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# WINTER SHELTER NOTTINGHAM 2007-2008



## Establishing the need

The Nottingham Winter shelter first operated December 2006 – January 2007, following an identification of need. Prior to the previous shelter's operation a number of individuals from Christian backgrounds in Greater Nottingham had come together having been continually and increasingly aware of the number of homeless people seeking ad hoc assistance from our churches. This was reinforced both by the experiences of individuals involved on the 'soup run' circuit in Nottingham and from frontline homelessness professionals encountering persistently and consistently high levels of rough sleeping in Nottingham.

We were aware of the differing statistical and anecdotal accounts as to the numbers of rough sleepers in Nottingham.

Homeless Watch 2007 (A Snapshot Survey Of Homelessness In Nottinghamshire) says: "the figure for individual rough sleepers is **199**".<sup>1</sup> This figure was the total number of rough sleepers (Page 8) using information from 186 different agencies and services during the survey period, and removing duplication of numbers. At best the figure is an indication of levels of homeless but may not be a totally accurate figure. Figures are trending slowly downwards but there still seems to be a shortfall in direct access provision.<sup>2</sup>

The same report recommended a review of provision for rough sleepers and states that this might need to be short term, e.g. a winter shelter. Throughout all stages of the Winter Shelter, the more contact we have had with local church and voluntary sector agencies working in homelessness, the more the need for this project has been reinforced. We regard people who are rough sleeping as among the most vulnerable, excluded and impoverished group of individuals in our society.

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<sup>1</sup> The report, which is for the whole county, can be downloaded from <http://www.hlg.org.uk/Homeless%20Watch%202007%20-%20final%20version.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *...decreasing prevalence of rough sleeping in Nottinghamshire with numbers down by almost a third, falling from 280 in 2005 to 199 in 2007. Whilst this reduction is obviously very positive, the overall findings related to rough sleeping in 2007 show clearly that there is still a major and chronic problem that remains to be solved. Numbers of rough sleepers presenting in Nottingham city have fallen from 145 in 2006 to 131 in 2007. However, contrary to the overall trend, there has been an increase in those reporting as sleeping rough in Mansfield, up from 41 in 2006 to 62 in 2007. Quoted from same report (Page 9)*

Having become increasingly and unavoidably aware of these needs and frustrated by the situation we came together drawing upon a Biblical heritage that has at its heart the person of Jesus: born in temporary accommodation and living a life of transience for 3 years of his adulthood.

*"...the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).*

The words of Jesus in Matthew 25, also speak of caring for the marginalised within society:

*"...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."*

We were aware that the churches in Nottingham are very well placed when it comes to providing a response to a need such as homelessness. We have well-established networks; human resources, including many people already involved in working with homeless people; buildings and other practical resources<sup>3</sup>; particular funding streams and a willingness to contribute materially at a grassroots level. There is also a freedom that allows for creativity and quick responses, even more so than the mainstream voluntary sector. And all of this is underwritten by guiding principles of the faith that speak of reaching out, of overcoming injustice.

### **The Steering Group**

Following the success of the previous year's project, it was decided to run the Winter Shelter again, using a similar format. Gerard Goshawk (previous project coordinator) was moving to Birmingham and another steering group member who had been employed in the previous shelter) was encouraged to lead the project for the following year.

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<sup>3</sup> Much has been written about the use of "Faithful Capital" - the combination of buildings and people that church networks have access to. For more information see: [http://www.culf.org.uk/content\\_1.0.asp?p=2](http://www.culf.org.uk/content_1.0.asp?p=2) which contains the report "Faithful Cities: a call for celebration, vision and justice" from the Commission on Urban Life and Faith. Much more detailed research can be found via the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, particularly, "Faith as social Capital" <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/faith-social-capital>

Some members of the steering group were leaving/moving on so a few others were recruited – including experienced workers from the previous project to take part.

Contacts through formal and informal Christian networks, reaching across denominations, brought together a group of people with a wide range of experiences and expertise in this field. A steering group was formed with individuals who included: experienced homelessness workers currently working in the 'secular' sector; a street pastor involved in leading soup run initiatives; a current and a previous day centre/project manager; two people from local churches who brought experiences with them of responding to ad hoc requests for help from homeless people; and the local diocesan urban officer. This mix reflects the richness and professionalism of the human resources available to a faith-based project such as this.

The Steering Group began its work in April 2007. The task in hand was to consider and develop a further Christian response to the needs of rough sleepers for the coming winter. Following the success of the last Winter Shelter project, it was decided to largely stick with the formula that had worked previously. Thomas Helwys Baptist Church agreed for their premises to be used again. The project had started in the church and had actively been supported by it – in terms of providing a site, volunteers and pastoral support.

**We had some key considerations that determined the shape of our response. Our project would need to be:**

1. *Meeting the needs*: it would need to be of practical help to its service users
2. *Manageable*: it would need to be structured and sufficiently systematic to be operable on what would inevitably be a part time basis
3. *Achievable*: it would need to be realistic and simply effective
4. *Safe and secure*: risk assessment and active risk reduction would need to underpin all aspects of the project

## **Our response: Winter Shelter 2007-2008**

The Steering Group working with Thomas Helwys Baptist Church resolved to set up a temporary night shelter for 18<sup>4</sup> homeless people (male and female) and that this would run from 24 December 2007 to 19 January 2008. We would provide a simple bed, an evening snack and breakfast. The venue would be in the church hall and foyer at Thomas Helwys.

### **What we did in order to set up the Winter Shelter:**

- Nurtured the vision for the project in its 'host church' at Thomas Helwys Baptist Church by consulting with the church deacons
- Set up a winter Shelter project plan to track tasks and progress
- Joined and regularly attended the Nottingham Voluntary Homelessness Forum for networking, recruitment and publicity
- Formally notified the local authority planning department regarding change of use (we found we did not actually need this if operating for 28 days or less)
- Contacted churches (28) across Greater Nottingham inviting support, including visiting to publicise and recruit
- Registered under "Hope 08" and as a "Fresh Expression" initiative
- Contacted local businesses, Chambers of commerce and Institute of Directors for sponsorship/publicity, including Lenton Church Square Working Group
- Contacted Dunkirk and Lenton Partnership Forum
- Produced a DVD for publicity and placed a video on "youtube"
- Contacted the local school and the Lenton Centre
- Held discussions with the local police and two of the local city council elected representatives, including Councillors David Trimble and Zahoor Mir who represent the Lenton area.
- Notified the Homelessness Solutions Manager for the City of Nottingham and arranged a meeting
- Sought advice and discussed our requirements with the local authority Environmental Health department
- Sought advice and discussed our requirements with the Fire Service and local authority fire officer
- Held a forum with homelessness agencies to finalise referral processes and trained the relevant outreach/contact workers
- Extended the church insurance with the Baptist Union Insurance Company in order to take into account the needs of our project

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<sup>4</sup> This was an increase from the previous year of 3 (i.e. 15 to 18 beds). This was decided due to the success and manageability of the previous project.

- Worked very closely with the Street Outreach Team in order to design a project that was not only safe but most relevant to the current needs of rough sleepers
- Contacted some trained clergy (including Bishop Tony Porter) to offer pastoral support to service users within the church space if requested. Some service users did this and valued it greatly
- Contacted the press, local MPs and a bishop to publicise the shelter
- Arranged for "Footprints Theatre Company to perform a dramatic story telling for service users one evening (attendance optional!)
- Made it clear that we were not providing a service for under 18s

## Timing

This was an aspect that caused much reflection and debate amongst the steering group. The period we operated (Dec 24<sup>th</sup>- Jan 17<sup>th</sup>) was not the coldest part of the year. The coldest part is usually end Jan – beginning of March – so why did we open in this time frame? There were several reasons:

- Many agencies close down for the statutory bank holidays over the Christmas and New Year period leaving service users vulnerable with few facilities – often over 5 days or so.
- Emmanuel House was staying open over Christmas but would be closing to give its staff a well earned break in early January
- We did not have resources to operate for longer, so chose to operate when services would be known to be reduced or less available

A long-term goal of the Winter Shelter (apart from making itself redundant and not being needed) is to open for longer, possibly from December 24<sup>th</sup> to February or March end in order to bridge the coldest months. Such a venture would need more support and also more venues. At the moment, such an operation cannot continue for more than 28 days without change of use planning consent being granted. In the current political climate concerning Nottingham City Council's perception of the winter shelter, it would be difficult to envisage this being granted. In order to avoid having to gain such consent, the shelter could operate for a fixed time period in several different places – each one with its own management structure and volunteer/worker base but having oversight from one overall coordinator or manager. If operating in one place for a month was found to be difficult, then the burden could be spread by

operating in several places for a week or fortnight at a time, or even on a nightly basis as in the London Islington night shelter scheme.

## **Finance**

We compiled a budget of our projected costs. This budget was continually revised as we progressed.

We requested financial support from a range of faith based funding streams as well as from local charitable trusts and local churches and individuals. We received funding from many sources including:

Anonymous donation from local trust fund: £5000

St Nicholas Church: £600

Thomas Farr Foundation: £1 000

Browne Jacobson: £1000

Shoosmiths: £300

Wilkinson's Trust £500

Amongst other individual and church donations.

We applied for funding from the Nottingham City Council Winter Support Fund, but our application was unsuccessful as in the previous year, the money was instead targeted at emergency B+B accommodation, paying deposits and in some cases rent arrears so that people could stay in accommodation.

We received numerous other donations of clothing, bedding and foodstuffs from various churches, individuals and agencies, as well as from Boots.

A creative funding approach was to obtain sponsorship of workers for a shift, or even for a series of shifts (cost approximately £300) for 3 people for a 12-hour shift.

## **Volunteers**

Through word of mouth and various targeted flyers we were able to reach significantly diverse groups of people. In some instances the project did its own recruiting, i.e. when people heard about the project taking place in their community they said they would like to volunteer!



*Some of our wonderful volunteers*

More usual was volunteer recruitment through community and church networks, more specifically through contacts in the homelessness sector, flyers and conversations in various church settings and a well-placed article in the Wollaton Link magazine and Southwell Diocese "See" publication. Attempts were made to recruit volunteers and workers from local theological colleges but this was surprisingly unsuccessful as well as approaches to several large resource rich churches within Nottingham City. In fairness to some of these churches, they were already active providing social action programmes to disadvantaged people, with one shutting down its main operation for two weeks over Christmas to give its volunteers and staff a break. The composition of our 56 strong volunteer team was thoroughly ecumenical as well as reaching well beyond church people, and came mainly (but not exclusively) from smaller city churches. (I would like to do more research on reasons behind this in the future).

### **Paid workers**

We planned (and achieved for every session) that we would staff the project with 3 paid workers each night.

We recruited via an advertisement in the Nottingham HLG newsletter, "Homing In" and also through church networks and other agencies. The Steering Group's informal church and homelessness sector networks

backed this up. We aimed to have a mix of experience and gender for each shift.

We employed 16 people as night shift workers; these people had varying levels of experience of homelessness working. There were 8 men and 8 women on the paid team. The majority of the workforce was not particularly from a Christian faith background.

Staff were employed by Thomas Helwys Baptist Church and the payroll was calculated by the Winter Shelter co-ordinator and administered by Thomas Helwys Baptist Church treasurer.

## **Training**

We held a 3-hour training session twice in one day prior to the commencement of the project.

Training was delivered by:

- The Winter Shelter co-ordinator
- A Mental Health Support Team worker with many years experience of night shelter working
- NHS Homeless Nursing Team
- Health Shop

Workers and volunteers were also issued with a handbook containing the policies and procedures for the operation of the shelter.

The training was mandatory for volunteer and paid workers. This was vitally important in order to communicate:

- What people's expected roles were
- Policies and procedures
- Basic safety training including personal boundaries
- What support workers and volunteers could expect
- Procedural aspects of the project
- Food hygiene; personal safety and risk/other management issues
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Physical health issues
- And many more (further information can be found in the worker's and volunteer's handbook)

One of the key achievements of the Winter Shelter was the constancy of the service and care offered to service users – no mean feat with so many different individuals being involved.

### **Policies and procedures**

We drew upon the experiences and expertise of other relevant projects and thought through very carefully what would be necessary, prudent and effective in guiding all people involved in the Winter Shelter.

Consequently, we devised a wide range of policies and practical procedural guidelines

We carried out risk assessments on fire safety, food hygiene, general hygiene, violent incidents and other emergencies and shaped our procedures accordingly. Policies and procedures were also amended from the previous year. Some were also modified during the operation of the shelter as we reflected on their effectiveness and workability.

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Our policy was to be clear that there was no place for illegal substances or alcohol on the premises. There was a facility for service users to deposit their alcohol, methadone and “works kits” (syringes and needles) with staff for safekeeping and collect as they left in the morning.

We had some concerns that alcohol dependent service users would struggle with not being able to drink on the premises nor being able to leave the project temporarily. This however remained manageable both for staff and the service users concerned. Sometimes this involved allowing drinkers to leave early so that they could drink outside of the shelter to avoid withdrawal and potential fitting.

Our policy was communicated to service users at point of referral and upon entering the project. It was reinforced by staff awareness through training and ongoing vigilance as well a willingness on the part of service users to cooperate.

The church is a no smoking building. Throughout the planning process this was one of our main practical concerns. Following the advent of smoking legislation, we had to be creative with a solution to this issue. Several options were investigated. Smoking inside the building using the porch area as in the previous year could not now occur; both due to the

legislation and also the amended insurance conditions as a result of this. To allow service users to stand outside the project smoking would undermine the security of all concerned, also opening a fire exit in the sleeping area of the hall would have caused problems with unknown exit and access, as well as disturbing service users already asleep in the hall. A very creative solution was found by using a camouflage net strung across an open area to reduce the visibility of the service users and the project. It may sound a bit daft but it was very creative and solved a potential headache. (Personal thanks to Peter and Steve Rydal for this one!) Service users were allowed out to smoke behind this and were supervised by volunteers or staff (whilst also having a crafty fag!)

### **Assembling of resources**

A substantial part of our preparatory work was gathering all of the things that we had worked out were needed for a temporary night shelter.

Certain items, such as airbeds, heaters, mobile phones and various safety related items, had been purchased for the previous year's project and had been stored under the stage. Other items needed restocking and we also had to buy increased bed linen due to the extra capacity being undertaken, and also to allow spares whilst laundry was occurring.

We asked for and received substantial donations of food and clothes from Thomas Helwys and a number of local churches and projects. Boots also gave us toiletries and this was split between London Road and ourselves.

Various supermarkets had been approached for food donations but this was unsuccessful.

This aspect of the project needed careful management and communication to ensure that a balanced and appropriate range of items was requested and/or received. Volunteers took an inventory on the Saturday before opening and extra provisions (bedding etc) were bought in during the week.

### **Premises**

All people involved in the Winter Shelter were really appreciative of the willingness of Thomas Helwys Baptist Church to host the project.

The church is situated in Lenton, within walking distance of the city centre.

The parts of the building used for the Winter Shelter were: the hall (sleeping area); foyer (social space); kitchen with a serving hatch adjoining the foyer; toilets leading off the foyer; an entrance area and a corridor off the foyer which provided a quiet consultation space leading to a small room used by staff for safe storage and night time sleeping breaks.



*Simple, safe, effective accommodation*

## **Referral Procedures**

Following discussions with Emmanuel House (and other agencies) and in order to make the referral process more streamlined and manageable, a different approach was taken from the previous year.

Emmanuel House would act as the main referral point and also as a "clearing house". Rather than many different agencies contacting a winter shelter day coordinator (as in the previous year), people would instead be referred to a worker at Emmanuel House for assessment and processing. If there were any concerns regarding risk assessment/suitability of potential service users, these would be taken up with the project coordinator. All referrals were then passed through to the Winter Shelter co-ordinator by fax by 6:00 PM for review and discussion over

the phone. Initially, the idea was to receive the faxes at Thomas Helwys Baptist Church prior to opening for set up at 8:00PM, however, following a misfeed on the second night<sup>5</sup>, it was decided to receive faxes at the home of the co-ordinator. In this way, service user information was guaranteed to be received for oncoming night staff to be aware of service user risk assessments and needs.

Referrals were accepted between 10:00 – 12:00am, from the Emmanuel House worker. Other agencies could “feed in” to this process by contacting Emmanuel House, for example:

Street Outreach Team, Handel Street Day Centre, Emmanuel House Day Centre, Homeless Team (Nurses), Salvation Army (Sneinton House), Friary Drop-In, Nottingham HLG.

Emmanuel House would perform a risk assessment (sometimes in conjunction with the other signposting agency, e.g. Street Outreach team) and also fill out a Nottingham City Council contact assessment form. In doing this, people would then also be entered onto the local authority system for housing assessment/processing.

When Emmanuel House was satisfied that no further investigation was required, particularly with regard to risk or dual occupancy a referral would be accepted.

Service users were then given a ticket in order for them to access the Winter Shelter between 9-10pm that night.

A referral could only be made for the immediate night ahead. Bed spaces were “reserved” until 12:00 noon so that people could present and be re-referred and another ticket issued. If people did not present prior to this time, then their bed space would be lost and be available for someone else. The reasons for having this process were:

- It prevented people block booking bed spaces for the duration of the project. If they had found alternative accommodation they would otherwise prevent other people accessing beds
- It took people to a place where they could engage with services – quite often by meeting with a outreach worker accommodation problems/other requirements could be resolved
- It gave a regular point of contact where other service providers could communicate with service users

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<sup>5</sup> A quick phone call got the relevant information to come through again!

Referrals were taken until the project bed list was full (usually by 12:00am as the project ran) or the 5pm cut-off point had been reached. Sometimes late referrals were accepted providing risk assessment data was available. Again, safety of service users and staff was paramount.

No “door services” or unREFERRED admissions were to be offered or accepted, i.e. no ticket, no service

Service users needed to access their bed at the Winter Shelter between 9pm and 10pm. Queuing before 9pm was firmly discouraged and if seen as happening, was to result in exclusion from the project. Late admission was to be denied. These stipulations were important in our desire to have a minimal impact upon the local community in Lenton.

We sought to accommodate dogs as best we can. In the event we did not have any dogs at the project.

We decided that we would have no automatic exclusions but would conduct individual risk assessments on the basis of the service user in question and our ability to manage the risks they present. Several people were refused access, as the shelter would not have been able to cope with particular behaviour.

- One person was refused a referral due to being known as unstable and unpredictable to other service and deemed too high risk<sup>6</sup>
- One was barred after several days due to erratic behaviour
- Another was refused referral as they had accommodation already but wanted to come in and stay with a relative for the social interaction (this would deny space to someone who really needed it, and the person concerned had little incentive to follow rules).

The above may seem harsh, but the overriding concern of the project was to provide a safe place for vulnerable people, as well as reducing risks for volunteers and workers. Also, the function of the shelter was not to provide specialist care for people with serious mental health problems – something that they statutory agencies should have been providing, in some cases refusing entry “forced” relevant agencies to arrange proper care. Many people with mental health issues did present and use the

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<sup>6</sup> This descriptor could apply to many people who used the shelter, however, this person was known to the coordinator who had witnessed such behaviour consistently (as well as information from the referral centre staff). Strangely enough, as we refused accommodation, a bed space in another project suddenly became available.

shelter but some service user requirements were beyond the remit/ability of the shelter, and really should have been addressed elsewhere by other agencies.

### **Winter Shelter Up And Running**

The project became live on Christmas Eve 2007 with referrals being accepted from 10am on that day.

The "Shelter Coordinator" received faxes from Emmanuel House each day by 6:00PM, with that evening's bed list and any extra information (medical needs, special requirements, advisory notes etc).

In the evening the Shelter Coordinator would take the referral information to the project, oversee setting up and handover to the Shift Leader and Project Workers at 8.30pm.

At 8pm the volunteer team would arrive and set up the airbeds and bedding in the sleeping area as well as preparing refreshments etc.

At 8.30pm the 3 paid workers began their 12-hour shift. The paid staff consisted of 1 Shift Leader and 2 Project Workers.



Between 9pm and 10pm was 'checking in time' and service users were greeted by two project workers. We also operated a "safe deposit system" where valuables and other items could be left.

They were then able to have a meal, watch a DVD or chat. 'Lights out' time was 11.30pm – although this time moved forward – instigated by some service users who wanted to get good night's sleep. Very often service users had done much walking around during the day as they had tried to access services from various agencies.

During the night all 3 paid workers stayed on duty and there was an on-call arrangement with the Shelter Coordinator. There was a separate room in an area inaccessible to service users, and this was used for a shift worker sleeping area. The project was open to men and women but in the event we only housed one woman, briefly, for one evening. Arrangements were in place for a bed near the entrance of the hall, where staff could monitor sleeping area activity. Every 10-15 minutes a brief visual check was done of the hall sleeping area to ensure service users safety.

At 7.00am the 3 volunteers arrived for the morning shift and any service users not yet up and about were awakened. A simple breakfast (toast and cereals) was served and then service users were required to leave the locality by 8.00am (in order to minimise any impact on the local community and for the safety of our users).

Service users stored their own bedding in marked Ikea bags, if they were planning to return the next night – individual service users laundry was washed every two days or sooner if required. It had been the intention to get another church involved in terms of either carrying out the laundry or sponsoring for service washes at a launderette, this however was unsuccessful, with the project only finding this out on the Monday of the week we were opening! In the end we got by with people volunteering to wash a load (or several) every so often and this seemed to work quite well. This vital task is important for hygiene and dignity of service users. At 8.30am the paid staff left having handed over any key information to the Shelter Coordinator by phone. A volunteer would then ensure that provisions and clean bedding were in place (or arranged to be in place) for the next session.



For 27 days the Winter Shelter ran on this basis and thoroughly became part of the networks of provision for homeless people

For 27 days a highly committed team of experienced and inexperienced, paid and unpaid workers got to grips with providing a service for some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

By whichever criteria we would wish to judge the Winter Shelter, our assessment is that it was a success.

## **Winter shelter findings/analysis**

54 individuals enquired about the shelter:

- 1 individual did not pursue
- 1 individual refused as had own accommodation and wanted to come into the shelter to be with a relative

Of the 52 remaining enquiries:

- 3 were refused on initial referral due to risk assessments etc
- 49 individuals were referred to the shelter (but not all presented)

**For the 39 individuals who turned up and were resident service users:**

- 27 presented as rough sleeping the previous evening
- 34 presented as otherwise rough sleeping for the coming evening
- 35 individuals used the winter shelter for at least 1 night
- 4 individuals stayed for one night before alternatives found
- 10 people stayed 2 -5 days
- 5 people stayed 6 -10 days
- 3 people stayed 11-15 days
- 4 people stayed 16-20 days
- 8 people stayed for at least 20 days
- 3 people were resident for 25 days
- 1 woman was accommodated for 1 evening before being rehoused elsewhere (safer, more visible sleeping arrangements were used)

### **Age profile of service users**

- 4 were aged 18-20 (we did not offer services to under 18s)
- 8 were aged 20-29
- 12 were aged 31-39
- 6 were aged 40-49
- 2 were aged 50-59
- 1 was over 60

Total Bed space capacity offered for duration project = 468 (18/night)

Service user spaces reserved = 369

Bed spaces taken up = 343

93% of reserved bed spaces were taken up and used which represents 73% total shelter capacity used over duration of project

Average bed usage = 13 service users per night for duration of project

## **Mental Health Issues**

- 23 enquirers (43%) presented with or claimed to have mental health or learning disability issues
- 18 service users (46%) claimed to have mental health issues
- Not all were seeing/been referred to Mental Health Support Team
- 4 were using mental health related medication with an additional 4 who had finished taking prescribed drugs in the last year

## **Drug/alcohol problems exhibited or claimed by service users**

- 18 alcohol
- 10 crack/heroin
- 2 cocaine
- 2 amphetamines
- 1 solvents
- 9 were multi drug users
- 5 were on methadone scripts
- 3 people had been previous users who were now clean following a detox programme but were at risk of relapsing due to their social situation

## **Prison release profile of service enquirers/users**

- 13 winter shelter enquirers had recently been released from prison
- 12 referrals had recently been released from prison (31%)
- 6 actual service users had recently been released from prison (15%)

## **Accommodation found during project**

- 4 moved back to towns of origin or to friends/relatives
- 10 moved into projects/b+b/private landlord accommodation before the end of the shelter (indicating some use as a "holding" area)
- 2 were moving into accommodation the following day
- Several had further appointments for housing services
- 1 returned to his own accommodation in a sheltered housing scheme (a vulnerable adult with mental health problems whom we let stay as he was more at risk outside even though he had his own tenancy)
- i.e. 17 had accommodation, the rest were unknown/not finalised
- Some of the above suggests use of the shelter as a "stop gap" pending readiness or availability of other accommodation

In our initial meeting with the council we were asked to finish earlier in the week and not on a Saturday morning, which we refused. It had been pointed out that on Saturday fewer services were available. We replied with several points:

One of the council arguments for not running the shelter had been that it was not required and not many people would use it. We said:

If there was no demand required and no service users we would close early anyway.

If proper systems were in place then people should be housed/rehoused in alternative accommodation before the end of the shelter, as they would by the very nature of the shelter be engaged on a daily basis with service agencies trying to find them accommodation, so it should not matter that we close on a Saturday morning. Also, for long term users attempts should be made to house them before the end of the week and several emergency beds were available in hostels but these were very rarely used or able to be accessed by people. (I know, I have tried in the past on several occasions to place people in these with limited success). It is easy to be hostile to the council and its service provision but as stated earlier, very often their hands are tied and they have to operate within a specific framework. The value of faith based agencies and projects is that very often there is more freedom to act with compassion and not just meet specific criteria or targets. So often, vulnerable people are not quite vulnerable enough for statutory agencies to act – this is also often experienced with mental health issues where people can become quite desperate but not enough to be a significant danger to themselves or others, which would trigger extra care (even though there is specific provision in the Homelessness Act for this, not all are registered with GPs, or know how to access services, hence the valuable work of the Mental health Support Team with homeless people).

Support for released prisoners seemed very patchy, not all had been linked in to services for accommodation prior to release. There are many reasons for this and too many to fully examine but they include:

- Prisons see their duty of care as mainly inside the walls and not outside, there is often not enough in terms of resources to allow “bridging” of internal and external support services/agencies
- People who go to prison are deemed to make themselves intentionally homeless, tenancies are usually forfeited and rents/housing benefit not paid and they end up at the bottom of the queue for re-housing as they have made themselves intentionally homeless!

- There can be a reluctance to set anything up inside prison in case sentences are extended due to criminal activity within the prison during the sentence
- These problems have been recognised and systems/resources are being allocated, including prisoner mentoring schemes where volunteers meet prisoners a week before release and attempts at support are set up. Some research shows that the first 48 hours are critical post release in order to reduce the likelihood of resorting to offending behaviour

#### **High points included:**

- Seeing people make a real effort to stay off drugs
- Seeing people realise that they can make positive choices
- Seeing three people's faces when we brought out birthday cakes!
- Seeing people engage with services and regain hope
- Seeing some conflicts disappear between service users and bridges starting to be rebuilt
- Seeing some terrified volunteers gain confidence and really engage with service users in a sometimes challenging environment

#### **Low points included:**

- A window being smashed after a service user was refused entry due to suspected drug use and erratic behaviour (the only "major" incident)
- Seeing the number of vulnerable people (particularly with mental health issues) who apparently fall through the safety net of established services
- Death of a potential service user in another project.
  - A minister brought a potential service user to the project. As we had no information for risk assessment, we could not allow entry but we did obtain (rare) access to an emergency bed at a hostel. He had been sleeping rough for a few months in a park and looked awful. Following access to the emergency bed space, he looked so much better, showered, shaved and clean clothes (I had met him the following day to be an advocate for a benefits interview). The aim had been to allow him back into the shelter the next evening after a subsequent risk assessment and information but space was found in the project with the emergency bed. 2 days later he was dead from an overdose. He had asked for some heroin, had no history of drug use so had a very low tolerance, and overdosed on his first use. I

found this particularly difficult, as I had seen the transformation in appearance and attitude. It was a stark reminder that a place in a hostel is not necessarily the answer to people's problems. Quite often one set of risks for vulnerable people is replaced by another set when they enter accommodation. In speaking with the Street Outreach nurses, they said that we can only do so much and that people have choices – we cannot constantly be with them.

### **Service user feedback**

Here are some of the things that service users said about the project...

- ✓ "Thank you very much for having me"
- ✓ "If it wasn't for the Winter Shelter I would have been on the streets, homeless and hungry"
- ✓ "I was well looked after and I liked the people"
- ✓ "Could you be open for longer next time?"
- ✓ "Good idea – Gets people off the streets at Christmas. Glad its here to help out"
- ✓ "Everyone has done a great job and made me feel ore comfortable"
- ✓ "It helped everyone with all kinds of issues. I got on with staff and was glad I had a bed"
- ✓ "It's a safe place. Its good to find nice people"
- ✓ "Very good place"
- ✓ "I would like to say I have enjoyed myself here. The staff try and help you as much as they can. It's a shame its not open for longer but they have been good to me"

### **WE ASKED A SAMPLE OF 12 SERVICE USERS TO ANSWER SOME MONITORING QUESTIONS Here are some of the main findings: -**

- a. The length of time that individuals had been rough sleeping prior to the Winter Shelter varied from 1 night to 3-4 years.
- b. 9 of those asked had visited Housing Aid and many were on waiting lists
- c. 12 of those asked were using Emmanuel House
- d. 4 were using Handel Street
- e. 7 were using Street Outreach Team
- f. 3 were using the Friary
- g. 2 were accessing the Mental Health Support Team for Homeless People
- h. 2 were using the Drug Support Team
- i. 4 were using the Homeless Team Nurses

## Evaluation

- a. The level of usage: 39 individuals accessing the project, demonstrates that there was a basic need that was met
- b. For many of the people using the project we provided an invaluable safe shelter whilst other accommodation options could be explored or were waited for
- c. The Shelter Coordinator, paid and unpaid staff undertook much more follow-up work for service users than was envisaged originally, e.g. trying to get more permanent accommodation and engaging with service users main agencies or housing associations (especially with mental health issues where people felt unsafe in their own accommodation e.g. the above example which involved tracking down remote agencies based in Leicester and co ordination of follow up).
- d. In spite of doubts raised by some critics of the Winter Shelter, our careful and thorough planning paid off: the project operated with few practical difficulties or incidents
- e. The accommodation was simple and worked, it enabled easy management
- f. Having no showers was a drawback but as most people referred through Emmanuel House, there was potential access to these
- g. Multi-usage of the premises generated some extra work and maintenance/clearing up pressures
  - Volunteers did a good job in cleaning/preparing the hall for incoming user groups including a pre-school group that met in the same hall used for the service users sleeping area. There were no complaints from this group.
- h. Some other users of the premises decided not to operate whilst the project ran: questions here about sustainability of this approach in the future – other service groups need to be flexible
  - Some groups graciously took a break, or arranged other accommodation for a month
- i. Safety and security: was thought out and planned very carefully

- j. Media coverage was good (churches, Business networks, BBC Radio interview, Nottingham Evening Post, Southwell Diocese "See" Magazine), but could have been better and planned more
- k. Referral process worked well in most instances: problems of losing referrals in the period from referral time to checking in time at Winter Shelter producing voids (i.e. 49 referrals but 39 attendees)
- l. Excellent collaborative working with other agencies throughout
- m. Extra agencies sought to make use of us, e.g. police, probation, mental health services
- n. The requirement that service users re-refer each day worked well in ensuring that contact with other services was maintained
- o. An excellent broad base of volunteers and paid workers has been established, across Christian denominations and across communities and branches of the homelessness sector. Social capital had been established in the previous operation and successfully reused as well as further recruitment for this year and beyond.
- p. A positive response to the project has been received from: local community, police, other homelessness agencies, the service users, volunteers and paid staff
- q. It was really useful having the Homeless Nursing Team conducting a drop-in once a week at the project

### **Recommendations**

- a) On the basis of the high numbers both of referrals and attendees at the Winter Shelter, together with the reactions of frontline workers across the homelessness sector, we firmly believe that there is a definite case for more *easy access* accommodation for homeless people in Nottingham.
- b) As a group of concerned citizens now with the experience of the Winter Shelter, we should seek to have ongoing conversations with the City Council and other significant agencies in Nottingham in order to open a way for increased provision and/or a more collaborative approach. A diplomatic line needs to be followed here – council policy is

set in place following central government guidelines. It is not always easy for service users to fit specific targeted criteria in order to obtain help or accommodation. There are systems in place within Nottingham e.g. Nottingham Gateway and Housing Aid, There are instances, however, of the "local connection" criteria not working positively in favour of established local rough sleepers/homeless persons. One service user had been in Nottingham for over 10 years and had been registered at drug assistance clinics since 1991, along with GP registration and signing on location history. None of this was taken into account and the person was repeatedly encouraged to relocate back to York, where he had not been for over 10 years!

- c) We should endeavour to raise the profile of rough sleeping all year round
- d) Seek earlier clarification about support services for pre-released/released prisoners
- e) We should continue to capitalise on the links that have been made across and within church denominations, across communities and between the churches, Winter Shelter and other agencies – this was the case with VHF membership and the aim will be to continue this
- f) If there is no significant change in current provision and no clear evidence that levels of rough sleeping have decreased, we should operate a similar project in winter 2008 and beyond

**If the Winter Shelter is to run again, we should...**

- a) Retain the model from this year since it has largely been successful
- b) Continue with the requirement for service users to register every day with a referral agency, as this ensured continuing and, in many cases, increasing engagement with those services including registration with council run services
- c) Look at refining the existing referral system in order to reduce the potential for 'voids' (empty beds) – this however may be impractical
- d) Consider running for a longer period of time and possibly at a different time of the winter. This has been discussed above and is a long term goal of the shelter operation

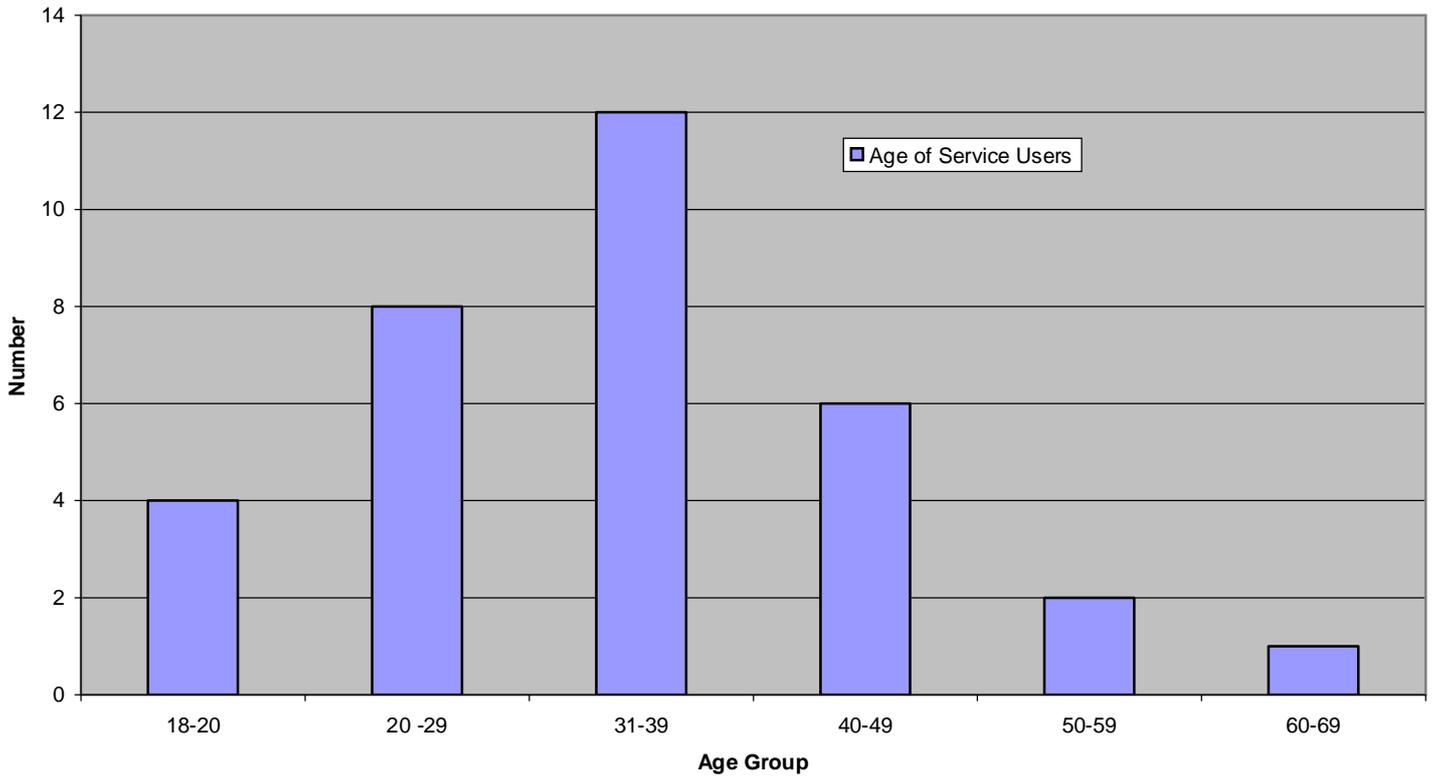
- e) Consider a different, or multiple venues, if we are to run for longer, as the accommodation at Thomas Helwys, whilst excellent in most respects, necessitated an impact on other users of the premises. This again is discussed earlier in the report
- f) Pursue all appropriate possibilities for partnership working with other agencies to provide more “joined up” or coordinated work
- g) Further to the above point, ongoing tenancy support is vital to try to keep people in their accommodation or obtain new accommodation. Persistent, consistent, regular support from voluntary agency staff improves and clarifies the communication with statutory bodies. Voluntary sector staff can interpret and clarify statutory agency rules to statutory agency staff, who may not be clear on policy/procedure. Tenancy support/mentoring schemes are effective.
- h) Seek to exploit favourable media coverage over a wider area, including a “blogging diary” to follow the set up and running
- i) Enhance our training with a more practical procedural edge (even though this was very thorough, there is always room for improvement)
- j) Look closely at how we manage the issue of smoking. This is a big issue for several reasons:
  - It is probably needed by people with other addiction issues and can be a useful distraction from the primary addiction needs
  - It is important for the social aspect
  - It breaks down barriers and builds relationship between service users and staff/volunteers (some staff also smoke)
  - It can act as a useful distraction to reduce/remove conflict by taking a person away from an aggressive situation (“Come on, mate, come and have a fag”)
  - It can bring extra visibility to the project which could attract unnecessary attention from the local or passing community who are not sympathetic to the aims of the shelter
- k) Develop more formally the role of the Shelter Coordinator, most particularly with regard to follow up work, e.g. Connecting service users with other services
- l) Offer service users more activities, letter writing, art, games etc

## Winter Shelter 2007/2008 Accounts

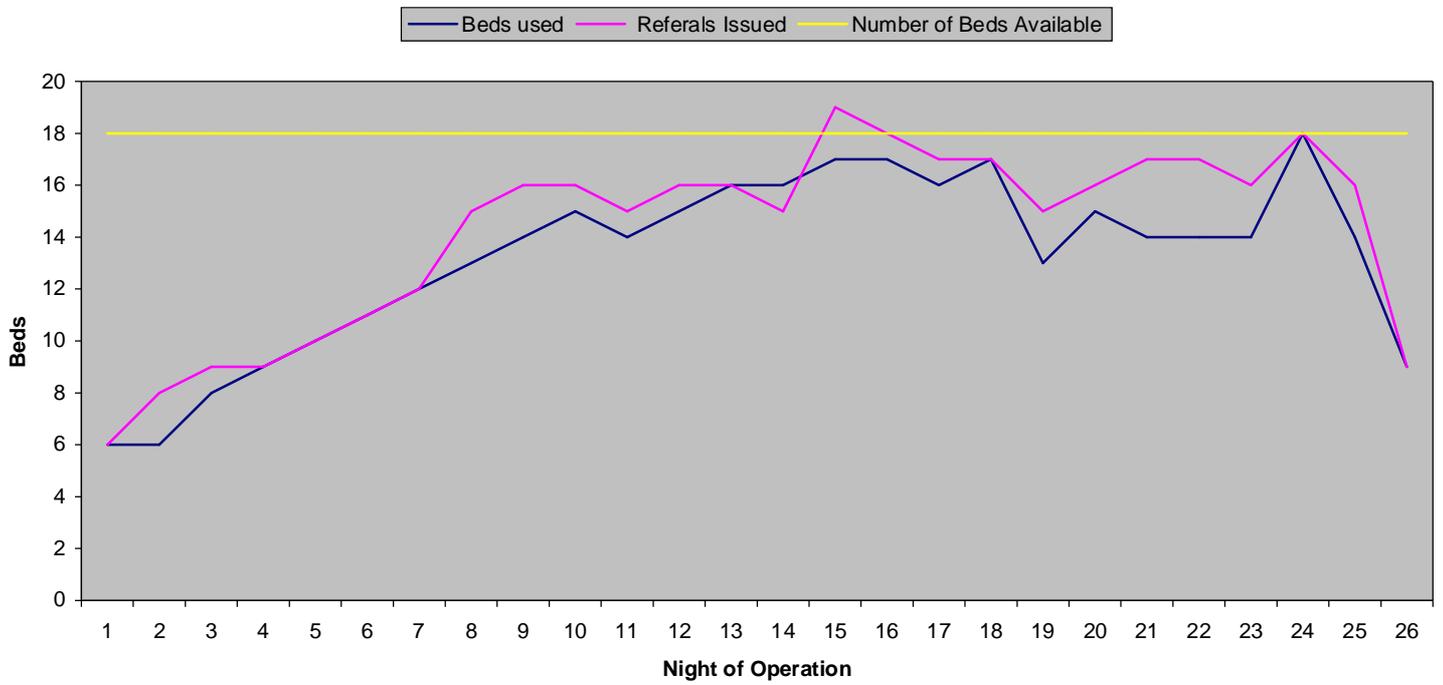
<b>Income</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>	
Opening Balance 1.4.2007	634.55	Salaries paid to workers	7960.15
Thomas Farr Foundation	1000.00	Inland Revenue - tax	1146.33
Holy Trinity and Priory Churches	100.00	NI	400.40
Personal Donations	501.00	employees	NI
		employers	<u>465.92</u>
Daybrook Baptist Church	375.00	Footprints Theatre Company	25.00
Wilkinsons	500.00	Use of Premises	550.00
Yoga	250.09	Excess for broken window	50.00
Sir John Eastwood Foundation	1000.00	Volunteer expenses	353.01
Assorted Donations	215.00	Printer Ink	78.99
Shoosmiths	300.00	Stationery - Fitz	42.74
Browne Jacobson	1000.00	Petty cash	<u>2.09</u>
St Nicholas Church	600.00	Mobile Call time	142.22
Anonymous donation	2000.00	Postage - Fitz	28.91
West Bridgford Baptist Church	124.00	Alison	<u>17.56</u>
Church Urban Fund	5000.00	(payroll)	
Lady Hind Trust	1000.00	Bedding	206.80
Magistrates courts – broken window	22.73	Socks/underwear	15.38
		Cleaning materials	89.45
		Toiletries	29.81
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>14622.37</b>	Food - Fitz	48.69
		Petty cash	<u>317.68</u>
		Equipment	42.61
		Towels	35.88
		Newspapers	24.61
		Laundry	281.20
		Keys	19.95
		Taxi to hospital	3.00
		LCL Transport	50.00
		<b>Total Project</b>	<b>12428.38</b>
		<b>Expenditure</b>	
Balance as at 1.9.2008	2193.99	<b>Transfer to Emmanuel House for 09/10 Project</b>	<b>2193.99</b>
		<b>Total Expenditure and account closed</b>	<b>14622.37</b>



### Service User Age Profile



### Winter Shelter Bed Occupancy







FOR MORE DOCUMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND TO DOWNLOAD THIS AND THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S REPORT AND TO LISTEN TO A BBC RADIO NOTTINGHAM PACKAGE ON THE WINTER SHELTER GO TO

[www.thomashelwysnottingham.org.uk](http://www.thomashelwysnottingham.org.uk)

For more information on the forthcoming project, contact Pailor at Emmanuel House: 0115 9507140



WHAT SOME OF THE AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH US HAD TO SAY...

*"The **Street Outreach Team** found the Winter Shelter a valuable, accessible resource providing much needed emergency accommodation for a vulnerable client group. The shelter was professionally run, with the staff and volunteers providing a compassionate service for the limited amount of time the shelter was allowed to run"*

Karen Bell, Street Outreach Team

*"The Winter Shelter (WS) was a real asset to **Emmanuel House (EH)** and its visitors. EH can support individuals in finding accommodation but the vast majority of the time this process takes days or often weeks. Homeless individuals that present at our centre will often end up as rough sleepers while accommodation is found for them. The WS was a great resource as it provided a safe location for homeless people to sleep until they could secure settled accommodation. EH was one of several organisations that could refer people to the WS and once this information became more widely known, the number of homeless people presenting at EH increased dramatically.*

*The incentive of the WS brought EH in contact with more vulnerable people, who we were then able to support. When we were then working with these individuals, the presence of the WS made it easier for us to work with clients. This was because each person had to be referred each day and issued with a coupon, so they had to return to EH, and because sleeping in a safe staffed location allowed them to have a degree of stability in their lives; they were more motivated in working with others towards their goals. The facility of the WS also allowed staff to find more suitable accommodation for visitors. When people are rough sleeping, it is necessary to find the quickest available accommodation for them and not prioritise the suitability of it. Knowing that an individual had access to the WS meant that staff could work towards accommodation that would take longer to access but was clearly appropriate for the person concerned.*

*The WS was run by experienced workers in the area of homelessness; this meant that the work that was begun at EH didn't need to end when the centre closed for the day. Liaising with the WS staff allowed them to continue the support offered by us and also to report back relevant information that EH could use to support our clientele. The existence of the WS greatly improved the effectiveness of EH's services and I feel that it is very unfortunate that it is not an all year facility with its own full-time set of staff. After the first few days of its operation it was full to capacity every day and unable to accept all of the referrals made to it. It is clear that there needs to be a bridge between rough sleeping and temporary accommodation and a night shelter would fulfil this purpose, the success of the Winter Shelter confirms this."*

Lyndon Campbell (Rough Sleeper Worker) & Hannah Baguley (Resettlement Worker)

(These comments were included in the original 2006-2007 report but were still held to be true for the 2007-2008 operation after consultation with the original writers).

### **Thanks are owed to...**

Baptist Union of Great Britain, Church Urban Fund, The Fifty Fund, Pailor, Rory and Emmanuel House Day Centre, Friary Drop In, Handel, Street Day Centre, Health Shop, Holy Trinity/Priory Church-Lenton, Homeless Nursing Team (Max et al), Lenton: various people in the local community, Lenton Centre, Lenton Methodist Church, Lenton Crocus Café, London Road Project, Nottingham HLG and MHST, Nottingham Voluntary Homelessness Forum, Salvation Army (Sneinton House), Southwell Diocese Urban Officer support (yes, Jonesy, that's you!) and Bishop Tony Porter, St Mary's Church, Wollaton Park, St Nicholas Church, Street Outreach Team, Malt Cross (Steve and Angie), West Bridgford Baptist Church, Thomas Helwys Baptist Church, (Deacons and congregation for taking a brave risk), Rally nights and Aspire Mentoring (especially Dr Graham Bowpitt for support and encouragement), Gus Rochester (website), Mary Ann Good for foot massages (service users loved them!), numerous other individuals who made donations, gave encouragement and advice, got involved as workers/volunteers, and the 39 people who responded so meaningfully to what we were seeking to do and enriched the lives of those who met them.



*Richard Fitzgerald (Winter shelter Coordinator) next to bishop Tony Porter and volunteers*

**Once again a huge "thank you" to everyone, from Richard Fitzgerald, (Winter Shelter Coordinator 2007/2008) on behalf of the Winter Shelter Steering Group:**

Sarah Barton, Richard Fitzgerald, Rev David Jones, Louise Keetley, Naomi Mantle, Peter and Stephen Ridal, Rory Sewell, Steve Simmonds

**Thank You!!!!!!**