeting House**

"Another year of Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter ended with great success. It wouldn't be possible without all our amazing volunteers who gave huge amounts of time and dedication to make this happen in all the venues.

Every Friday night during the winter period, Maidstone Day Centre was full of positive energy and goodwill, with 15 warm beds, friendly faces of volunteers and hot dinner waiting for the homeless people. It was truly inspiring to see the churches and Maidstone community coming together to help those in the greatest need during the winter weather."

**Zofia Grzymala, Venue Lead
Maidstone Day Centre**

"When thinking of the Winter Shelter, my first thought used to be of the food and shelter given to the guests. Having just completed my third year as a venue lead, I realise the Shelter gives so much more."

The basic need for food, warmth and shelter is a good starting point, but there are so many other needs met through the work of the Shelter. There are of course the additional practical services such as the provision of clothing and toiletries, along with haircuts and foot treatments.

However, having spoken to many guests the biggest impact for them is the social contact, acceptance and love shown to them. For the period of the Shelter, they become engaged in meaningful friendship and belonging with seven different sets of volunteers across the town venues.

Would I say this life enhancing process is only of benefit to our homeless guests? Most certainly not. Speak to any volunteer or staff member, and they will be able to recall accounts of special moments dining, chatting, or simply playing chess with guests. They will be able to share the great joy in being able to help match a guest with the coat they needed, or that size 9 pair of shoes they had been looking for.

Then there are the emotional ups and downs for guests and volunteers, with each party never knowing how each day or shift will turn out. I was always struck by the fact that every Thursday night was always different in some way or another, and I am sure other venue leads will say the same.

In conclusion, it has been an enormous privilege once again to be a Venue Lead, working with a team of amazing volunteers, supported by the staff working across every venue.

Providing overnight Winter Shelter for the street homeless of Maidstone, will and should always remain the core focus.

However, the core strength of the Shelter relies on the volunteers, and it is the experiences they have when meeting and sharing their time with our guests that will continue to make them return for more, for the mutual benefit of all."

**Andrew Nuttall, Venue Lead
Maidstone Family Church**



"The running of the Shelter went very smoothly as a result of good teamwork: evening setup, kitchen team, welcome team, overnight team, and breakfast and clear-up team. The Venue Leads role was divided between Mark and Jaqui, and this took away the pressure from carrying out this task singlehandedly. We were also lucky to have a dedicated and committed team of overnight volunteers."

We were surprised by the number of guests returning from previous years and the other different thing was our guests went to bed early, usually by 9.30pm.

Our guests enjoyed the lovely meals and friendships formed with volunteers. They also had access to the Greenlight Charity, a medical team.

The weather this year was very cold but we were able to supply guests with blankets and this was appreciated, in fact they told us they looked forward to coming to the Salvation Army on a Saturday night. A few of the guests attended a church service on the Sunday morning."

**Jaqui Hall and Mark Heather, Venue Leads
The Salvation Army**

Our Partners

As in previous years, we have worked alongside a range of local agencies in developing services and 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. 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 Porchlight.

Both agencies consistently worked alongside the Shelter to ensure that our Project Team could access their proven expertise in working with the local street-homeless community and that our guests could benefit swiftly from their professional support and advice.

We know our guests are particularly grateful to the Day Centre for providing the opportunity to use their shower and laundry facilities as well as food and clothing, without which the daily experience of living on the streets would be all the worse.

Over the past 12 months we continued to build on our successful partnerships with Making A Difference Maidstone (MADM) who regularly came to our aid when we needed 'one-off' items for our guests or with practical help. The partnerships with Aylesford Priory and Hair Professionals have continued to thrive, who along with a number of other wonderful people and churches across the town, laundered our many sleeping bags.

Once again, Maidstone Borough Council proved to be a very reliable partner and we are very grateful to their staff for their advice and support.

This year also saw the invaluable support of two new partners. Local employer Obart Pumps encouraged their staff to volunteer for the overnight sessions at the Shelter, which proved to be a great success for all. We are also very grateful for the support of The Jubilee Church, who provided a suitable building for our daily guest registration.

We also worked with:

Trinity Foyer
Involve
Kent Police
Kent Probation
Community Mental Health Workers
Kent County Council
Lily Smith House
Maidstone Town Centre Liaison Group



Corporate Partnerships

Maidstone based pump sales and distribution company, Obart Pumps approached Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter in the autumn of 2017 to explore ways in which the company and its staff could actively support the Shelter over the approaching winter.

Following a presentation to the staff team by our Project Manager and with the support from Obart's Management team, we were delighted when 8 members of staff offered to volunteer for overnight sessions at the Shelter. All winter shelters have problems attracting people to volunteer to work through the night, in part because of the sleep pressures of having to work the following day. However, thanks to the very generous offer by Obart Pumps to provide their staff with a paid day off the following day, and the welcoming approach by The Maidstone Family Church to pilot our new partnership. This new arrangement proved a huge success.

Our guests gave incredible feedback on the individual kindness, professionalism and personal interest shown by every member of the Obart Pumps team.

It has proven to be such a successful partnership, that we are currently in talks with one of the town's largest employers to join with Obart Pumps and encourage their staff to volunteer with MCWS next winter.



"Obart Pumps began its life in 1972, originally based in South East London, we moved to Kent in the 1980s. We are one of the UK's leading distributors of pump and accessory products.

We wanted to do something different to just giving money to a good cause, and the idea of helping the homeless in Maidstone was something that we felt we could support by giving up some of our time. The Shelter needed volunteers to help run the overnight shift and we asked our employees if they would like to help support them. Although a small company, employing 16 people, we were very pleased that 8 decided to give up their evenings.

In addition, we also managed to get one of our suppliers 2SB Management Systems to support the Shelter, with one of their employees also volunteering.

Overall, our experience was very positive. Hearing some of the stories that the guests had to tell us reminded us that circumstances can often change very quickly and that homelessness can happen to anyone."

Matthew Hill, Managing Director, Obart Pumps

Ellie Hill

"This was my first experience volunteering at a homeless shelter, and I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. All of the guests were very friendly, and I especially enjoyed hearing their stories and about their background. Taking part really opened my eyes to how big an issue homelessness is, not only in Maidstone, but across the UK. I hope to take part again next year."

Joelle Foster

"It felt very rewarding being able to give my time to the lovely guests. It gave me an insight into what life is like for them. It has definitely changed my perception of 'The Homeless' as they were all so kind and so grateful, just for the fact I had given up some of my time to be there for them. I found this very humbling. Sometimes money is not what people need, it is time, care and conversation. Little things make a big difference!"

Phil Gibson

"I found helping overnight at the Maidstone Shelter to be extremely rewarding and challenged my perceptions of the homeless population of the UK. The Guests were very polite and approachable, and willing to recount many of their life stories. I would highly recommend other people to help as they will find this a rewarding experience."

Matthew Hill

"I found it a very enjoyable and enlightening experience. The guests were all so approachable, engaging and interesting. The life stories of the guests I met proved to me that my own life is purely down to luck and altered my opinion of people in their position. The resilience they show, in extreme adversity, is incredible. I will now endeavour to change the attitude and beliefs of others I know and meet, as a result of this edifying experience."

Daniel Fraser

"I spent two nights volunteering at the shelter and found the experience very rewarding. My pre-conceived ideas about the kind of people that stay in the shelters were incorrect and I found all the guests to be very polite. The conversations I did have lead me realise that a few wrong turns and it could easily have been me in their situation. A great charity and a great cause."

Fundraising

Based on the volume of enquiries to the office and response to our press coverage campaign, we saw an upturn in the number of other community groups across Maidstone showing interest in the plight of the town's street-homeless. Nowhere was this more tangible than with the town's children and young people. Last winter we saw many examples of the town's younger population showing compassion and commitment to both raising awareness of the issue of homelessness in Maidstone but also helping MCWS generate funds to run the Shelter next year and beyond.

A great example of this is the Youth Group from All Saints Church in Loose, who after hearing a presentation from one of our Trustees Wendy Tull, on the realities of being street-homeless, set out to raise funds via a sponsored sleep-out, which secured an incredible £197.89.

Another kind and wonderful example came in February when a group of Year 12 pupils from The Malling School, who raised an astonishing £210.00 following a 10 mile sponsored walk.



Another really 'sweet' gesture – Ezzie and Eliza who worship with their parents at St Paul's Church made ribbons and Christmas decorations out of recycled sweet wrappers, and sold them to friends and families and raised £15.58.

We also incredibly grateful for the wonderful fundraising support given to the Shelter by many wonderful and generous people from across Maidstone and beyond! Your donations meant an incredible amount to both MCWS and our guests, be it an incredible £7000 given by local employer Filder Filter Systems, or a truly inspiring gift of £5 by a 6 year old girl from Snodland, out of her first pocket money.

We are very grateful for all the wonderful donations the Shelter receives, including that of sleeping bags and food, which are such a reflection of the incredible generosity that exists within the Maidstone community.



A special thank you to Larkfield Community Church (LCC) for their sponsored sleep out, which raised £471.96 in aid of the Winter Shelter. Children at the LCC made beds/shelter out of cardboard boxes. They slept in the hall turned off the heating, no blow-up beds and no mobile devices. Some Street Pastors came along to give their personal testimony of their work with the homeless.' We also received a further £127 donation from their Carol service collection.



Fundraising

Thank you to everyone who supported our fundraising dinner at Frédéric Bistro on the 17th of April, and special thanks to Frédéric's themselves for generously donating £10 per head to the Shelter. We raised over £1,300 which will go a long way in supporting Maidstone's homeless.

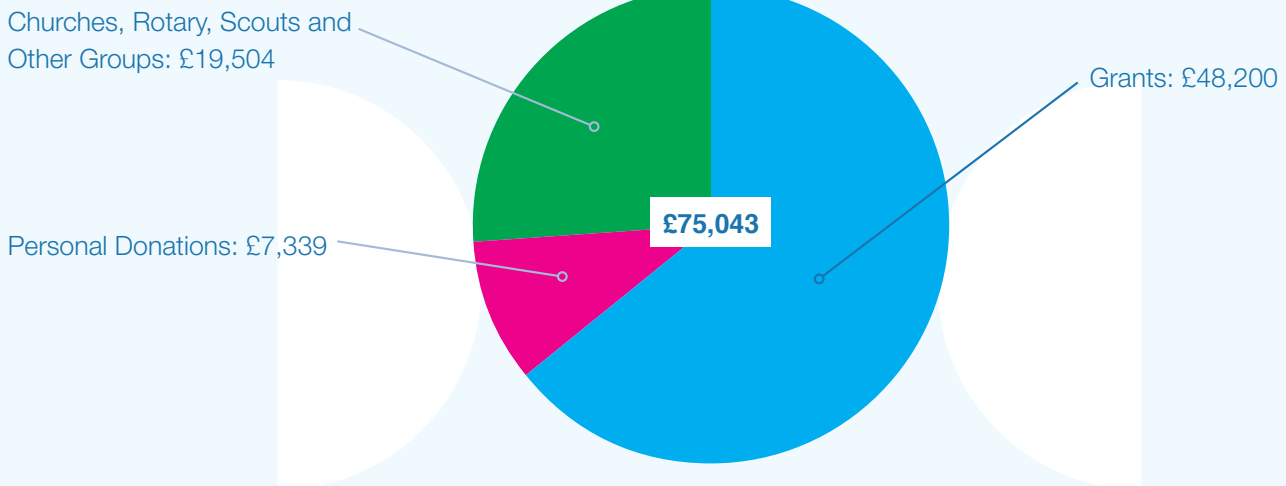


Special mention of our former Project Manager, Alexa Kersting-Woods for her fundraising contribution to the Shelter. Alexa organised and hosted a pub quiz last November, which raised over £130. Alexa and her team at the Maidstone YMCA organised a quiz night which raised £410. Alexa, along with her YMCA team of Lynda Dale, Petra Thorpe and Sue Thompson sponsored and prepared a scrumptious evening meal at the Shelter. Alexa also hosted our fundraising dinner at Frédéric's and organised the raffle along with Lynda Dale.

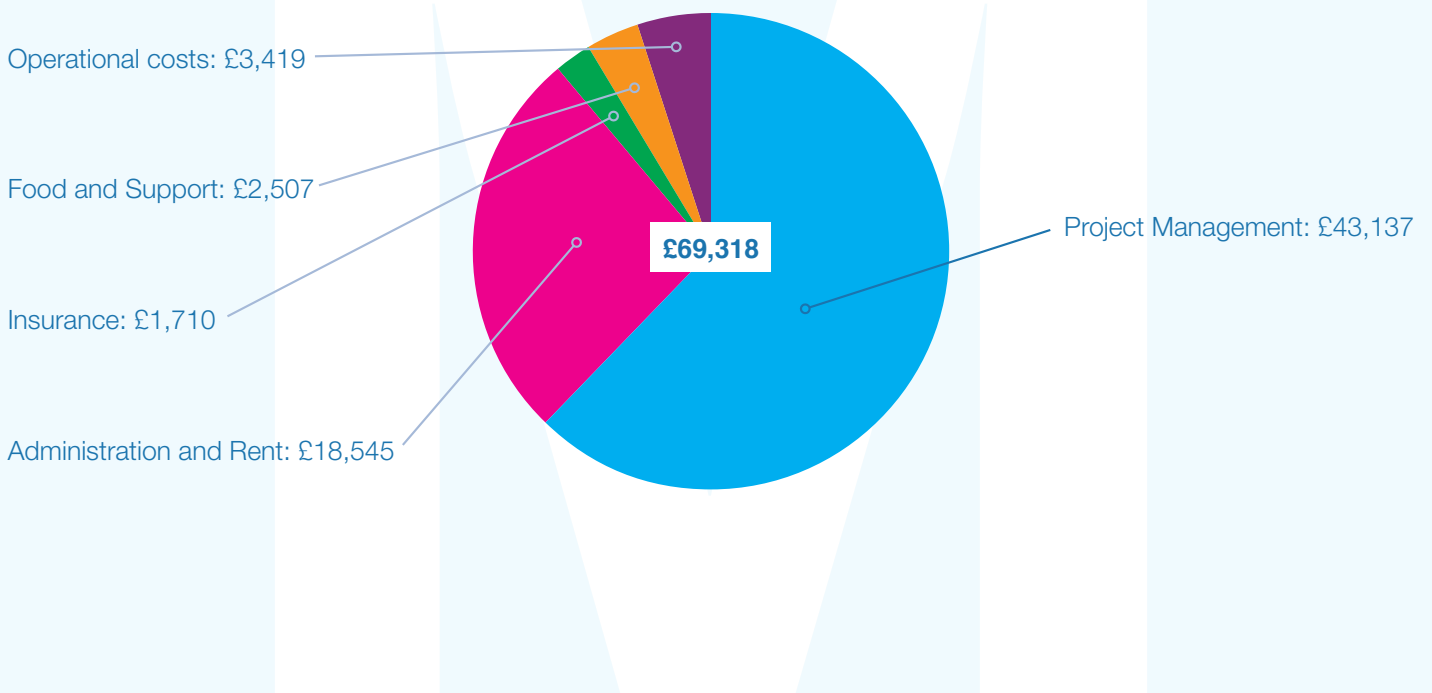


Financial information

Sources of Income



Expenditure



Thank you very much...

We do hope that we have thought of everyone who has contributed to the success of the Shelter and we are extremely grateful for your invaluable kindness and commitment.

Our volunteers

At Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter we recognise that our volunteers are at the heart of our work with street homeless people. This year we had more than 300 volunteers making a huge difference to many of our guests. We want to say a big thank you to every single one of you that supported the Shelter. We could not provide this vital service without you.

Our venues

St Luke's Church of England, Maidstone Baptist Church, the Quaker Meeting House, Maidstone Family Church, Maidstone Day Centre, the Salvation Army, Tonbridge Road Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Making your buildings available to the Shelter has been a vital and generous contribution.

To all our Venue Leads, Lead Cooks, Ministers of our host venues, here, we recognise you and thank you for your whole-hearted support to the Winter Shelter.

Our staff

Our staff team this year consisted of Andy James, Aziza Kilmister, Rebecca Crosbie, Gwyn McPherson, Farzaneh Lotfi and Ophelia Orr, who all went above and beyond the call of duty from start to finish to ensure that the Shelter not only opened but was well-coordinated. Thank you!

Our trustees

To Our Trustees, thank you for your passion, commitment, and leadership! All our Trustees are volunteers, and at the moment we have 7 Trustees who all generously give their time and a high level of dedication both behind the scenes, and at the forefront by volunteering at various venues during the Shelter.

Gordon Mackley, Martin Hinchliffe, Michelle Peirce, Wendy Tull, John Tapper, Zofia Grzymala and Kerry Faulkner, we thank you!



Our funders and donors

Allington Baptist Church
 All Saints Church Loose
 Aylesford Parochial Church Council
 Bearsted Methodist Church
 Beneden Tennis Tournament
 Boxley Parochial Church Council
 Cobtree Charity Trust
 Cranbrook and Hawkhurst Rotary Club
 East Farleigh Farmers' Market
 East Farleigh Parochial Church Council
 Filder Filtration Systems
 Friends in Harmony
 Griffin Law
 Jaguar Drivers' Club
 Jollie's Socks
 Kent Community Foundation
 Larkfield Community Church
 Linton Road Congregational Church
 Kingswood Christmas Trees
 Maidstone Borough Council – Housing Team

Maidstone Day Centre
 Maidstone Rotary Club
 Maidstone Relief in Need
 Mid Kent Decorative and Fine Arts Society
 Obart Pumps
 Porchlight
 St Andrew's Barming
 St Francis Catholic Church
 St Luke's Parochial Church Council
 St Martin's Parochial Church Council
 St Michael's Parochial Church Council
 St Paul's Parochial Church Council
 St Paul's Youth Group
 St Peter's Church
 The Salvation Army
 Staplehurst Free Church
 South African Congregation Church
 Sure Foundation Assembly
 Tovil Christian Fellowship
 Willington Players

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

Thank you very much...

Those Who Supported In Other Ways

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

Absolute Creative Prints for donating printing services.

Aylesford Priory for laundering sleeping bags and pillows.

Bill's Restaurant for donating raffle prizes for our fundraising dinner.

CGL Maidstone

4 Degrees Bar and Kitchen for donating raffle prizes.

Frederic's Bistro for hosting our fundraising dinner.

Hair Professional, who once again assisted us in many ways including the laundering of sleeping bags and provided haircuts.

Jubilee Church for use of their premises for our daily guest registration, and for helping at a moment's notice.

Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT)

Lateef Restaurant in Sittingbourne for preparing a delicious curry meal over the Christmas period.

Making A Difference Maidstone (MADM).

Morrisons, Lisa at the Larkfield store for donations of apple pies and Christmas crackers.

Quakers, St Paul's, St Luke's and the Baptist's Church laundry angels.

Snap Fitness for donating raffle prizes.

Tesco, Lunsford Park for donation of food items at Christmas.

Union Street Methodist Church, which served as a venue for the training of volunteers.

United Reformed Church – Week Street for financial and monetary donations.

The White Horse Charity Otham for a large donation of sleeping bags and pillows.

YMCA Maidstone for fundraising efforts.



**Maidstone
Churches
Winter Shelter**

www.maidstoneshelter.org.uk

01622 296 450

Charity No: 1156735

6 Buckland Road, Maidstone, ME16 0SL