



Impact Report
Winter 2017/18



MORE THAN JUST A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD

The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter evolved from a Churches Together public meeting in June 2017 when the issue of homelessness was discussed.

Speakers attended from various organisations involved with homelessness across Norfolk, including Paula Hall, CEO of the Purfleet Trust; Darryl Smith, Operations director for the YMCA; Susan Carne, Project Co-ordinator for Community Chaplaincy in Norwich; and Andrew Frere-Smith, Development Worker for Imagine Norfolk Together. They described their individual projects; the steep increase in rough sleeping; and their concerns about the decreasing amount of suitable accommodation being made available by local authorities and private landlords.

There was genuine concern that rough sleepers were at risk of death during the winter months. As a result, a new charity, the King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter, was proposed. Its trustees and management board would come from King's Lynn Churches Together. It would

work in partnership with churches, volunteers, community groups, homeless charities, local authority services and supporters. Its aim would be to provide safe, supported shelter to rough sleepers during the coldest months of the year.

The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter launched as a pilot in December 2017. Paula Hall, CEO of The Purfleet Trust, kindly provided the venue for the night shelter at the Purfleet Trust's premises at St Ann's Fort in King's Lynn. This enabled the pilot to run from 1st December 2017 for 2 nights per week, every Friday and Saturday, concluding on the morning of Easter Sunday 2018.

A vision of hope and hospitality

The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter vision, aims, and mission statement, were set out in the volunteer handbook, which formed part of the volunteer agreement. Handbooks were distributed to all volunteers following an initial interview process. In total, forty three volunteers were recruited to the project.



Our Vision

King's Lynn should be a town where nobody has to sleep rough on the streets.

Our Mission

To offer shelter, hospitality and hope to people sleeping rough through the winter months.

Our Aims

To enable people sleeping rough to have shelter, warmth, and hospitality, for some nights every week during the winter months.

To improve outcomes for people sleeping rough and wanting to move on to more secure accommodation.

Objectives

- To provide safe shelter for people otherwise sleeping rough
- To provide hot meals and hospitality
- To assist and support guests to move on, as and when appropriate
- To work closely with other agencies
- To encourage churches and agencies to work together
- To be an example in the community, drawing volunteers from all areas of society

Funds:

Through the support of Imagine Norfolk Together and Norfolk Community Foundation, the night shelter obtained funds from various charities (see appendix). Further support came by way of fundraising events, including two sponsored sleep-outs (photos).

Building the dream

Our first challenge was how best to utilize the building. It was used for different purposes during the week and had to be adapted for

our purposes.

Based on the capacity of the building and the estimated number of rough sleepers in the area, it was decided to provide for up to 15 rough sleepers (known as guests) each night.

One of our early considerations was the kind of beds to select. The solution needed to be portable and quick to set up. Inflatable beds and sleeping bags were chosen as the most effective solution for comfort, storage and transportation.



Following research and testing, Ready Beds and battery operated pumps were purchased. These could be easily transported away from the Purfleet premises and stored at the King's Lynn Food Bank through the week.



The local press, Churches Together, and word of mouth, led to a remarkable response to requests for volunteers.

Applications were received from all corners of society. Following interview and DBS checks, volunteers were welcomed to The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter family.

Friends were quickly made and differences were embraced and celebrated. It was joyful to observe everyone working positively towards a common goal: young people, students, nurses, retired folk, teachers, parents, grandparents,

campaigners, members of the clergy, those between jobs, care workers - the list was long, colourful and diverse.

A sense of mutual respect grew from within the group and spread amongst guests as the project became more established.

Tolerance, and the respecting of different views and values, was key.

A shared vision

By providing the use of their premises, free of charge, the Purfleet Trust made our shared vision a reality. This would not have been possible otherwise, due to the limited time and funds we had available to us.

Through their generosity, we were able to access various resources including:

- Heating and hot water
- Shower facilities
- Toiletries
- Clean Towels
- Laundry facilities
- Clothing donations
- Kitchen facilities
- Cooking utensils
- Security

The King's Lynn and Hunstanton Foodbanks also provided tremendous support including tinned goods, cereals, pasta, rice, biscuits, tea and coffee. The King's Lynn Foodbank also gave us very useful storage space at their warehouse.





Information sharing

A referral and risk assessment process was discussed between the Purfleet Trust's Day Centre Manager and the King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter Project Coordinator. It was proposed that a simple ticket system should be introduced. This would provide volunteers, and the night shelter coordinator, reassurance that guests had been referred and initial risk assessments had been carried out.

Tickets were issued throughout the week by staff at the Purfleet Trust who were able to identify the most vulnerable through their contact at the day centre.

Tickets provided guests with access to a bed, hot meals and refreshments, on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Purfleet Trust's day centre manager shared risk assessment data relating to the guests they referred to us. Also, the night shelter coordinator shared data with the day centre

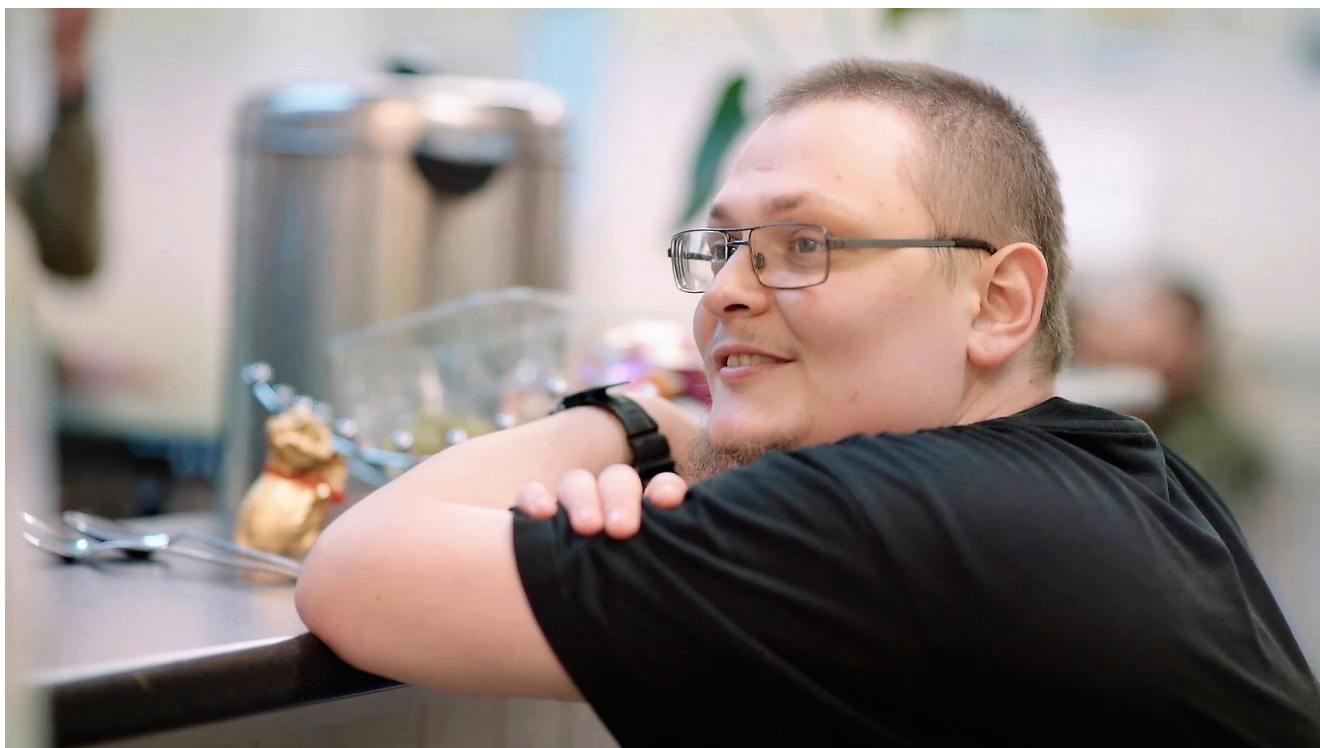
manager regarding any new comers not known to the Purfleet Trust. We also shared details of any relevant incidents or issues which arose at the night shelter and may have had an impact on the guests. Data sharing was discussed with each guest on arrival to the shelter. They signed an agreement stating that we could share their information with other agencies when necessary. Sensitive data was not discussed or made available to volunteers.

In addition to referrals from The Purfleet Trust, the night shelter received referrals from Genesis Housing, probation teams and the local constabulary.

Safety and security

We remained vigilant about receiving guests who presented themselves without a referral.

There were just four guests who came without referrals during the pilot period. One was a care leaver, who had been unable to access



accommodation elsewhere. Two visitors came from outside the area, and the fourth was already known to the Purfleet Trust.

To ensure the security of guests and volunteers we were pleased to have access to the Purfleet Trust's security system. The CCTV and intercom allowed staff to see who was outside the building and to communicate with them prior to giving them entry. The door release security ensured that those accessing the shelter could be detained safely within the reception area and be risk assessed.

Passion and commitment

Forty three volunteers, from all areas of the community, offered their time, commitment, and compassion, over the length of the project.

Their tasks were numerous. In addition to preparing food and drinks they helped by: welcoming guests, washing up, assisting overnight, preparing breakfast, washing

clothes and bedding, playing board games, interpreting official documents, debating, joking, baking cakes, caring for some shocking cases of trench foot, and various other tasks. The volunteers remained positive and compassionate throughout the project and were an inspiration to us all.

43 volunteers from all areas of the community remained committed and compassionate throughout the project.

One volunteer gave 16 shifts and five other volunteers gave more than 10 shifts each.

6,552 volunteer hours were donated to the shelter for some of our most marginalised and vulnerable members of society.

Roles and responsibilities

There were three shifts per night:

Supper shift 6pm-9pm

Overnight shift 9pm-6am

Breakfast shift 6am-9am

The volunteers were supervised by one paid member of staff on each shift - a project coordinator or an assistant coordinator.

Two or three volunteers were present with the staff member for each shift. The evening shift was the busiest and most demanding. Guests could arrive cold, hungry and often nervous of what they might encounter.

‘The staff that work here are awesome, they are really good, always friendly, can’t do enough for you.’

The role of the project coordinator was to receive referrals during the week, gather the

information relating to referred guests and carry out risk assessments. The project coordinator remained on site throughout the evening shift, arriving ahead of the volunteers in order to set up, welcoming volunteers and admitting guests. She would then brief the volunteers before handing over to the assistant coordinator to supervise the night shift. The coordinator returned at 6.00am to relieve the night coordinator, supervise the breakfast shift, clear up and see guests off the site before securing the premises.

Winter 2017/18 brought some bitterly cold weather and an epidemic of flu in the community.

The night shelter was accessible to rough sleepers for approximately 468 hours across the period of the pilot.





Dinners included staple favourites like sausage and mash, roast chicken, cheesy pasta bake, as well as Mexican feasts and Indian curries. There were deserts, magnificent trifles, hearty fruit crumbles and cheesecakes.

A much appreciated cooked breakfast was provided each morning, plus countless cups of tea, coffee and hot chocolate.

36 different home-cooked dinners were provided

45 guests received food and shelter over the duration of the pilot

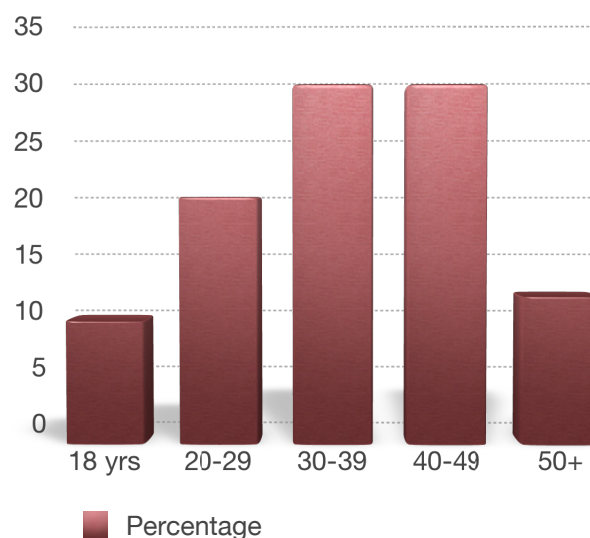
The Guests

- Five were female
- Approximately one quarter were from Eastern Europe
- Across the 36 nights 1 guest attended every single session and 1 other attended 35 of 36 sessions
- 5 guests spent an average of 22 nights each at the shelter

- The average number of people sheltered each night was 13, (with the most being 19 and the least 7)
- For 15 of the 36 nights, we sheltered between 10 and 19 guests
- For 11 of the 36 nights, we sheltered between 7 and 9 guests

Guests ranged from 18 to 59 years

- 12% in their mid to late 50s
- 29% between 40 and 49yrs
- 29% between 30 and 39 yrs
- 20% between 20 and 29 yrs
- 10% aged 18 yrs



Volunteer and Guest Feedback

Q1. How much impact do you feel your volunteer work had on the lives of the guests?

Over 70% of volunteers who responded said they felt their work had far more than just a moderate impact on the lives of the guests. This impact is reflected in the comments from some of our guests:

"There's some decent people here, we have a friendly atmosphere and reasonable food, a laugh and a joke with them..."

"The staff that work here are awesome, they are really good, always friendly, can't do enough for you... a positive impact on everyone who comes through those doors."

"There's no prejudice, anywhere, because we are all on the same page ..."

"If there was just more houses, more people to support us back into work or help us with our own dreams, our own things that we want to achieve..."

"The food, is really good."

"They are good people here, kindhearted people, I have a room of my own because of my health conditions. Mentally I'm better than I was when arrived..."

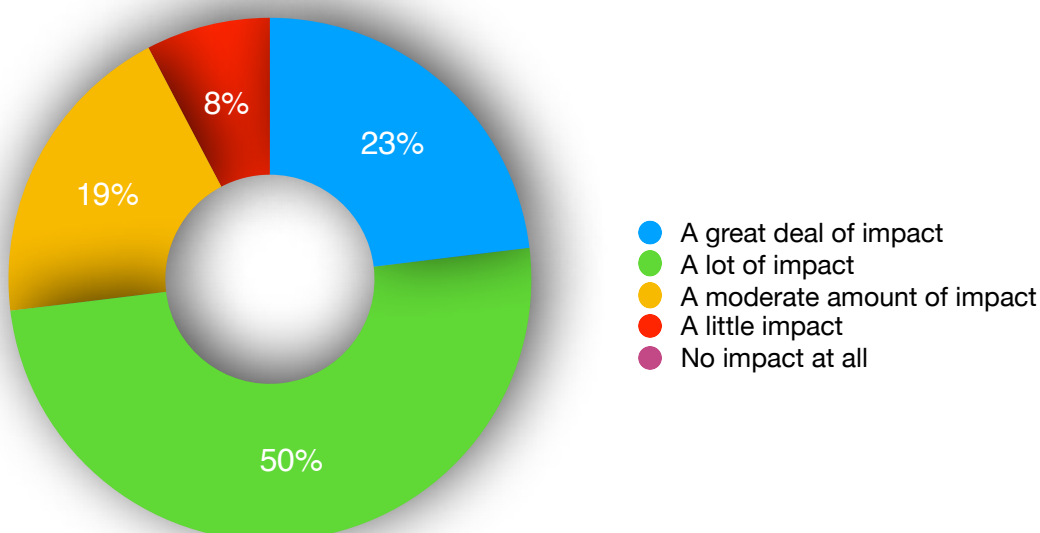
"Without the night shelter this past couple of weeks this would have been the worst couple of weeks ever because of the cold weather. It's unfortunate that its only open at the weekends."

"On Thursday I got in a wheelie bin and slept it was so cold. Now I can sleep here."

"I had ulcers in my feet, ... these people here are decent people aren't they? They give me clean socks."

"Somewhere to stay at Christmas would have been good, I woke up on Christmas day behind Argos soaking wet, it would have been nice to have somewhere to go at Christmas. Somewhere like this would have helped take my mind off things. It doesn't necessarily make everything better but it does help my mental health..."

"I'd rather have shelter than food. An empty room with no beds even...shelter at night is far more important than food, if I had a choice of a meal or shelter at night I would choose a roof over my head."



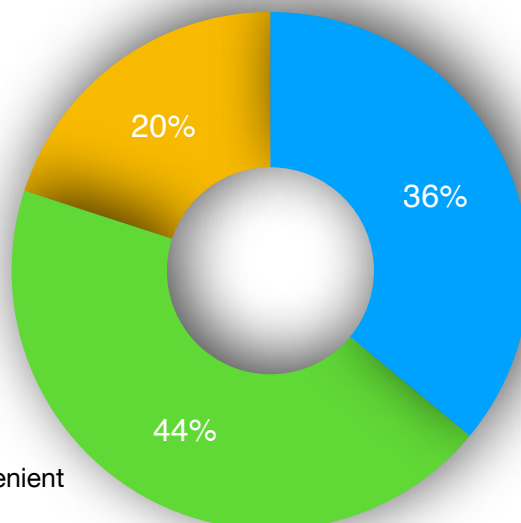
Q2. How convenient did you find the shift patterns?

Throughout the project, volunteers showed remarkable generosity with their time, even during the worst weather of the winter months they still made it into the shelter to work their chosen shifts.

Overall, the breakfast shift was the most difficult to cover; supper and night shifts were more popular.

Volunteers were encouraged to choose shifts which best suited their own lifestyles and before long there were more volunteers available than remaining shifts.

- Extremely convenient
- Very convenient
- Somewhat convenient
- Not so convenient
- Not at all convenient



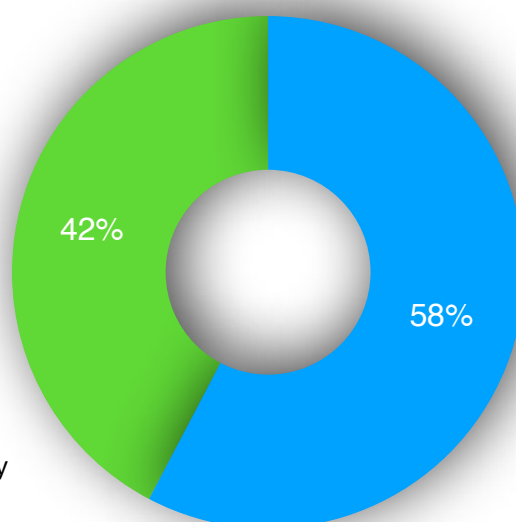
Q3. How easy was it to get along with the other volunteers at the night shelter?

There was a genuine sense of family and affection amongst all who played a part in the project.

Volunteers supported and embraced one another's differences; those who were anxious as first time volunteers, soon grew in confidence.

New friendships were formed and contrasting values and perspectives blended together to create a colourful and varied mix.

- Extremely easy
- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Not so easy
- Not at all easy



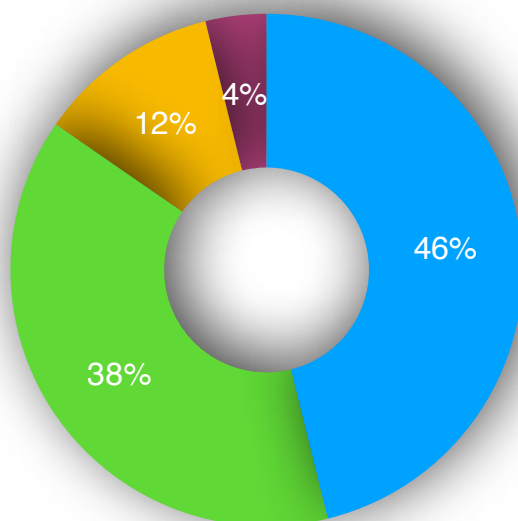
Q4. How much of an impact do you think the Winter Night Shelter project has had on the local community this winter?

"There was a great deal of worry about the people living on the streets. This project helped allay those fears."

"There were fewer homeless people sleeping in doorways when the shelter was on."

"While I think it must have been helpful to the guests, I'm unsure what impact it would have had on the wider local community."

Visitors from the local community reached out with offers of soup, funds and clothing. Seeing a rise in rough sleepers in the town clearly impacted local people. They were glad that there was somewhere warm for people to stay.



- A great deal of impact
- A lot of impact
- A moderate amount of impact
- A little impact
- No impact at all

100%

of respondents said they would like to volunteer with the night shelter again - extremely likely (69%) or very likely (31%)

92%

of respondents said they would recommend the organisation to a friend or colleague

Q5. Overall, in terms of safety and comfort how appropriate did you find the King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter facilities?

"Very appropriate but I think we do need at least one male volunteer on during night shifts."

"It would be nice to have more permanent accommodation (beds), however, as the night shelter was only open at weekends I appreciate that this was not possible."

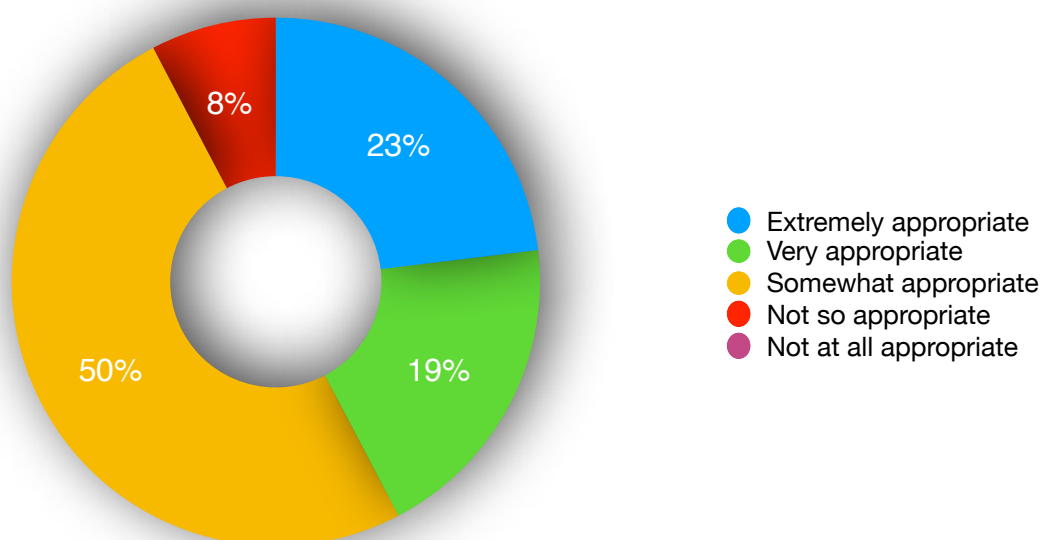
"It has everything one could need but would have been nicer if it was slightly more homely."

"I'm not sure it was comfortable, but that's because I don't live on the streets. I didn't find the seating comfortable for volunteers, but that was bearable for me. I felt the safety was okay."

Volunteers referred to their own discomfort (particularly overnight) when they had to sit for long periods of time. A lack of quiet space was highlighted, somewhere with comfortable seating where people could sit and socialise separate from the dining area.

Overall, volunteers reported that the facilities felt safe, although one felt it appropriate to have at least one male volunteer on duty overnight for security and safeguarding reasons. This was largely the case although ratios of male/female volunteers meant that occasionally there was a choice between an all female overnight shift, or not running the shelter. There were no safeguarding issues raised during the project.

One way to ensure that at least one male member of staff was on duty overnight would be to recruit a male night coordinator to supervise that shift.



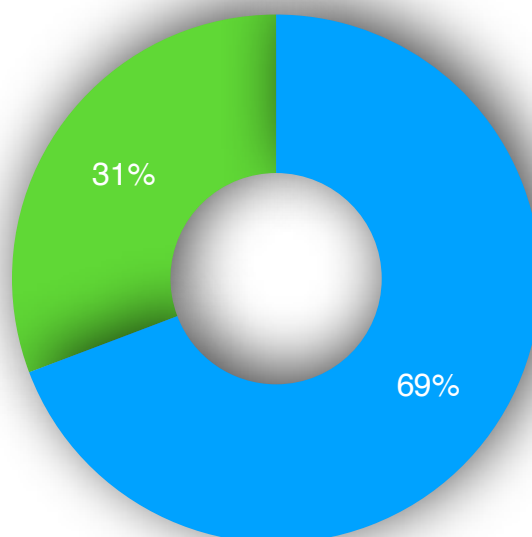
Q6. Overall, were you satisfied or dissatisfied with your volunteer experience with the night shelter?

"I think it's fantastic, it's really what's needed for King's Lynn, it's a lovely atmosphere and I must say observing people, they make it easy for us and we can learn hugely from them, really."

"Very well organised and I hope it continues to develop as a charity."

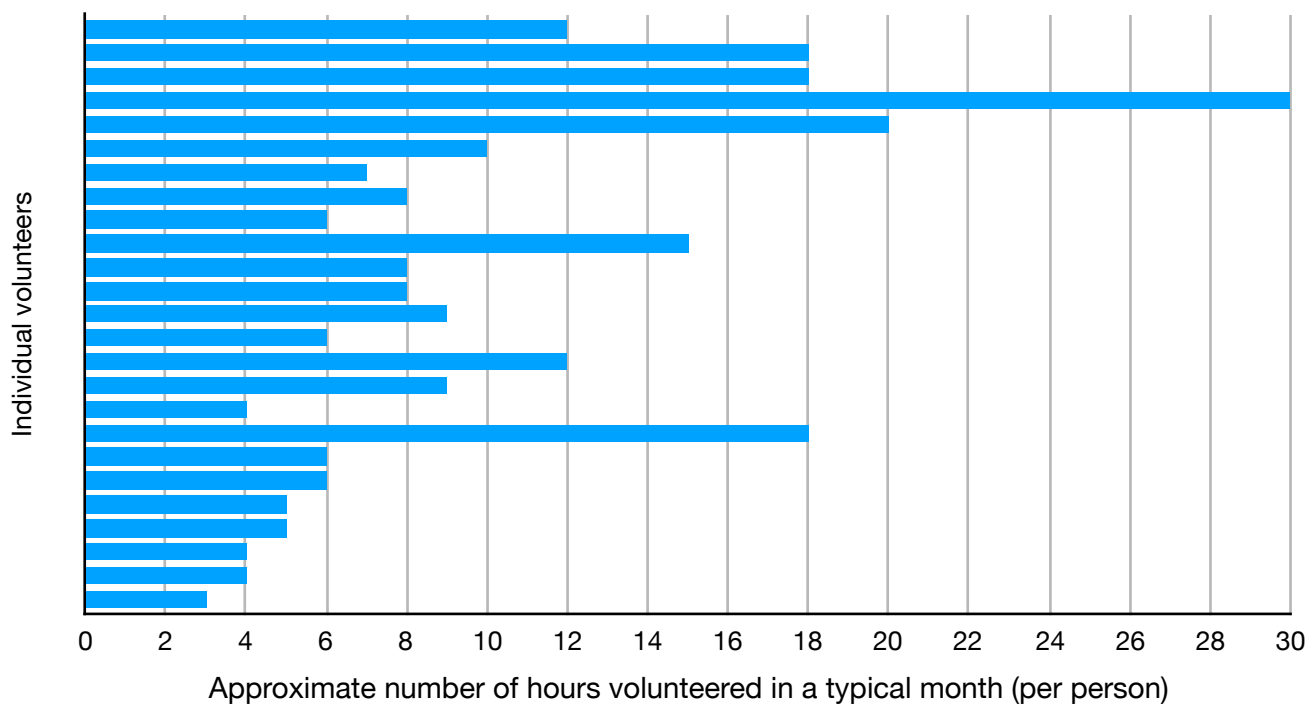
"I found some new and interesting friends who had the same concerns as I do about the homeless in the town."

"I was proud to play a small part in the project."



- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

In a typical month our volunteers worked for between 3 and 30 hours



Food for thought

The housing options manager at the **Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk** was asked for his initial thoughts regarding how the night shelter had been received by the council:

"It was good, and a shame it couldn't have been active the whole period (7 days) rather than just at weekends."

Concerning the future:

"I would need to look at all options and be creative... We need to be mindful of not duplicating services."

The **Norfolk Constabulary** local community liaison officer said she too had received positive feedback. Officers who attended the night shelter, during an active shift, were happy knowing that individuals were not wandering the streets but comfortable and staying out of trouble. They were surprised at how upbeat and relaxed the atmosphere was and commented positively about the friendly, calm and efficient manner in which the facility was being staffed.

There was only one incident, at the very start of the project, which led to police being called to manage a situation. There were no further episodes.

Tolerance and support were recognised by both guests and volunteers during the project.

Guests were openly supportive of one another, looking out for each other and showing concern if a regular face was missing. Over time, reluctant guests who had originally displayed some challenging behaviour, began to relax and unwind, sharing their dreams and goals, laughing and joking with others. All ages respected one another. Non-English

speaking guests were included through the simple communication of gestures and facial expressions.

The sense of family atmosphere was appreciated by many guests. Despite differences of opinion, conflicting personalities and competing dynamics, many said their health and wellbeing improved. In the safety of the nurturing environment, individuals grew in resilience and confidence.

For our guests, the King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter was clearly more than just a roof over their heads. For those who had been unable to build and sustain relationships within their own families, the shelter provided structure, tolerance and support without undue demands.

More than just a roof over your head

The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter looked at individuals in the context of the combined influences of psychological factors and the surrounding social environment. Many of the guests who came to the shelter spoke of improvements in their mental health due to their social interactions and the impact that our volunteers' warmth had on them.

Fixing homelessness is never going to be simply about putting a roof over a head.

Immediate Goals

With regard to planning for the coming winter, there are some immediate matters that need to be attended to:

- Location of suitably accessible premises to house the winter night shelter
- Creation of a strong corporate identity for the charity
- Retention of existing volunteers

- Establish a team of volunteers to plan fundraising events
- Training and administration of volunteers

Looking Ahead

As a result of the experience gained from this pilot, we believe it would be right to expand the winter provision for 2018/19. If possible, the shelter should open 7 nights per week throughout the winter months. There should also be the capacity to accept more guests during periods of severe weather.

The King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter should continue to provide immediate shelter and hospitality, referring people to the ongoing rehabilitation and support from partner organisations. Private enterprises and the borough council could help with premises, grant applications, raising awareness and signposting.

For health and safety, safeguarding and ease of accessibility, we should seek premises that could accommodate up to 25 guests in a single ground floor hall, rather than across multiple floors and rooms. Kitchen facilities, a dining area and a quiet space for relaxing would be necessary. In addition, there would need to be toilet, shower and washing facilities, and, if possible, a simple laundry.

The CCTV door release systems at the Purfleet Trust was very helpful; whatever the venue, a similar security system should be a high priority.

Consideration must also be given to the secure storage of risk assessment and personal data.

Other things to consider are:

- options needed for people who are highly vulnerable and/or high risk
- how to overcome communication/language barriers
- how to staff the project. At least 2 coordinators would be required. If funds allow, 3 staff would be ideal to provide cover in the event of illness, annual leave etc.
- recruiting a volunteer to provide administration support

Finally

Thank you to all the supporters and partners of the King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter, volunteers, staff and coordinators who made this pilot project such a success.

Joanne Downen

Project Coordinator



Appendix

We would like to acknowledge the generous grants received from:

Dreams and Visions

Church Urban Fund

Farthing Trust

Freebridge Community Housing

Communities That Care

Goodman Trust

Shelroy Trust