FCENS

FOREST CHURCHES EMERGENCY NIGHT SHELTERS



Report on the Winter Season

This last winter season due to numbers of Covid cases still relatively high and Public Health England's discouragement of shared facilities, the Trustees made the decision to use the Cranbrook Hotel again to host the shelter.



The hotel had been excellent to work with previously and they were very flexible and accommodating to our needs. We were able to secure the self-contained annex of the hotel again providing 14 hotel rooms with en-suite facilities for guests. We were able to convert one of the rooms into a shared dining space to try and foster more of a sense of community and use a room as a space for meeting and for our staff to work from. Another room served as a volunteer sleep in room.

Each night churches provided a main meal and breakfast for the next day. We had plentiful supplies of tea/coffee and many organisations donated extra food and supplies for guests.

We provided support to the guests throughout the night with our Night Awake staff and volunteers which proved



Thank you to Tesco, Leytonstone for the Christmas packages pictured.

to be invaluable - quite often the Night staff would find one or two guests would sit with them for a couple of hours.

Use of the hotel for another season brought with it both positives and also some challenges. The main challenge was trying to form some sense of community and collegiality. We attempted this by encouraging use of the dining area for food; however, many of the guests still preferred to eat in their rooms. In addition, there were the similar challenges to the previous season of ensuring that the space was constantly managed during both the daytime and night time, especially as we were understaffed to begin with. There was also the undoubted challenge of using a hotel outside the borough and the inevitable disconnect that meant (although Waltham Forest Council also used the Cranbrook as accommodation when SWEP (Severe weather emergency protocol) was declared).



However there were also positives of using the Cranbrook again. The main benefit that having guests accommodated in their own rooms and able to remain in the same venue meant that we were able to be much more effective with our casework than we had been pre-Covid. This is reflected in the high proportion of re-housing numbers we achieved this year.

Our casework continued to be staffed by Tunde Rotinwa and he was supported in the second half of the season by Charlie Xavier.

Throughout the winter season we had a total of 66 referrals. Of those we accommodated in the shelter 51 guests. Out of the remaining referrals, 4 had needs that we felt were too high for us to be able to support and others failed to turn up to their appointments.

The good news is that through the hard work of Tunde and Charlie we managed to re-house 44 of our guests. 11 were referred to Crisis - which is positive but we have no information where they are long term - and unfortunately 7 left to unstable situations.

In addition to re-housing, our caseworkers worked with the guests to help them with whatever support needs they had, such as helping register with local GP's, benefit applications and helping them settle into their move-on accommodation and providing them with some of their needs (e.g. microwaves to those moving into private rented accommodation).

Whilst the season officially ended on 31st March, thanks to some funding by Housing Justice, we provided a further 4 weeks' accommodation and casework for 2 guests in order to finalise their move-on plans.

As in 2020/21, it was season where we had to operate very differently. Yet we are grateful that we have been able to take homeless people off our streets and provide them with much needed support during this difficult time. We are so thankful to our staff team for being able to adapt to these challenges and still provide high level of care.

Church Partnerships

We continued to work in partnership with Churches to help run the shelter and we are so grateful for the hard work of the co-ordinators at our partner churches. Throughout the season Churches provided breakfast, lunch and dinner for every guest as well as organising volunteers to help staff the shelter and provide support for the Night Awake Staff.

Staffing



This season our Night Shelter continued to be led by Tunde Rotinwa, our caseworker. In January we welcomed to the team Charlie Xavier who provided casework alongside Tunde. We are also hugely grateful to the wonderful team who re-joined us again this season: Anthony Walsh and Adrian Maxhuni our Night Awake workers and Jean Ashley who provided administrative support.

We are also so grateful to the many volunteers who helped run the shelter, particular providing support to the Night Awake staff. Also a huge thanks to the hard work of our trustees who give their time voluntarily to help run the night shelter.

In other staffing news, David Baker (HR Trustee) and David Maynes (Treasurer) have both stepped down as Trustees. We offer our heartfelt thanks to all that they have contributed to FCENS over the years as Trustees.

Funding News

The main cost of the hotel and the casework was funded by the Homelessness Winter Transformation Fund with **Homeless Link**.

We are thankful to the **London Borough of Waltham Forest** whom we have worked closely with throughout the pandemic and are grateful for their financial support towards some of the costs of bed spaces.

A grant from **Housing Justice** enabled us to extend the shelter to ensure a move on plan was completed for the remaining guests.

Also we would like to thank all those who have very generously provided much needed financial support through personal donations either direct or through our website and via CAF. In addition to this we want to thank all who supported a crowdfunding campaign to help us move forward and explore future options through which we managed to raise over £10,000.

What Next?

The future direction of Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter is uncertain and we would love your input as we seek a way forward.

The provision for rough sleepers has changed for the better as a result of efforts over the past two years and increased central government funding. The Local Authority are offering more resources for the homeless in the form of sheltered housing and a 15 space rough-sleeper assessment bed project at the YMCA. This can only be a good thing and we hope it will be reflected in less people on the streets in the future. In addition to this a number of questions remain about the viability of returning to a roving shelter model like we used to pre-Covid.

However, the trustees feel there is still a need for those who are homeless and we do not yet know what the impact on rough sleeping will be with the rising costs of living. In addition, churches are uniquely placed to offer love, care and community rehabilitation to the homeless in a way no statutory organisation can provide.

With all these questions in mind, **we would love to invite you to an evening to celebrate and reflect on the last 2 years as well as discuss the way forward for the shelter**.

This evening will be on Tuesday 24th May, 7.30pm at St Mary's Welcome Centre and it is an open invitation to all who wish to input and be involved.

Thanks to our supporters:

The National Lottery®

homeless link

HOUSING JUSTICE

Waltham Forest

FCENS

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We are seeking two new Trustees to join our team

Would you like to put your faith in to action and use your skills to transform the lives of the homeless in Waltham Forest?

We are looking for a new **Treasurer** with skills/experience of finance & accounting and a Trustee with skills/experience of **Human Resources** to join our dynamic team of Trustees.

For full details visit: www.forestnightshelter.org.uk/join-us

If you are interesting in finding out more, please contact the Chair of Trustees, David Britton (rev.britton@gmail.com / info@forestnightshelter.org.uk)

FCENS is an independent charity working in partnership with local churches who are motivated by a common concern for the plight of the homeless.

Our mission is to save and transform the lives of the homeless in Waltham Forest and ensure everyone has somewhere to go. We provide emergency accommodation for the homeless during the Winter from 1 November to 31 March and ongoing Casework support throughout the year.

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Charity Registration No 1148362 Company No 7904107